

THE FICTION OF C. S. LEWIS

Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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PREFACE

All the articles on, and references to, Lewis which I have consulted are listed in the Bibliography.

As far as I am aware, there has been no previous full-length treatment of Lewis's fiction. The most complete study of his thought known to me is Chad Walsh's C.S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics (1949), which deals, often briefly, with Lewis's fiction, though not, of course, with 'The Chronicles of Narnia' and Till We Have Faces. As indicated at several points in the thesis, I find myself in general agreement with Chad Walsh, whose book I was not able to utilize until revising my first version.

John Wain's recent autobiography, Sprightly Running (1962), appeared in time for me to quote its account of Lewis's views on romance (Chapter XIX of this thesis), but too late for me to supplement my brief description of Lewis's life at Oxford (Chapter II of the thesis). It gives a fascinating account of Lewis and his circle in wartime Oxford.

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Cue-titles and Symbols

1. Works written or edited by C.S. Lewis

<u>Abolition:</u>	<u>The Abolition of Man</u>
<u>Allegory:</u>	<u>The Allegory of Love</u>
<u>Caspian:</u>	<u>Prince Caspian: the return to Narnia</u>
<u>Divorce:</u>	<u>The Great Divorce</u>
<u>ELSC:</u>	<u>English Literature in the Sixteenth Century</u>
<u>EPCW:</u>	<u>Essays Presented to Charles Williams</u>
<u>Experiment:</u>	<u>An Experiment in Criticism</u>
<u>HB:</u>	<u>The Horse and his Boy</u>
<u>LB:</u>	<u>The Last Battle</u>
<u>LWW:</u>	<u>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</u>
<u>MacDonald:</u>	<u>George MacDonald; An Anthology</u>
<u>Miracles:</u>	<u>Miracles; A Preliminary Study</u>
<u>MC:</u>	<u>Mere Christianity</u>
<u>MN:</u>	<u>The Magician's Nephew</u>
<u>OSP:</u>	<u>Out of the Silent Planet</u>
<u>Pain:</u>	<u>The Problem of Pain</u>
<u>Preface:</u>	<u>A Preface to Paradise Lost</u>
<u>Reflections:</u>	<u>Reflections on the Psalms</u>
<u>Regress:</u>	<u>The Pilgrim's Regress</u>
<u>SC:</u>	<u>The Silver Chair</u>
<u>Screwtape:</u>	<u>The Screwtape Letters</u>
<u>SJ:</u>	<u>Surprised by Joy</u>
<u>TAFP:</u>	<u>They Asked for a Paper</u>

- TWOC: 'Three Ways of Writing for Children'
- Transposition: Transposition and other Addresses
- THB: That Hideous Strength
- TWIF: Till We Have Faces
- Voyage: The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'

2. Other Works

- Arcturus: Lindsay, David, A Voyage to Arcturus 1946 ed.
- Clarke: Clarke, A.C., The Exploration of Space 2nd ed., Penguin, 1959
- Crouch: Crouch, M.S., 'Chronicles of Narnia', Junior Bookshelf vol.20, no.5, '56
- Darton: Darton, F.J.H., Children's Books in England 2nd ed., 1958
- DNB: Dictionary of National Biography
- FMH: Wells, H.G., The First Men in the Moon Atlantic Edition, 1925
- Green: Green, R.L., Into Other Worlds 1957
- Lilith: MacDonald, George, Lilith; a Romance 1895
- Nicholson: Nicholson, Marjorie Hope, Voyages to the Moon the Macmillan Company, New York, 1948
- Phantastes: MacDonald, George, Phantastes: A Fairie Romance Dent, 1915
- PL: Milton, John, Paradise Lost
- Spec.: Spectator (twentieth century)
- TLS: The Times Literary Supplement
- Walsh: Walsh, Chad, C.S. Lewis: Apostle to the Sceptics 1949
- Williams: Charles Williams: Selected Writings chosen by Anne Ridler, 1961

Scriptural references are to the A.V., unless otherwise stated and are given as follows:

Rev. v.5: Revelation, chapter five, verse five

C H A P T E R I

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Clive Staples Lewis was born at Belfast on 29th November, 1898, the second son of a solicitor and a clergyman's daughter. His father's ancestors had been Welsh farmers; his mother came from a long line of 'clergymen, lawyers, sailors and the like'.¹

Lewis has told his own story in Surprised by Joy, a spiritual autobiography which provides an indispensable account of his development. It traces the formation of the religious convictions that underlie all his work - critical, apologetic and fictional. Like Augustine's Confessions, it is concerned primarily with his conversion to Christianity, but it contains more autobiographical details than can well be summarised in a brief account.

Two strains in Lewis's temperament, the romantic and the rational, may be traced to his ancestry.

My father's people were true Welshmen, sentimental, passionate and rhetorical, easily moved both to anger and to tenderness; men who laughed and cried a great deal and who had not much of the talent for happiness. The Hamiltons were a cooler race. Their minds were critical and ironic and they had the talent for happiness in a high degree - went straight for it as experienced travellers go for the best seat in a train. From my earliest years I was aware of the vivid contrast between my mother's cheerful and tranquil affection and the ups and downs of my father's emotional life, and this bred in me long before I was old enough to give it a name a certain distrust or dislike of emotion as something uncomfortable and embarrassing and even dangerous.²

Lewis's story shows how a critical mind and certain deeply felt intui-

tions were reconciled in Christianity. A 'certain distrust' of the more powerful human emotions lingers on in his fiction. Only with The Four Loves (1960) does his treatment of human affections and passions achieve a satisfying width and balance.

Lewis's early years may be divided between a predominantly happy childhood and outwardly unhappy schooldays. Thanks to good parents and a kind nurse his childhood, apart from nightmares occasioned by a fear of insects, was 'a period of humdrum, prosaic happiness'. The only aesthetic experiences, 'already incurably romantic, not formal', were aroused by his brother's toy garden and the low line of the Castlereagh Hills seen from nursery windows, 'They were not far off but they were, to children, quite unattainable. They taught me longing - Sehnsucht; made me for good or ill, and before I was six years old, a votary of the Blue Flower.'³

When Lewis was seven his family moved to the 'New House', of which the features may be traced in 'The Chronicles of Narnia', where his voracious appetite for books and his taste for romantic scenery were both gratified. Receiving education from his mother and a governess, he had still, with the removal of his brother to boarding school, plenty of solitude. An 'extreme manual clumsiness' prevented him from enjoying hobbies and sports, so he took to composing, and illustrating, stories set in an imaginary 'Animal Land'. This was an outlet for 'invention', not 'fantasy', and in the holidays his brother shared in its development. Through Animal Land, he says, 'I was training myself

to be a novelist....not a poet....there was no poetry, even no romance, in it. It was almost astonishingly prosaic'. The significant imaginative experiences, comparable to those of Traherne and Wordsworth, were of another kind.

They came to him through three oddly diverse objects - the memory of his brother's toy garden, the 'Idea of Autumn' in Beatrix Potter's Squirrel Nutkin, and the northern magic of Tegner's Drapa. The quality they had in common was 'that of an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and from Pleasure....I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world.' 'Joy' was to prove the supreme influence on his life, and is the key to all his work.

His mother's death brought this childhood period to an end. To his distaste for all the flummery of the funeral, he traces a defect he has never fully overcome - 'a distaste for all that is public, all that belongs to the collective; a boorish ineptitude for formality'.

The subsequent period at prep. school in England was extremely unpleasant. Lewis heads his account of it 'Concentration Camp', and labels the strange establishment at which he was a boarder, 'Belsen'. The curriculum was narrow and monotonous; the facilities for recreation slight. Some of the innumerable canings administered by 'Oldie', its tyrannical and half-insane headmaster, are among the memories he

'could willingly dispense with'. Yet just as his mother's death had drawn Lewis and his brother together, so oppression knit the boarders at Oldie's into a company of friends. 'To this day' he writes 'the vision of the world which comes most naturally to me is one in which "we two" or "we few" (and in a sense "we happy few") stand together against something stronger and larger.'

At home he and his brother were increasingly ill at ease with their demonstrative, humorous, but temperamental father, in whose disciplinary harangues a 'fatal bent towards dramatisation and rhetoric (I speak of it the more freely since I inherit it) produced a pathetic yet comic result'.⁴ Among the uncles, aunts, and other relatives with whom they mixed Lewis preferred the objective and serene Hamiltons to the warm but mercurial Lewises. He regarded even more highly the handsome, hospitable and gracious family of Sir W.E., Lady E. (his mother's cousin) and their three 'grown-up' daughters. From them Lewis learned 'whatever I know (it is not much) of courtesy and savoir faire'.⁵ But the round of social engagements (outside this family) with its interminable dances and vapid conversation seemed unprovoked persecution to a clumsy, imaginative boy.

After Oldie's demise Lewis spent a term at an Irish school, 'Campbell', (something like the English schools in the era before Arnold) and was then sent in January 1911 to 'Wyvern' [Malvern] - first to 'Chartres' the preparatory school and then, at the end of the summer term of 1913, to the College.

His judgment on the ethos and organization of his public school, like that of many other imaginative writers, is decidedly adverse. The compulsory games, and the fagging system with 'its elaborate mechanism.... for protecting the strong against the weak',⁶ stole precious hours from reading and prep. and were wearisome to body and spirit. There was rarely any privacy. His picture of 'Coll' as a homo-sexual society based on a highly-developed system of 'Bloods' and 'Tarts' is startling, and has been queried by Lord Hailsham.⁷ Yet Derek Verschoyle's account in The Old School⁸ bears out this picture, as well as the other points Lewis makes.

Lewis's life at 'Wyvern' lasted until the summer of 1914, but it is time to trace his inner development to this point.

In his earlier years religion was a thing distinct from his deepest imaginative interests. The impression that he was 'brought up in a strict and vivid Puritanism' is mistaken; he was merely 'taught the usual things and made to say my prayers and in due time taken to church'.⁹ His father's approach to religion was different from that which later became his own;

The charm of tradition and the verbal beauty of Bible and Prayer Book (all of them for me late and acquired tastes) were his natural delight, and it would have been hard to find an equally intelligent man who cared so little for metaphysics.⁹

His mother's illness came when he was too young for the prayers he offered for her recovery, and their negative result, to have much religious significance.

Attendance at an 'Anglo-Catholic' church whilst at Oldie's first led to effective belief, characterised by an element of fear which, he says, was not unwholesome, since 'I began seriously to pray and to read my Bible and to attempt to obey my conscience.'¹⁰

At Chartres this faith slowly disintegrated. The matron, 'Miss C.', though kind and well-meaning, was unfortunately floundering in the mazes of spiritualistic and Theosophic speculation, and her conversation inadvertently aroused in him a 'passion for the Occult'. Gradually his creed dissolved in speculation, passing 'from the tyrannous noon of revelation' into the 'cool evening twilight of Higher Thought'. This was the more welcome in that his over-earnest striving for 'realisation' had made his prayers a painful discipline. Contributory factors were the dismissal of ancient religions by his classical textbooks as sheer delusion (Christianity being an arbitrary exception), and an ingrained strain of pessimism which he traces to his innate clumsiness. Reading in astronomy added, incongruously, to his occultist fancies an atheistical 'Argument from Undesign'.

Then, from 'Pogo', a young, flashy master just down from University, came pathetic aspirations after 'knuttery' and sophistication. 'What attacked me through Pogo' he writes 'was not the Flesh (I had that of my own) but the World; the desire for glitter, swagger, distinction, the desire to be in the know.'¹¹ Neither the World nor the Flesh at this time produced shame:

It took me as long to acquire inhibitions as others (they say) have taken to get rid of them. That is why I often find myself at such cross-purposes with the modern world; I have been a converted Pagan living among apostate Puritans.¹¹

The effect of 'Wyvern', he says, was to make him an intellectual prig, and to intensify his innate tendency to resent any kind of 'interference' - 'I hotly demanded not to be interrupted.'¹²

Meanwhile, within, had come a 'Personal Renaissance', a 're-awakening' from imaginative sleep. For Lewis, the step from prosaic boyhood into what Keats once finely called the 'Chamber of Maiden Thought' came with the re-emergence of his childhood 'Joy'. Neither his taste for adventurous novels nor his first appreciation of poetry (through the reading of Sohrab and Rustum by his form-master at Campbell) had re-awakened Joy which, he claims, 'is distinct....even from aesthetic pleasure'.

The change came suddenly, whilst he was at Chartres, when, one day, he picked up a periodical in the schoolroom. Since Joy is the major theme of his life and work, his reaction to what he read must be quoted at length:

What I had read was the words Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods. What I had seen was one of Arthur Rackham's illustrations to that volume. I had never heard of Wagner, nor of Siegfried. I thought the Twilight of the Gods meant the twilight in which the gods lived. How did I know, at once and beyond question, that this was no Celtic, or silvan, or terrestrial twilight? But so it was. Pure "Northernness" engulfed me: a vision of huge, clear spaces hanging above the Atlantic in the endless twilight of Northern summer, remoteness, severity....and almost at the same moment I knew that I had met this before, long, long ago (it hardly seems longer now) in Tegner's Drapa, that Siegfried (whatever it might be) belonged to the same world as Balder and the sunward-sailing cranes. And with that plunge back into my own past there arose at once, almost like heartbreak, the memory of Joy itself, the knowledge that I had once had what I had now lacked for years, that I was returning at last from exile and desert lands to my own country; and the distance of the Twilight of the

Gods and the distance of my own past Joy, both unattainable, flowed together into a single, unendurable sense of desire and loss, which suddenly became one with the loss of the whole experience, which, as I now stared round that dusty schoolroom like a man recovering from unconsciousness, had already vanished, had eluded me at the very moment when I could first say It is. And at once I knew (with fatal knowledge) that to "have it again" was the supreme and only important object of desire.

Inspired by nothing more than this and the synopses of Wagner's operas in gramophone catalogues, he wrote three books of 'a heroic poem on the Wagnerian version of the Niblung story'.¹³ Subsequently he revelled in Wagner's Ring, and purchased Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods for himself. The experience seemed more important than religion, and led to an appreciation of Nature and an intensive study of Norse mythology. This was the true 'inner life'. By its side 'Animal Land', which he continued to transform and elaborate, helped by his brother, was an 'outer' interest.

At 'Wyvern' his growing taste for literature owed much to his teacher, the courteous and honey-tongued 'Smewgy'. Under his teaching he enjoyed Horace's Odes, Aeneid IV and Euripides' Bacchae, and was led to read Stephens's Crock of Gold. In the school library he discovered Milton, Yeats and Celtic mythology:

I felt keenly the difference between the stony and fiery sublimity of Asgard, the green, leafy, amorous, and elusive world of Cruachan and the Red Branch and Tír-nan-Og, the harder, more defiant, sun-bright beauty of Olympus.¹⁴

Among other verses, he composed a tragedy, Loki Bound, which reflected his pessimistic philosophy and hatred of authority.

Joy co-existed, but did not mix, with the hated externals of life

at Wyvern, from which release came when Lewis's father sent him, soon after the outbreak of war, to his own former tutor, Mr. Kirkpatrick, at Great Bookham in Surrey.

From the forthright Ulsterman, 'Kirk', a rationalist of the old school, and a formidable dialectician, he received a tough training in reasoned argument which he relished like 'red beef or strong beer'. Now he revelled in new fields of literature. Homer was opened up to him, along with other Greek and Latin classics; Mrs. Kirkpatrick taught him French; from London there came by post a constant stream of good books. Frequent walks led to a strong appreciation of the Surrey countryside. Lewis's prigery was demolished but his mental powers expanded. 'Smewgy' and Kirk', he writes, 'were my two greatest teachers. Roughly, one might say (in medieval language) that Smewgy taught me Grammar and Rhetoric and Kirk taught me Dialectic....My debt to him is very great....'¹⁵ He appears, slightly disguised, as the Scotsman, McPhee, in the planetary romances.

In the Bookham period (1914-16), with its frequent trips to Ireland, Lewis developed a great friendship with 'Arthur',¹⁶ a neighbouring boy who shared his enthusiasm for the Norse legends. From him he acquired a taste for the English novelists - Scott, the Brontës, Jane Austen - and came to share something of his enthusiasm for 'Home-liness' in books and in Nature.

His old love for the Irish landscape expanded and deepened. He exulted in the lines of the far-off Antrim plateau, the austere charm of the Holywood Hills, and the southward prospect, across the chequered

'plain' of County Down to the blue mountains of Mourne. He describes the northward prospect across Belfast Lough as, 'one of those great contrasts which have bitten deeply into my mind - Niflheim and Asgard, Britain and Logres, Mandraxit and Harandra, air and ether, the low world and the high'.¹⁷ Several passages in the planetary romances, and elsewhere, attest this impression.

It was a happy time. A congenial social circle, Arthur's friendship, the company of Tim, the family dog, and the 'discovery' of William Morris, all contributed to 'Fortune's Smile'.¹⁸

Yet Joy was a less frequent visitant. Norse mythology, now intensively studied, rarely brought the old thrill. It came, rather, as the 'memory' of former longing. Now, Lewis believes that these 'memories' of longing are identical with the longing itself, that, for instance, Wordsworth's 'sense of the loss of vanished vision....was itself vision of the same kind, if only he could have believed it'. He believes, too, that such imaginative experience 'reflects', or is an 'image', of spiritual reality, though distinct from it. At the time he consciously sought the thrill, not realising it to be a by-product of disinterested contemplation, of 'longing' fixed on some external 'object'. Yet his misguided pursuit showed Joy to be distinct from eroticism, or any other substitute. (This later became the central argument of The Pilgrim's Regress).

Lewis's imagination and intellect were now sharply opposed - 'On the one side a many-islanded sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow "rationalism"'. Consistently held, pessimistic

scepticism might seem to invalidate the imagination, but one factor supremely commended it: it supported Lewis's hatred of authority and 'Interference', of which Christianity with its 'transcendental Interferer' seemed the extreme embodiment.

Two new experiences imperilled this materialistic 'faith'. First, in Yeats and Maeterlinck, Lewis found two writers, non-Christians, who rejected Materialism and leaned to Theosophy and Magic. Suddenly the old occultist lore learned at Chartres returned like a 'ravenous lust', exerting an attraction by its comprehensive unorthodoxy, its esoteric appeal, and its promise of a renewal of 'Joy'. Yet 'the magical conclusion was just as irrelevant to Joy as the erotic conclusion' - 'the Flesh and the Devil, though they could still tempt, could no longer offer me the supreme bribe....And the World had never even pretended to have it'.

The second experience was the momentous discovery, on Leatherhead Station, of George MacDonald's Phantastes: a Faerie Romance, a find which was to have lasting consequences.

Lewis's first account of this experience is given in his introduction to George MacDonald: An Anthology. He depicts it as the crossing of a great frontier, as the first step on the path which led to his conversion. In Phantastes he first saw reflected 'the quality of the real universe, the divine, magical, terrifying and ecstatic reality in which we all live'.¹⁹ He met, without knowing it, real 'goodness'. In Surprised by Joy he brings out even more clearly the link between Phantastes and his earlier intuitions.

The woodland journeyings in that story, the ghostly enemies, the ladies both good and evil, were close enough to my habitual imagery to lure me on without the perception of a change. It is as if I were carried sleeping across the frontier, or as if I had died in the old country and could never remember how I came alive in the new...I did not yet know (and I was long in learning) the name of the new quality, the bright shadow, that rested on the travels of Anodos. I do now. It was Holiness. For the first time the song of the sirens sounded like the voice of my mother or my nurse....in this new region all the confusions that had hitherto perplexed my search for Joy were disarmed. There was no temptation to confuse the scenes of the tale with the light that rested upon them, or to suppose that they were put forward as realities, or even to dream that if they had been realities and I could reach the woods where Anodos journeyed I should thereby come a step nearer to my desire. Yet, at the same time, never had the wind of Joy blowing through any story been less separable from the story itself....Thus, when the great moments came.... I found the light shining on those woods and cottages, and then on my own past life, and on the quiet room where I sat and on my old teacher where he nodded above his little Tacitus. For I now perceived that while the air of the new region made all my erotic and magical perversions of Joy look like sordid trumpery, it had no such disenchanting power over the bread upon the table or the coals in the grate. That was the marvel. Up till now each visitation of Joy had left the common world momentarily a desert - "The first touch of the earth went nigh to kill"....But now I saw the bright shadow coming out of the book into the real world and resting there, transforming all common things and yet itself unchanged....That night my imagination was, in a certain sense, baptised; the rest of me, not unnaturally, took longer.²⁰

In MacDonald, Lewis had discovered his imaginative and spiritual 'Master'. Much later (he is not precise about dates) he was to derive essential elements of his faith from MacDonald's Unspoken Sermons, to which he acknowledges a debt 'almost as great as one man can owe to another'. For the time being, MacDonald's appeal was to imagination rather than to intellect or conscience.

This link between conversion and the reading of an imaginative

work is unusual, perhaps, but not unique. The French poet, Paul Claudel, attributed a similar decisive change in his outlook to a reading of Rimbaud's Illuminations and Une Saison en Enfer. 'For the first time,' he wrote in Ma Conversion, 'these books opened up a fissure in my materialistic outlook and gave me a lively and almost physical impression of the supernatural. But my habitual state of suffocation and of despair remained the same.'²¹ Lewis's experience was much like this, but whereas Claudel's subsequent move towards faith occupied four years Lewis's occupied some thirteen years.

Late in 1916 Lewis passed his scholarship examination at Oxford, was elected by University College, but returned to Kirk to prepare for Responsions. Owing to his weakness in arithmetic, he 'ploughed' Responsions at Easter but, notwithstanding, was admitted to University in the summer term, one of a small, but subsequently distinguished company. After training in the University O.T.S., he was called up, trained, commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Somerset Light Infantry, arrived in the front line on his nineteenth birthday (November 1917) and served there until he received a 'Blighty' wound in April 1918.

Whilst in hospital in the winter of 1917-18 he read G.K. Chesterton, enjoying him for his humour, his dialectic and his 'goodness'. 'For the critics who think Chesterton frivolous or "paradoxical",' he writes, 'I have to work hard to feel even pity....' and goes on, 'In reading Chesterton, as in reading MacDonald, I did not know what I was letting myself in for. A young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading'.²²

In his own battalion, Johnson, a scholar of Queen's, imaginative, intellectual, and 'a man of conscience', provided the raw subaltern with a model of the "severer virtues".²³ During convalescence, a reading of Bergson, beside setting philosophical speculations in motion, expanded Lewis's aesthetic tastes, teaching him 'to relish energy, fertility, and urgency':²⁴

I became capable of appreciating....all the resonant, dogmatic, flaming, unanswerable people like Beethoven, Titian (in his mythological pictures), Goethe, Dunbar, Pinder, Christopher Wren, and the more exultant Psalms.²⁴

In January, 1919, 'demobbed, he returned to Oxford.

The closing chapters of Surprised by Joy (which of necessity, he says, suppress 'one huge and complex episode' in which his 'earlier hostility to the emotions was very fully and variously avenged')²⁴ concentrate on the stages in a spiritual revolution. Not all these stages are easy to follow. An account of one's own conversion cannot be as tidy and logical as a book of apologetics. There is a factor that eludes complete explanation. Some steps remain obscure to the man himself - more to the outsider. With Lewis there is the additional difficulty, as Lord Hailsham has noted, that his intellectual bridge (Hegelian, or Idealistic philosophy) has since vanished from the contemporary scene.

Lewis found many friends at Oxford - A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, Owen Barfield and A.C. Harwood among them - all of whom shared Johnson's standards and exerted the same influence, for they 'believed, and acted on the belief, that veracity, public spirit, chastity, and sobriety were obligatory'.

Intellectually, he was assuming a 'New Look', in which 'There was to be no more pessimism, no more self-pity, no flirtations with any idea of the supernatural, no romantic delusions'. Acquaintance with 'an old, dirty, gabbling, tragic, Irish parson', without faith, but with a fierce and consuming interest in 'survival', and days spent with a friend, a former dabbler in various cults, who was going mad, and raved of devils and Hell, seemed dreadful warnings. Freudian psychology was welcomed for providing a subjective explanation of 'Fantasy' as 'wishful thinking'. Less clearly, Bergson's argument for 'necessary existence' encouraged an attitude of 'acceptance', a sort of 'Stoical Monism'.

Gradually, over a period of years, unhappiness and anxiety clouded this peace. Harwood and Barfield shocked him by turning to Steiner and the Anthroposophists. This was 'arrant nonsense', it was downright 'medieval', and a long 'war' with Barfield ensued. Barfield's beliefs never attracted him, but the controversy destroyed two elements in his thought. First it demolished his 'chronological snobbery' - 'the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited'. Secondly it revealed the incompatibility of his 'realism' with assumptions about the objective validity of intellectual, moral and aesthetic judgments. Thoroughgoing materialism demands a 'Behaviouristic theory of logic, ethics and aesthetics', but Lewis could never force his mind into the shape required for this. Finally, he abandoned realism and turned to the current Idealism (whose dependence on Theism was at first concealed).

At that time the English Hegelians, he says, enabled one to have 'all the convenience of Theism, without believing in God'. The Absolute was impersonal, demanding neither sacrifice, fear, nor obedience. Yet its evocation of "desire without hope" had religious value: 'it is more important', writes Lewis, 'that Heaven should exist than that any of us should reach it'.²⁵

In 1922 he finished Greats and, failing to find a philosophical post, spent a fourth year by reading English. A new friend, Nevill Coghill, distinguished by oddly 'archaic' virtues, proved to be a Christian. This was disturbing. So, too, was the fact that, increasingly, the writers he most enjoyed - MacDonald, Chesterton, Johnson, Spenser, Milton - had also been Christians, whilst writers theoretically nearer to his own position lacked the 'roughness and density of life'. Then he was deeply moved by Langland and intrigued by Herbert, but he clung to the theory that 'Christian myth' was a popular guise for mediating Absolute Idealism to the unphilosophical.

After a temporary lectureship he was elected a fellow of Magdalen in 1925, where, from among many helpful colleagues, he made two particular friends, H.V.V. Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien - both Christians. 'My Adversary' he writes 'began to make his final moves'.

Through the 'world's end imagery' of Euripides' Hippolytus, Joy triumphantly reasserted itself, and a new intellectual understanding of its nature came via Alexander's theory of 'Enjoyment' and 'Contemplation'. Introspection would never discover Joy itself for our mental contents are 'not the wave but the wave's imprint on the sand':

All the value lay in that of which Joy was the desiring.
And that object, quite clearly, was no state of my own
mind or body at all.

It was 'the naked Other...unknown, undefined, desired'.

When Joy was linked to Idealism it began to transform it. The Absolute tended towards Berkeley's 'God'. Then, Chesterton's Everlasting Man presented a convincing Christian interpretation of history. Finally, a life-long atheist casually remarked to him that "the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was really surprisingly good", and that Frazer's remarks about the Dying God made it almost look "as if it had really happened once".

Lewis had lost the initiative - 'a philosophical theorem' had become 'a living presence' - and the Divine Adversary was inexorable:

That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.²⁶

This obedience to Theism lasted for nearly a year, Lewis thinks, before leading to belief in the Incarnation or a future life. Interest in introspection for its own sake yielded to practical self-examination. Church-going, at first symbolical and provisional, a correspondence with his former pupil Griffith, and a re-examination of Pagan myth were new factors. The uniqueness and comprehensiveness of Christ asserted themselves. The Incarnation became real. On a drive to Whipsnade Zoo Lewis, almost unemotionally, reached the conviction that 'Jesus Christ is the Son of God'.²⁷

In these closing chapters, Lewis concentrates almost exclusively on his spiritual progress. Yet he can supply less psychological detail

than in the earlier stages. He attributes this to a falling-off in the habit of introspection. He became less interested in himself. Perhaps, also, he felt that a more detailed treatment would merely duplicate, inadequately, the arguments of his religious books.

There are unusual features in Lewis's conversion. Perhaps few people move in the direction of Christian faith by so many conscious and clearly defined stages. Either there is a more dramatic reversal of attitude or a slow re-orientation hard to resolve into particular moves. Yet there was nothing coldly intellectual about Lewis's interior transformation. Deep and powerful intuitions impelled and controlled it at every stage. They give his experience an appeal both to mind and feeling which is rare. It has something of the emotional and intellectual passion of St. Augustine's progress from Ciceronian philosophy, through the teaching of the Manichees, to orthodox Christianity. There is an awareness of spiritual power at work which Lewis finds best expressed in MacDonald's references to God's 'inexorable love'.

It has been necessary to dwell at length on Lewis's conversion, since it intimately affects nearly every book or article he has since written. Few writers of real imagination have been so inescapably didactic. Few specifically Christian writers have displayed so much imagination. The fusion of imagination and belief, rare in this age, gives Lewis's fiction its distinctive value.

Since 1954 Lewis has been Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English at Cambridge, a chair specially created for him. In his inaugural lecture, De Descriptione Temporum, he noted how the title of

his appointment recognized his own view that there is no 'Great Divide' between the Medieval and Renaissance periods. He went on to examine the claims to pre-eminence of other periods of change, and came to the conclusion that if there is such a thing as the Great Divide it lies between ourselves and the early nineteenth century. In politics, and even more in art, there have been radical changes. In religion there has been a vast 'un-christening of Europe'. Finally, the 'birth of machines' has introduced a period of constant and rapid change which has transformed our basic assumptions. In this situation, he views himself, with wry humour, as the 'spokesman of Old Western culture', and presents himself, with an underlying seriousness, as a specimen of 'Old Western' man.

How this role shows itself in his fiction will be the subject of the next chapter.

C H A P T E R I I

THE YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT

Many stages of Lewis's spiritual progress are reflected in his subsequent works; most directly and comprehensively in The Pilgrim's Regress (1933), the first fruit of his conversion, where the defence of 'Reason, Romanticism and Christianity' recapitulates much of his early life. This allegory is the culmination of his early years and a compendium of subjects for later development. Most of his subsequent themes are to be found here, or in the experiences recorded in Surprised by Joy.

Among omissions from Lewis's own record is the fact that he had gained Firsts in Hon. Mods., Greats and English before lecturing for a year at University College and then becoming Fellow and Tutor of Magdalen College. (He was to remain there until 1954, so that academic life at Oxford is the background to most of his writing career.) In 1926 he published, under the pseudonym of Clive Hamilton, a heroic poem in nine cantos which reveals his intellectual and imaginative position at the point when the 'New Look' had not been completely shaken and prior to the 'final moves' recorded above. It reflects his rebellion against authority, his encounter with, and rejection of, Yeats's occultism, and (apparently) something of the experience, presumably of disappointment in love, alluded to in Surprised by Joy. Something more will be said of Dymer in chapter three.

Lewis's life over the past thirty years has centred on his books and his friends, of whom (for one who earlier asked for nothing better than to be 'left alone') he has had a wide circle.

His books fall into the three broad categories (all richly inter-related) of literary criticism, religious works and 'fantastic' fiction.

His first, and perhaps greatest, success in scholarship and literary criticism was The Allegory of Love, which won the Hawthornden Prize for 1936. In it, all his 'chronological snobbery'¹ has vanished, and he assumes his distinctive role as a critic, that of an interpreter to our own age of the values and achievements of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. 'A man's life of any worth is a perpetual allegory', and Lewis's own cogitations on 'Joy', on Idealism, on the significance of erotic, occult and aesthetic experience had peculiarly fitted him for this task, whilst The Pilgrim's Regress had given him inside experience of the allegorical method. The significantly entitled Rehabilitations (1938), a collection of critical essays, revealed more of his tastes and viewpoints. Along with appreciations of Shelley and William Morris are essays defending popular taste, attempting to probe the nature of metaphor, and discussing the relation of literature to Christianity. Christian doctrines opposed to the modern glorification of 'personality' also underlie The Personal Heresy (1939), a controversy with E.M.W. Tillyard.

A Preface to 'Paradise Lost' (1942) was a notable salvo in the modern battle over Milton. It acknowledged the influence of Charles Williams and, in defending the poem, made out an unfashionable case for

the 'high style' of secondary epic, and elaborated the spiritual and psychological conception of 'hierarchy'.

The fruit of Lewis's study of 'renaissance' literature (a term which he has sought to devalue) is found in English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama (1954) where his gift for making the unfashionable interesting meets its severest challenge. His essays, many of which have recently been collected under the title They Asked for a Paper, always make their point with clarity, grace and force, whether it be a rebuff to psycho-analytical intrusion into literary criticism, a defence of Addison's platitudes, or an analysis of 'Kipling's World'.

At Oxford, Lewis's lectures, like those of Charles Williams, attracted an audience outside the circle of those taking English literature as a subject. Thomas Corbishley, in an appreciation mainly concerned with the religious works,² pays this tribute to his power to make literature exciting:

Remarkable as are the achievements of the English School at Oxford there can be little doubt that Mr. Lewis has been one of its brightest ornaments both in his published works...and also in his immensely successful lectures. He shows a range of knowledge and a depth of penetration never surpassed, and not often equalled by his colleagues. During the years immediately after the end of the war no lecturer in any School attracted a larger and more varied audience. Nor incidentally, in the more intimate circles of Senior Common Rooms has Oxford known many wittier or more urbane talkers.³

A sparkling impression of Lewis's manner and method is given by Kenneth Tynan in his book of character sketches, Persons Grate.⁴ After defining him as 'a legislator, a direct descendant of the robust

Macaulay school of literary criticism'⁴ Tynan goes on:

His principal intellectual weapon is gusto....He has revived the Middle Ages for many generations of Oxford undergraduates by presenting mediaeval studies as a controversial topic for immediate debate, on which the closure has not yet been enforced. His faults, like those of Sarah Bernhardt, cry to Heaven, when he is not there. For one thing, too many of his arguments rely on crafty analogy; for another his passion for ritual art ("applied art", as he calls it) is such that one sometimes wonders by what right lyric poetry ever came into existence at all; and for a third, he is likely to spend so long explaining what Statius was not trying to do in The Thebaid that the poem's positive virtues become clouded in an impenetrable smoke-screen of negatives. But in a non-stop intellectual circus a few bad turns can be excused. When he is talking about something he loves (Milton, perhaps, or Amanda Ros), his erudition never fails to coruscate. He has more knowledge available at his finger-tips than anyone I have ever known....⁵

A constant companionship with Charles Williams, and the circle that gathered round him, marked the years from 1939 to 1947.⁶ Lewis's Allegory of Love and Williams's novel The Place of the Lion had first brought them together, and an immediate friendship had sprung up which depended on occasional meetings until Williams's removal to Oxford in 1939 allowed it to flourish. Lewis, his brother W.H. Lewis, and the other contributors to the memorial volume to Williams⁷ - Dorothy Sayers, J.R.R. Tolkien, A.O. Barfield and G. Mathew - also met Williams regularly as an informal literary circle:

He read us his manuscripts and we read him ours; we smoked, talked, argued, and drank together....His All Hallows' Eve and my own Perelandra (as well as Professor Tolkien's unfinished sequel to the Hobbit) had all been read aloud, each chapter as it was written. They owe a good deal to the hard-hitting criticism of the circle. The problems of narrative as such - seldom heard of in modern critical writings - were constantly before our minds.⁸

One would like to know more of these discussions, for Williams, Lewis and Tolkien were all at an interesting stage of their literary development. In All Hallows' Eve, Williams showed a maturity of thought and a mastery of technique, that gave this novel, the last of his supernatural thrillers, a peculiar interest. Chad Walsh⁹ rightly links its principal character, the magician Simon Leclerc, with the malevolent scientific organization in Lewis's That Hideous Strength. Other elements in Lewis's novel may be traced to Williams's Arthurian poems. Perelandra owes little to Williams or Tolkien for its substance, but its perfection of form and imagery perhaps shows the benefit of writing for a group of sympathetic, but critical fellow-practitioners. Tolkien's sequel to The Hobbit, a children's fantasy now soundly established as a classic of its kind, was to appear later as the adult trilogy The Lord of the Rings. Many fruitful comparisons can be made between this original blend of folklore, legend and epic, and Lewis's stories for children.

Lewis's tribute to Williams in his preface to the memorial volume was shortly afterwards supplemented by a study of his later poems,¹⁰ Taliessin through Logres and The Region of the Summer Stars, and there are appreciative references to him elsewhere.

Lewis also participated in another intellectual discussion group, the Oxford Socratic Club, which met every Monday in term. Here Christians and Humanists discussed their differences. Two papers read by Lewis, 'Is Theology Poetry?' (1944), and 'On Obstinacy in Belief' (1955), are reprinted in They Asked for a Paper.

There was nothing outwardly remarkable about Lewis's life at this

time. Chad Walsh, who met him frequently in the summer of 1948, emphasises the quiet, steady routine of the don and scholar, broken only by regular gatherings with friends and relatives. Another writer pictures him 'sitting up till the small hours in someone's college room, talking nonsense, poetry, theology, metaphysics over beer, tea and pipes'.¹¹ In verses written in 1939, Lewis pictures himself in a Berkshire pub talking of dragons with Tolkien.¹² This homely, informal aspect of his character does not come out strongly in his writings before the children's stories of the 1950's, but the numerous dedications in his books, and the fine eulogy on friendship in The Four Loves, reflect the width and warmth of his friendships.

On Sundays Lewis would sometimes preach in the Oxford churches, Congregational as well as Anglican. One of his most notable sermons, 'The Weight of Glory', was later published in Transposition and Other Addresses (1949). As a churchman he has never wandered from a middle-of-the-road Anglicanism, but confesses, half humorously, to finding Hymns Ancient and Modern a sore trial to his literary taste. In a mood of spiritual stock-taking he deprecates his 'congenital preference for safe investments and limited liabilities'¹³ and confesses himself one of those 'whose imagination far exceeds their obedience'.¹⁴ This penitential note is much less evident in Lewis's works, however, than in the poems and essays of his fellow Anglican, T.S. Eliot. He is more concerned to stress Christian joy. Kenneth Tynan refers to him quaintly as combining 'the manner of Friar Tuck with the mind of St. Augustine'.¹⁵

To students at Oxford, Lewis's views must have provided a strong

and piquant contrast with those of the philosophers who have dominated the University since the war. Logical Positivism and linguistic analysis were making a complete break with the kind of Idealist metaphysics which occupied the philosophers of Lewis's youth. Lewis has devoted more time to attacking Behaviourist psychology and the more destructive assertions of the Freudians than to tackling the polite scepticism of this new philosophy, but there is an interesting treatment of linguistic analysis in, of all places, his children's story The Silver Chair.¹⁶

By 1945 Lewis was well-known for his expositions of Christian doctrine, first in The Problem of Pain (1940), and then supremely in The Screwtape Letters (1942), which soon became a best-seller. Simpler in style, the series of talks first given on the radio and then published separately as Broadcast Talks (1942), Christian Behaviour (1943) and Beyond Personality (1944) (collected as Mere Christianity (1952)) show that he could mediate Christian doctrine and ethics to an even wider public. During the war, he also gave numerous lectures on theology at R.A.F. bases. As a populariser he shared some of the virtues and idiosyncrasies of C.E.M. Joad. Perhaps the war years were especially favourable to such popularisation of theology and philosophy.

The Great Divorce (1945) has not won the fame of Screwtape but contains scenes as memorable as any Lewis has written. I discuss both these works in my study of the fiction, for though they are avowedly didactic they are genuine products of the imagination and warrant serious attention on their aesthetic merits alone.

Miscellaneous addresses and sermons of this period were collected

in Transposition (1949). All contain some insight, doctrine or theme central to Lewis's life and thought and frequently supply some illuminating footnote to, or commentary on, the fiction. Miracles (1947) has its technical passages, but most of it is brightened by vivid analogy and characteristically witty or imaginative digressions.

Lewis's fiction, which is the subject of this study, falls into three groups, the first of which, less clearly defined than the other two, consists of four works in which the religious purpose is more immediately apparent. The Pilgrim's Regress, Screwtape and The Great Divorce have already been introduced; Till We Have Faces (1956) is more novelistic in form and restricted in scope, but is just as firmly centred on a religious theme.

Next come the planetary romances, still less widely known than Lewis's other works. Out of the Silent Planet, the story of a voyage to Mars, appeared in 1938. Its sequel, Perelandra, (later republished as Voyage to Venus), followed in 1943. That Hideous Strength completed the trilogy in 1945 with a long romance differing in several respects from its predecessors.

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (1950) announced Lewis's unexpected entry into the field of children's books, and "The Chronicles of Narnia", which continued to appear in the six succeeding years, now constitute a coherent world of fantasy which, like MacDonald's tales, appeal to young and old alike. The award of the Carnegie Medal to The Last Battle (1957), the final story of Narnia, recognised the addition of a new name to the classic roll of writers for children.

In December 1956 Lewis, who had always been thought of as a confirmed bachelor, married an American authoress to whose sons, David and Douglas Gresham, he had dedicated The Horse and his Boy (1954). Joy Davidman, born in 1915 of Jewish parents, had come to England with her two sons in 1953. In 1954 she had worked on the proofs of Lewis's English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, and when she brought out her own book, Smoke on the Mountains, An Interpretation of the Ten Commandments, in February 1955, it carried a foreword by Lewis. From it we learn that Joy Davidman 'first came before the public as the poetess of Letter to a Comrade, which won the Yale Series of Younger Poets award for 1938'.¹⁷ For information regarding this Communist period Lewis refers us to her essay 'The Longest Way Round' in Dr. Soper's collection These Found the Way (1951). He then continues:

The adult convert to Christianity is of course a characteristic figure of our age. Joy Davidman is one who comes to us from the second generation of unbelief; her parents, Jewish in blood, "rationalists" by conviction. This makes her approach extremely interesting to the reclaimed apostates of my own generation; the daring paradoxes of our youth were the stale platitudes of hers.¹⁷

Lewis's next novel, Till We Have Faces (September 1956), was dedicated to Joy Davidman. Its theme of 'dark idolatry and pale enlightenment' may have crystallised during his recent study of her Smoke on the Mountain.

Till We Have Faces remains Lewis's latest work of fiction; since 1956 his publications have been either religious or academic. Reflections on the Psalms (1958), his first religious work after a break of

ten years, contains less apologetics and more devotional exposition than Miracles. A mellower note is also evident in The Four Loves (1960), a discursive, personal treatment of Affection, Friendship, Eros and Charity which contains Lewis's maturest thoughts on human relationships. Studies in Words (1960), is a scholarly work on semantics in which certain important words, such as 'Nature', 'Conscience' and 'Wit', are studied 'for the light they throw on ideas and sentiments'.

An Experiment in Criticism (1961) is a kind of literary credo which clarifies and develops views scattered through earlier essays. It is a plea for a catholic and sympathetic approach to literature of diverse kinds. Lewis is concerned at the tendency of 'the Vigilant school of critics' to narrow the field of literature, to restrict the list of approved authors, and, in general, to regard criticism as 'a form of social and ethical hygiene'.¹⁸ He thinks that modern criticism is in danger of coming between the reader and the book. The chapters on Myth, Fantasy and Realisms provide a good introduction to Lewis's own fiction. The reader who can respond sympathetically to the view expressed here will not find Lewis's fiction strange or repellent.

C H A P T E R I I I

THE PILGRIM'S REGRESS

The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism¹ was published in 1933 in Lewis's thirty-fifth year. It has never proved as popular as his later books and the reasons are not hard to find. The form is difficult, the thought is often obscure, and the treatment of the theme is too inclusive and too detailed. Nevertheless, it holds a special interest as containing the first treatment of themes to be taken up and developed more effectively in later works.

The Regress is the literary first-fruits of Lewis's conversion to Christianity in 1929, and corresponds, biographically and controversially to G.K. Chesterton's Orthodoxy, written at the same age. Maisie Ward, Chesterton's biographer, describes this book as 'the story of how one man discovered Orthodoxy as the only answer to the riddle of the Universe'.² The same may be said of the Regress, though weight must be given to the qualification made by Lewis in his preface to the third edition:

In this preface the autobiographical element in John has had to be stressed because the source of the obscurities lay there. But you must not assume that everything in the book is autobiographical. I was attempting to generalise, not to tell people about my own life.³

So, for instance, John's childhood in Puritania (Bk.1) is not a reflection of anything puritanical in Lewis's own upbringing, as

Surprised by Joy makes quite clear.⁴ Yet, in general, the spiritual pilgrimage which the book records is a recapitulation of Lewis's own experience. It is the chart of his inner progress recorded, like Dante's, in the 'mid way of life'.

It was not his first essay in spiritual autobiography, however, for in Dymer,⁵ a narrative poem published in 1926 under the pseudonym of Clive Hamilton, he had recorded an earlier stage in his development. It is true, as Chad Walsh says, that Lewis has 'never found himself as a poet',⁶ but this poem, written in a rime royal akin to that of Massfield's Dauber, can still be enjoyed. The traditional versification is melodious and varied, with a distinctive use of pauses and short phrases. The texture is enlivened by colloquialisms, a flow of vivid similes and clear, colourful imagery. As a story it holds the attention throughout. As evidence for Lewis's intellectual development it is indispensable.

Dymer, its hero, rejects the tyrannic State which has regimented him and, asserting his youthful energies, strikes a violent blow for freedom. His affirmation of energy, beauty and joy leads him to happiness when, wandering in a dark temple, he finds a mysterious bride. His attempts to re-discover her are repelled, and his depression is intensified when he discovers what anarchy and suffering his rebellion against the City unleashed.

In his preface to the 1950 reprint Lewis comments:

My hero was to be a man escaping from illusion. He begins by egregiously supposing the universe to be his friend and seems for a time to find confirmation of his belief....
[Later] He sinks into despair and gives utterance to the

pessimism which had, on the whole, been my own view about six years earlier. Hunger and a shock of real danger bring him to his senses and he at last accepts reality. But just as he is setting out on the new and soberer life, the shabbiest of all bribes is offered him; the false promise that by magic or invited illusion there may be a short cut back to the one happiness he remembers. He relapses and swallows the bait, but he has grown too mature to be really deceived. He finds that the wish-fulfilment dream leads to the fear-fulfilment dream, recovers himself, defies the Magician who had tempted him, and faces his destiny.⁷

The element that links this poem to The Pilgrim's Regress is Dyer's bitter attack (armed with the Freudian weapon of 'wishful thinking') on all attempts to derive philosophical truths from 'romantic longing'. This thesis, that 'longing' is subjective, is recanted in The Pilgrim's Regress. Lewis finally accepts his youthful intuitions as real evidence of the spiritual world. In the preface already quoted he salutes, across the gulf of his rebellious twenties, the boy whose 'immortal longings' had at last led him to belief.

From at least the age of six, romantic longing - Sehnsucht - had played an unusually central part in my experience. Such longing is in itself the very reverse of wishful thinking: it is more like thoughtful wishing.⁸

Dyer's quest for the source of his 'romantic longing' led him into the blind alleys of the erotic and the occult, escaping from which he refused to be 'taken in' again and adopted a stoical pessimism. The religious answer was ruled out. The Pilgrim's Regress shows how Reason came to the aid of 'Romanticism' to negate this negation. It derives its force from this struggle with a former self. 'But then the key to my books,' writes Lewis, 'is Donne's maxim, "The heresies that men leave are hated most." The things that I assert most vigorously are those

that I resisted long and accepted late.'⁹

In coming to grips with The Pilgrim's Regress, the literary critic faces the peculiar 'difficulty' that Lewis, in his preface to the third edition, has done a large part of his work for him - that of promoting understanding. Now if the preface were a piece of self-advertisement, our natural repugnance to a work which its author needs to 'explain' might lead us to discount it, but its frankly apologetic tone is disarming. 'On re-reading this book ten years after I wrote it,' Lewis begins, 'I find its chief faults to be those two which I myself least easily forgive in the books of other men: needless obscurity, and an uncharitable temper.'¹⁰ The preface seeks to mitigate the first of these faults.

If the book were poetical, or dreamily symbolic - like Phantastes for instance - Lewis's interpretation might be rejected as a rationalisation, but when the work has the inevitable self-awareness of allegory, and the author has an intellect closely harnessed to his imagination, it would be perverse to ignore the 'crib' provided. To discount the preface, and the page headings which expound the text, and seek some quite different interpretation would be like discounting Bunyan's marginal scripture references in Pilgrim's Progress.

Of course, Lewis's explanatory apparatus is not exhaustive, and he himself expresses the hope that parts of his book may transcend it:

....wherever the symbols are best, the key is least adequate. For when allegory is at its best, it approaches myth, which must be grasped with the imagination, not with the intellect.

Conversely, the reader may rightly complain of any episode that fails to give vital embodiment to the intention.

This intention, as stated by Lewis, is, briefly, as follows.

The core of the book is an 'intense longing' or Desire - 'a particular recurrent experience which dominated my childhood and adolescence and which I hastily called 'Romantic' because inanimate nature and marvellous literature were among the things that evoked it'. This 'intense longing' is, in fact, the same 'Joy' that played such an important part in Lewis's development.

In his allegory Lewis is concerned with 'a peculiar mystery about the object of this Desire' and with the mistaken identifications - nostalgic, erotic, aesthetic, occult, intellectual - into which the mind falls. The 'sole merit' he claims for his book 'is that it is written by one who has proved them all to be wrong'. After examining them one by one he continues:

It appeared to me therefore that if a man diligently followed this desire, pursuing the false objects until their falsity appeared and then resolutely abandoning them, he must come out at last into the clear knowledge that the human soul was made to enjoy some object that is never fully given - nay, cannot even be imagined as given - in our present mode of subjective and spatio-temporal experience.

The lure of these 'false Florinels', and 'the dark ways' through which 'the pursuit of them leads us', form the substance of the story:

This lived dialectic, and the merely argued dialectic of my philosophical progress, seemed to have converged on one goal; accordingly I tried to put them both into my allegory which thus became a defence of Romanticism (in my peculiar sense) as well as of Reason and Christianity.

Lewis therefore found himself engaged in a battle on two fronts:

a battle against the counter-Romantics and against the sub-Romantics who, whilst opposed to each other, seemed united in their 'common enmity to "immortal longings"'.¹¹ From this arose his twentieth century version of the 'Holy War' and the 'Pilgrim's Progress'.

It is interesting to pause here and note the book's parallels to (or inversions of) The Pilgrim's Progress with which its title firmly links it.

Pilgrim, then, longs to lose his burden of sin; John to find the source of 'sweet desire'. The one flies from the City of Destruction to seek Mount Zion; the other leaves Puritania to find his island. Pilgrim has Christian for company, John has Vertue; Mr. Worldly Wiseman sidetracks Pilgrim, John is detained by Mr. Sensible. Slough, hill and dungeon impede Pilgrim's progress; dungeon, mountain and canyon hold up John's. In both books the narrative style is plain, both are in the form of a 'dream', both have a picaresque fulness of character and incident, and record a spiritual history in an allegorical form.

Yet there are important differences. From the beginning Pilgrim sets out on the 'narrow way' of the Christian life which will lead him to Heaven. John follows (or strays from) the middle road which will bring him to the Christian life. Pilgrim's first mentor is Evangelist; John's is Reason who (along with Vertue) can only take him as far as the canyon which separates him from God. Only in Book Nine does he surrender to the Divine Power which alone can take him across.

Finally, the proportion of primary experience to philosophising about experience differs in the two books. The Pilgrim's Progress is

nearer to the primary emotions of Everyman. John's progress from 'popular realism' via Idealism, Pantheism and Theism to Christianity is, as Lewis later recognizes, a 'road very rarely trodden'.¹² It follows the unusual route taken by Lewis himself.

The thought is inseparably linked with the allegorical form, in the understanding of which much help may be derived from The Allegory of Love. Whether this academic study was a result, or a cause, of Lewis's choice of allegory as the vehicle for his spiritual manifesto is an interesting, but not important, question.

In Lewis's own terms, his artistic problem was to 'invent visibilia'¹³ to express the 'immaterial facts' of his experiences of 'longing' and his search for its true object. For this he preferred the traditional representation of the journey to that of the pitched battle - The Pilgrim's Progress being superior artistically to The Holy War. He had noted this superiority of the journey form in The Allegory of Love:

The journey has its ups and downs, its pleasant resting-places enjoyed for a night and then abandoned, its unexpected meetings, its rumours of dangers ahead, and, above all, the sense of its goal, at first distant and dimly heard of, but growing nearer at every turn of the road. Now this represents far more truly than any combat in a champ clos the perennial strangeness, the adventurousness, and the sinuous forward movement of the inner life.¹⁴

Next, this journeying necessitates 'some sort of visionary geography'. As Lewis says of the allegorist:

...before he has finished he will find himself making an imaginary country whose allegorical pretext justifies it in being rather more imaginary than the countries in

romance, being grounded not in Britain or France....but in the much wider and more indefinite realities of inner experience.¹⁵

Lewis's own allegory has an unusually elaborate mental landscape. His passion for cartography (seen in 'Animal Land' and Narnia) leads him to produce a map of John's travels extending far on either side of his actual route. Indeed, in the picture of an opposed North and South, something of the spatial emphasis of the 'pitched battle' is combined (not always happily) with the linear progression of the journey.

As pointed out earlier, Lewis's allegory is more dependent on contemporary events and opinions than Pilgrim's Progress, and in that sense requires more elucidation. In his preface of 1943 he relates it, more clearly than in the book, to the intellectual movements of the 'twenties':

The different intellectual movements of that time were hostile to one another; but the one thing that seemed to unite them all was their common enmity to 'immortal longings'. The direct attack carried out on them from below by those who followed Freud or D.H. Lawrence, I think I could have borne with some temper; what put me out of patience was the scorn which claimed to be from above, and which was voiced by the American 'Humanists', the Neo-Scholastics, and some who wrote for The Criterion. These people seemed to me to be condemning what they did not understand.¹⁶

The description of Romanticism as 'spilled religion' annoyed him. It had, he believed, led him to the Faith.

From this double quarrel with the counter-Romantics on the one hand and the sub-Romantics on the other, came the main features of Lewis's allegorical landscape - 'the barren, aching rocks of its 'North', the foetid swamps of its 'South', and between them the Road on which alone

mankind can safely walk'.¹⁷

Lewis's preface works out this antithesis in the realms of nature, art, psychology and philosophy. Its application to theology will serve as an illustration.

In Theology also there is a North and South. The one cries 'Drive out the bondmaid's son', and the other 'Quench not the smoking flax'. The one exaggerates the distinctness between Grace and Nature into a sheer opposition and by vilifying the higher levels of Nature (the real praeparatio evangelica inherent in certain immediately sub-Christian experiences) makes the way hard for those who are at the point of coming in. The other blurs the distinction altogether, flatters mere kindness into thinking it is charity and vague optimism or pantheism into thinking that they are faith, and makes the way out fatally easy and imperceptible for the budding apostate.¹⁸

This North-South antithesis has an imaginative appeal and considerable philosophical utility, but is apt to introduce confusions of its own. The lumping together of D.H. Lawrence and the Surrealists, for example, is indiscriminate. Anne Ridler¹⁹ takes Lewis to task for a similar sweeping blow at Lawrence in his commentary on Charles Williams's Arthurian Torso.²⁰

A more general weakness is that the placing of many thinkers on the North-South scale seems rather arbitrary. Only when certain elements in their outlook are stressed at the expense of others, or they are viewed from a particular angle, does it make sense. It is not really clear, for example, why the Idealist philosophers are placed far South. The extremes of totalitarian dictatorship are not entirely 'northern', as the preface admits. Cleopatra is north of the road, so that the sudden intrusion of 'primitivism' (Book 3, Chapter 2) has to be covered by the bald device of heading the chapter 'A South Wind'.

The doctrine of the 'golden mean' which, to some extent, the scheme implies is subject to another unfortunate, but natural misinterpretation. It can be taken as recommending a cautious and selfish moderation, a hedonistic pursuit of what best ensures happiness. This misunderstanding is neatly, but perhaps belatedly, corrected in the narrative itself by Vertue's retort to Mr. Sensible:

'I also was brought up on Aristotle. But I think my text must have differed from yours. In mine, the doctrine of the Mean does not bear the sense you have given it at all. He specially says that there is no excess of goodness. You cannot go too far in the right direction. The line that we should follow may start from a middle point in the base of a triangle; but the further off the apex is, the better.'²¹

John's duty is not to station himself between North and South, but to push forward along the middle road.

Even so, the explanation is not entirely satisfying. The scheme still seems closer to the pagan conception of virtue as a careful balance, a calm equilibrium, than to the Christian conception of a strenuous co-existence and reconciliation of extremes. Chesterton, in a chapter of Orthodoxy entitled 'The Paradoxes of Christianity', has made clear the distinction between Pagan and Christian ethics through a series of brilliant illustrations. After accepting, provisionally, Aristotle's doctrine of balance, he remarks

But granted that we have all to keep a balance, the real interest comes in with the question of how that balance can be kept. That was the problem which Paganism tried to solve; that was the problem which I think Christianity solved and solved in a very strange way.

Paganism declared that virtue was in a balance; Christianity declared it was in a conflict; the collision of two passions apparently opposite. Of course they were

not really inconsistent; but they were such that it was hard to hold simultaneously.

He goes on to show how conflicting passions are reconciled in the Christian view of courage, humility, charity and liberty. His colourful illustrations have an excitement and profundity lacking in John's earlier adventures.

Of course, Lewis, who had read Chesterton with enjoyment and approval, seeks to distinguish pagan virtue from Christianity. His travellers can go far along the road by their own effort, but nothing they can do for themselves will carry them across the Canyon. Technically, their early journey is merely an approach to the Christian life, not the life itself. That comes with their regress through the land after their conversion. Unfortunately, this is not always clear to the reader's imagination.

Yet the scheme has its value, and often assists Lewis to state his views on human nature with clarity and force. It is most salutary, perhaps, in its balanced treatment of the role of 'feeling' in human life:

We were made to be neither cerebral men nor visceral men, but Men. Not beasts nor angels but Men - things at once rational and animal.²²

Man's 'middle state', a commonplace of Medieval and Renaissance theologians and moralists, is given a new relevance.

This is an example of how allegory can vitalise 'truths which platitude conceals', and occasionally the scheme supports Lewis's other assertion that there are 'intangibles which only allegory can fix and

reticences which only allegory can overcome'. The scene where Vertue falls silent and listless, sick with contradictions and uncertainties, has a pathetic significance eluding plain psychological statement. Sometimes the allegory conveys moments of fear, anger and shame, moods of apprehension and ecstasy, which defeat rational exposition and are distorted by paraphrase.

The story of John's pilgrimage is not unusually long, but with its ten Books and its seventy-nine chapters, each containing some new incident, character or idea, it does not invite an unbroken summary. The following account combines a broad survey with some specimens of its technique.

The three basic elements in John's experience are given in the first two chapters. Born in Puritania, he is tormented by confusing rules imposed on him by his hypocritical elders. Escape comes one day when, wandering far from home, he hears a strange, compelling sound

very sweet and very short, as if it were one plucking of a string or one note of a bell, and after it a full, clear voice - and it sounded so high and strange that he thought it was very far away, further than a star. The voice said, Come.

Lewis's childhood glimpses of Joy obviously lie behind this episode. Just as he stood beside a currant bush in summer, remembering with intense desire the longing that had overpowered him years before at the sight of his brother's toy garden, so John stands in a wood full of primroses striving to recapture an earlier moment of similar longing.

While he strained to grasp it, there came to him from beyond the wood a sweetness and a pang so piercing that instantly he forgot his father's house, and his mother,

and the fear of the Landlord, and the burden of the rules.

The 'Landlord' (God), the 'rules' (the Law), and also the 'black hole' (Hell) are the unattractive guise which religion had assumed for John. But this, and the humbug and formalism of his elders, had not saved him from feeling guilty for having broken the moral law.

The truth, or falsity, of religious teaching, and the source of 'Sweet Desire', occupy John's thoughts, and provide the substance of the story.

The voice of 'Sweet Desire', from beyond this world, is, unfortunately, at once confused with John's own fantasies:

It seemed to him that....he had seen a calm sea, and in that sea an island, where the smooth turf sloped down unbroken to the bays, and out of the thickets peeped the pale, small-breasted Oreads, wise like gods, unconscious of themselves like beasts, and tall enchanters, bearded to their feet, sat in green chairs among the forests.²³

Subsequently John is seduced by the 'brown girl' (lust), but she proves no answer to his 'longing'. He sets out westward to look for his Island and has the misadventures expected of the innocent at large in the world.

In Book Two he meets Mr. Enlightenment (old-fashioned Rationalism) who 'explains away' his religious beliefs, Vertue, who has self-imposed rules of his own, Media Halfways (Romantic Love), and her father, Mr. Halfways (aesthetic experience). Gus Halfways (the 'modern' literary movement) whisks him away from experiences which, whatever value they may have, are no substitute for his island.

Concealed literary quotation is neatly used as a shorthand.

With Stevenson, Vertue thinks that 'to travel hopefully is better than

to arrive'; Media has her fashionable quotation from Donne; Mr. Halfways strives to believe with Keats that 'What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth, whether it existed before or not'.

These sketches are not unsympathetic except for the satirical exposure of the gaps in Mr. Enlightenment's arguments.

Book Three brings the 'twenties under satirical review, hitting out first at their intellectual and poetic 'cleverness' and then at their flirtation with the primitive. African drums are no answer to John's Desire, but his gauche frankness is ill received:

'...I thought that you objected to Mr. Halfways' singing because it led to brown girls in the end.'

'So we do.'

'Well, why is it better to lead to black girls in the beginning?'²⁴

John is told that he has not yet acquired the ability 'to distinguish between art and pornography' - he is 'full of inhibitions and everything he says is only a rationalisation of them'.²⁴

With some further incidents this leads naturally to John's encounter with Sigismund Enlightenment (Freudianism). He is soon captive, in a new 'black hole', to this manifestation of the Zeitgeist, with its doctrine of 'wish fulfilment', its 'complexes', and its reduction of higher experiences to a lowest common denominator. There are neat, exhilarating touches of satire. The victim of Freudian subjectivism is parodied in Master Parrot, who defines argument as 'the attempted rationalisation of the arguer's desires'. His instructor is delighted by his pupil's progress and proceeds to catechize him:

'Now; what is the proper answer to an argument proving the existence of the Landlord?'

'The proper answer is, "You say that because you are a Steward."'

'Good boy. But hold your head up. That's right. And what is the answer to an argument proving that Mr. Phally's songs are just as brown as Mr. Halfways?'

'There are two only generally necessary to damnation', said Master Parrot. 'The first is, "You say that because you are a Puritanian," and the second is, "You say that because you are a sensualist."'

'Good. Now just one more. What is the answer to an argument turning on the belief that two and two make four?'

'The answer is, "You say that because you are a mathematician."' ²⁵

From all this John is eventually rescued by Reason, Milton's 'sun-bright virgin clad in complete steel', but the sword with which she strikes his shackles from him is two-edged. Her austere logic leads up to the point that for the Giant (the Spirit of the Age) and his subjects 'disbelief in the Landlord is a wish-fulfilment dream'.²⁶ At this John turns sulky and, at the high road, parts from her.

The first four books bring John and his companion Vertue to the Canyon which separates this world from the divine country. Their attempts to find a way across the Canyon form the basis of books five to seven.

The interest of the figures and landscape, and the success of the significatio, vary. Mother Kirk, whose offer of help is declined, is an unsatisfactory figure suggesting, as Lewis admits, something too ecclesiastical or Roman for the 'mere Christianity' intended. Her unattrac-

tiveness perhaps reflects the mood of John and Vertue, but she lacks solidity and suggestiveness whilst her parable of the Fall is a mere sketch for Perelandra. Instances of the lack of charity confessed in the preface are found in the placing of Mr. Broed (the 'modernist' Churchman) and Mr. Neo-Angular (Barthian, or neo-scholastic theology) on this side of the canyon. Nor is the latter figure, with his companions Humanist and Neo-Classical, vividly realised. Savage, the heroic nihilist whom Vertue visits in the far North, makes more impact with his Nietzschean rhetoric and grim Nordic glee.

This section ends with John's sojourn in the house of Wisdom (Metaphysics and Idealist Philosophy) placed, with dubious propriety, in the far South. Straight philosophical exposition here runs to excessive length as Lewis traces his own progress. Its artistic appeal is limited but it has a curious documentary interest as a relic of the metaphysics of Green, Bradley and Bosanquet.²⁷

Satire is directed at this, and other philosophical positions, because of their concealed and disowned dependence upon the common cultural heritage and the toil of the under-privileged.

Mr. Sensible, the Epicurean, is undoubtedly the ripest and richest of the characters encountered. His portrait, drawn in lines of perennial truth and flecked with aesthetic, sceptical, and classical hues, glowingly evokes the precarious serenity of the Eighteenth Century. It is a portrait worthy of Peacock. He regards John's Island not as a clue to reality but as an aesthetic experience:

Who has not felt immortal longings at the lengthening
of the shadow or the turning of the leaf? Who has not

stretched out his hands for the ulterior shore? Et ego in Arcadia! We have all been fools once - aye, and are glad to have been fools too. But our imaginations, like our appetites, need discipline: not, heaven help us, in the interest of any transcendental ethic, but in the interests of our own solid good.

He decorates this theme of enjoying our intuitions without taking them too seriously, but Vertue is unimpressed and asks him if he knows of any way across the Canyon:

'I do not', said their host, 'for I have never made inquiries. The proper study of mankind is man, and I have always left useless speculations alone. Suppose that there were a way across, to what purpose should I use it? Why should I scramble down this side and up the other to find after my labours the same soil still beneath me and the same heaven above? It would be laughable to suppose that the country beyond the gorge can be any different from the country on this side of it. Eadem sunt omnia semper. Nature had already done all she can for our comfort and amusement, and the man who does not find content at home will seek it vainly abroad. Confound that fellow! Drudge!! Will you bring us our supper or do you prefer to have every bone in your body broken?'²⁸

The balance and antithesis, the smooth phrasing, careful colloquialisms and choice quotation, delightfully embody the airy detachment and exquisite selfishness of a less noble Epicurus. John's restless longing and Vertue's severe conscience and relentless logic provide the perfect foil. The long-suffering Drudge is an ironic reminder of the parasitic nature of this 'religion of all sensible men'. Neither Romanticism, Reason nor Justice are satisfied by mere 'bon sens'.

Mr. Brood, Sensible's southern neighbour, is a complementary figure drawn on a smaller scale, a comfortable ecclesiastic who is a forerunner of the clergymen in The Great Divorce. The setting in which

he is placed is finely matched with his character and significacio.

The details are delightfully in keeping:

Maidservants in snowy aprons opened the long windows of the library and came over the grass carrying tables and trays, the silver teapot and the stand of cakes. There was honey for tea.²⁹

Books seven, eight and nine, concerned with the crossing of the Canyon, retrace the course of Lewis's spiritual progress as told later in Surprised by Joy. For a time 'The doctrine of the Absolute...Covers more of the facts than any doctrine John has yet encountered.'³⁰ In theory, it is an austere, noble creed, denying Hope whilst valuing Desire. But it has two fatal weaknesses: it secretly derives its inspiration from Revealed Religion (which it affects to patronise), and one cannot live by it, or, if one makes the attempt, it threatens to change back into the Landlord and the Rules.

Wisdom's House lies at the bottom of the Canyon; but a narrow chasm separates it from the farther side. Vertue, broken by his failures, has derived from Wisdom's tuition the desperate resolve to practise a savage asceticism which will weaken, if it cannot sever, the cords which bind immortal Spirit to corrupt mortality. Despairingly, John follows him North, spurned as a weakling, until, where the chasm widens and the valley bottom narrows, he clings to a fearful ledge on the Canyon's eastern wall. He is betrayed into prayer and into accepting Christ's aid, but then shrinks from the logic of his move 'like some small animal caught up in a giant's hand and held beneath a magnifying glass'.³¹

He shelters in the cave of the Hermit (History) who interprets his experiences (Bk.8, Chaps.7-10), explaining the relationship of his 'island' (one of the 'good pictures' the Landlord sends to the pagans) to the Rules of the Shepherd People (the Revelation to Israel) and to the Roads (the Moral Law).

In this eighth book the satirical element falls away, and a heightened mood first finds expression in outbursts of song. The first of these, 'He whom I bow to only knows to whom I bow',³² seems to mark the invasion of the temporal by the Eternal. Man's search for God is now felt as God's search for Man.

Book Nine records the final, painful stages of John's progress. There is no life without death. Like MacDonald's Lilith, John, and Vertue his alter ego, must 'let go' of self, and, under Mother Kirk's directions, plunge into the pool of death and re-birth. The wraiths of John's old acquaintances make a last effort to dissuade him, but fail. Through the dark tunnel of re-making he reaches the farther side, and led by celestial guides eventually sees, across the straits, his island. John has come almost full circle, and his island is revealed as the reverse side of the Landlord's Eastern Mountains.

This is the turning point of the story, and the surprise it springs is both ingenious and, in terms of Lewis's allegorical geography, satisfying. The basic idea probably came from the preface to The Ever-lasting Man (1925), where Chesterton writes

There are two ways of getting home, and one of them is to stay there. The other is to walk right round the whole world till we come back to the same place....³³

John had never expected to find a connection between his romantic longings and the religious doctrines of his elders, yet the mountains he sees across the straits are inescapably his island, though in the course of his wanderings it has undergone a subtle change in his imagination.

This is Lewis's first use of a device which he employs again in the planetary romances and The Great Divorce, and which may be called 'the reversal of preconceptions'. It is not so effective here as in the later books. There Lewis learns to prepare the way, and to delve deeper into the human mind.

There is no immediate crossing of these straits. This is life's beginning, and upon John and Vertue is laid the task of making the 'pilgrim's regress' eastward, under an angelic Guide, until the brook of Death is crossed. Like Plato's enlightened philosophers, they have to return to the cave of shadows.

Returning, they see the land 'as it really is':

....only the long straight road, very narrow, and on the left crags rising within a few paces of the road into ice and mist and, beyond that, black cloud: on the right, swamps and jungle sinking almost at once into black cloud.³⁴

Its inhabitants, too, are changed. Sensible, the 'man of shreds and patches', is invisible; the valley of Wisdom is seen as Limbo; 'Tough-Mindedness revealed as a form of Pride'³⁵ - and so on. The vision has the harshness of the recent convert, with the taste of error still sour in his mouth, who spurns the 'filthy rags' of self-righteousness. Charity and experience will warm and fructify the vision in the later

books without blurring its outlines. Meanwhile its severe countenance reflects the anguish rather than the ardours of the way, though a fire smoulders in the frequent verses.

The renewal of temptation - stronger as the resistance to it grows - is one strand in the narrative. Luxuria (Lechery), who solicits John, is franker, fiercer and deadlier than the brown girl:

Offering with gnawing haste
Her cup, whereof who taste,
(She promises no better) thirst far more.³⁶

Her whirlpool attraction for Desire corresponds to Superbia's rocky magnetism of Vertue.

The reconciliation of Desire and Vertue is effected in the allegory of John's fight with the cold, northern Dragon and Vertue's with the fiery southern Dragon. Each wins a quality from his adversary that makes him a more complete man.

As the 'dram' ends, the final insights echo in the songs of John, Vertue and the Angel, as they cross the brook.

Effective in parts, this final section of the allegory, the 'Regress' itself, is disappointing as a whole. Structurally, it comes near to being an anti-climax; spiritually, its deficiencies are even more apparent. The apologetics of the Angelic guide are sketchy and unsatisfying. The Times Literary Supplement³⁷ complained

...it would appear from the explanations offered by a sort of angelic Guide...that the old fables which terrified John's childhood of the "Landlord" and the "Rules" and the "Black Hole"....are not to be essentially transformed but only vindicated, with a subtlety, indeed that would have delighted Newman, but with a rigour that excludes any true religious development.

This reviewer found the book's earlier satire at the expense of psycho-analysis and Hegelianism more enjoyable.

The failure to transform the earlier caricature of Christianity and find satisfying symbols and episodes for a truer, deeper portrayal of its nature, is undoubtedly the book's most important weakness. (In comparison, the weaknesses of the allegorical scheme discussed earlier, are of minor importance.) The scattered symbols of Christianity - the Landlord, Mother Kirk, the Man (Christ), the pool of re-birth, the Eastern Mountains, the Angelic Guide - appear and disappear abruptly and carry few, or no overtones. They do not provide a coherent image of the spiritual realm, a task which Lewis was to attempt later with much greater success. The Great Divorce and Perelandra made a tremendous advance in this respect.

Few, then, are likely to agree with T. Corbishley's judgment³⁸ that this is the 'most effective' of Lewis's religious writings prior to Surprised by Joy. Even he admits 'that it was almost too crowded and too elaborate to satisfy those whose need was for a much simpler statement of Christian truth'. Perhaps his enthusiasm can be explained by the interest of the close-packed subject matter to the student of religion or philosophy. For such a reader the aesthetic deficiencies are only a partial obstacle to enjoyment.

Later, Lewis was to learn how to dramatize his material more effectively than in the Regress. Here, almost half his message is conveyed in the talks or lectures given by Mother Kirk, Wisdom, History and the Angelic Guide. They have an interest as Lewis's first excursions

into popular theology, but they break up the narrative, and are too long and undramatic to sustain the emotional tension.

Chad Walsh, who considers that the book 'lacks the simplicity and eloquent naivete of Bunyan', and is 'disappointingly empty' of 'wit and grace', puts his finger on its main interest for the student of Lewis:

Mediocre as a work of literature, the Regress is invaluable for anyone tracing the development of Lewis's ideas. Practically all his later books exist within it in embryonic form.³⁹

This is very true, though to demonstrate it fully would be tedious. Here are a few examples from the non-fiction. The function of the Moral Law (the 'roads' of Lewis's allegorical landscape) is expounded in Broadcast Talks and The Abolition of Man. The Angel's comments on divine goodness and human suffering are developed in The Problem of Pain. The theme of 'sweet Desire' recurs in the sermon 'The Weight of Glory',⁴⁰ and throughout Surprised by Joy. Popular misapplications of psycho-analysis are taken up in 'Psycho-analysis and literary criticism'.⁴¹

These subjects, and others from the Regress, are the raw material of the later fiction. The story of the Fall, outlined by Mother Kirk, is imaginatively recast in Perelandra; the satirical attacks on contemporary trends are extended and refined in Screwtape; the contrast between earthly illusions and heavenly realities is more successfully imaged in The Great Divorce.

A fuller, more systematic, examination of Lewis's main themes is provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THEMES

One great fact distinguishes Lewis's fiction from the typical nineteenth or twentieth century novel - it deals with Man rather than men. The Pilgrim's Regress is an extreme example, but in all his fiction a concentration on the essential elements of the psyche, rather than on the forms and trends of society, or the fascination of diverse 'characters', brings him closer to Spenser, Milton and Bunyan than to Fielding, Dickens and Forster. Consequently, the critical approach suitable to what he calls 'the novel of sentiment and manners' and 'analysed characters.... in a naturalistic setting'¹ is unsuited to his work. What Lewis says about allegory applies, in the main, to his own fiction:

The gaze turned inward with a moral purpose does not discover character. No man is a 'character' to himself, and least of all when he thinks of good and evil. Character is what he has to produce; within he finds only the raw material, the passions and emotions which contend for mastery. That unitary 'soul' or 'personality' which interests the novelist is for him merely the arena in which the combatants meet: it is to the combatants - those 'accidents occurring in a substance' - that he must attend.²

Lewis has not restricted himself to allegory in depicting the inner world, but everywhere his pre-occupation with Man necessitates a form of narrative very different from that of the psycho-sociological novel stemming from Fielding and Richardson.

Lewis is extremely critical of our modern emphasis on 'personality' and 'originality'. The Personal Heresy sets out his objections at

length, but briefer comments in Surprised by Joy are equally revealing. 'How far the story matters to anyone but myself,' he writes, 'depends on the degree to which others have experienced what I call "joy"', and warns us that it is 'suffocatingly subjective; the kind of thing I have never written before and shall probably never write again'.³ A personal story is justifiable, by Lewis's criteria, only in so far as it is symbolical, or sacramental; the biographical elements are offered as a vehicle for eternal verities. In the intenser scenes of his own fiction the characters are transfigured rather than incandescent; 'clothed with transcendent brightness' rather than lit by an inner fire. His fiction is thus inherently and avowedly 'other-worldly'.

This lays it open to the moral charge of being 'escapist' and the aesthetic charge of being 'doctrinaire'. Against the reader unwilling to entertain the existence, or relevance, of a spiritual world there can be no defence. A response to the more moderate demand for 'realism' and 'objectivity' must consist of a critique of these terms, along with 'escapism' (sometimes linked with 'fantasy') and 'doctrinaire'. Modern objections to 'escapism' have been examined by J.R.R. Tolkien in his essay 'Fairy Stories',⁴ where he upholds the value of fantasy in an argument that Lewis has commended. Lewis's own careful treatment of the problem forms a chapter of An Experiment in Criticism entitled 'The Meanings of Fantasy'. His arguments will be discussed in Chapter XIX. For the moment, his view may be represented by a comment from an earlier essay on the poetry of William Morris that 'All we need demand is that

the invented world should have some intellectual or emotional relevance to the world we live in'.⁵ Doctrinaire writing can only be defended by demonstrating the competability of a 'palpable design' with aesthetic integrity. This can only come through the detailed examination of individual works.

Though its other-worldliness and didacticism set it apart from the typical realistic novel, Lewis's work can be linked with two subsidiary trends in modern fiction that have a long history. These are fantasy and the moral fable. Thus, on the one hand, Lewis's fiction stands with such works as She, Voyage to Arcturus, The Worm Ouroboros, Last and First Man and The Lord of the Rings⁶ (all of which have links with the planetary romances); or The Princess and the Goblin, The Amulet, The Wind in the Willows and The Hobbit⁷ (the literary ancestors of 'The Chronicles of Narnia'). On the other hand its predominantly didactic note links it with the line of the moral fable, both with such classics as The Pilgrim's Progress, Candide and Brewton, and such modern fables as Brave New World and 1984. It can, of course, be seen from this list that the co-existence of fable and fantasy in Lewis's fiction is no new thing.

It is a mark of the moral fable that theme is more susceptible to statement in intellectual terms than in the realistic novel. Thus Candide is an attack on the optimism of Leibniz, Pilgrim's Progress sets out the evangelical doctrine of salvation, and 1984 traces totalitarianism to a logical conclusion. Whilst Lewis is nearer in spirit to Bunyan than to Orwell, he does not ignore the problems which have troubled the predominantly secular moralists of our own century. In Screwtape, and above

all in That Hideous Strength, he has his say about contemporary issues, but a broad survey reveals that, like Bunyan, he is concerned primarily with the perennial questions of personal salvation. What follows is an attempt to map out his main themes, from The Pilgrim's Regress to The Last Battle. Such a procedure has, admittedly, its dangers, but they are less with writers who, like Lewis, have a coherent and steady outlook.

'Joy' is Lewis's first and favourite theme, both in his technical sense of the longing which drives Man to God (a kind of divine goad), and in the Scriptural sense of an inner communion with Christ, the joy of which St. Paul speaks in his Letter to the Philippians.

In its first sense, the sense it bears in Surprised by Joy, it is the basis of The Pilgrim's Regress; Jane Studdock feels its attraction in That Hideous Strength, following her conversation with Ransom; the children in Narnia experience its fascination whenever the name of Aslan is mentioned. Its nature is discussed in Chapter X of The Problem of Pain and in Lewis's sermon 'The Weight of Glory'.⁸ It is written across all his work, and no more need be said of it here.

In its second, more usual, sense it is an equally vital part of his vision. 'I think we all sin,' he writes in The Problem of Pain, 'by needlessly disobeying the apostolic injunction to "rejoice" as much as by anything else.'⁹ For himself, he finds joy in his faith and turns 'to share the rapture'. Frequently, therefore, the culmination of his books becomes a 'triumph of Joy', a 'eucatastrophe'.¹⁰ This is true of Perelandra, That Hideous Strength, The Great Divorce, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader and The Last Battle.

Joy ranges from simple pleasure to mystic ecstasy. Lit by that 'bright shadow' from Phantastes which had the power to transform common things, Lewis's homelier scenes, - Ransom with the hrossa, Susan among the beavers, - glow with tranquil delight. Bathed in its transcendent brightness Psyche, in her godlike Palace, Ransom's company in the aura of Perelandra, or the lady who moves triumphantly through the outskirts of Heaven are ablaze with celestial felicity.

'Inexorable Love', Lewis's second theme, is related to Joy in both its senses. God has designed Man for the bliss that can only come from communion with Him. The darts of 'Joy' are one of His means of arousing Man from darkness and apathy. Yet 'solid joy and lasting treasure' can only be secured by a response to the divine approach which involves a surrender of self painful to fallen Man. Without this, reconciliation is impossible for, as Traherne insists (in a passage quoted by Lewis in The Problem of Pain), 'Love can forbear, and Love can forgive....but Love can never be reconciled to an unlovely object'.¹¹

'Inexorable Love' is a central concept of the theology of George MacDonald (the phrase is his own) which Lewis uses as a title for many of his extracts from Unspoken Sermons. The following passages are typical:

Nothing is inexorable but love....For love loves unto purity. Love has ever in view the absolute loveliness of that which it beholds. Where loveliness is incomplete, and love cannot love its fill of loving, it spends itself to make more lovely, that it may love more; it strives for perfection, even that itself may be perfected - not in itself, but in the object.... Therefore all that is not beautiful in the beloved, all that comes between and is not of love's kind, must

be destroyed. And our God is a consuming fire....

The man whose deeds are evil, fears the burning. But the burning will not come the less that he fears it or denies it. Escape is hopeless. For Love is inexorable. Our God is a consuming fire. He shall not come out till he has paid the uttermost farthing.¹²

This distinctive treatment of God's love and wrath, everywhere an important theme in MacDonald's own works, colours all Lewis's fiction. The 'inexorable love' of God is made known to John clinging to the dreadful walls of the Great Canyon, to the Ghost Dwarf in his terrible struggle with Joy, to Edmund and Eustace in the chastening perils by which Aslan draws them to himself. Lewis has also expounded this doctrine directly in the chapter on 'Divine Goodness' in The Problem of Pain where he says of God that 'He has paid us the intolerable compliment of loving us, in the deepest, most tragic, most inexorable sense'.¹³

From God's 'inexorable love' stems the crucial nature of human choice, Lewis's third and central theme. Made aware of God's call to surrender and obedience, Man is involved in a decisive choice, involving a rejection of self (and whatever less than itself self clings to) and an acceptance of God.

The theme is most explicit and comprehensive in The Great Divorce, which bears on its title-page this quotation from MacDonald:

No, there is no escape. There is no heaven with a little of hell in it - no plan to retain this or that of the devil in our hearts or our pockets. Out Satan must go, every hair and feather.¹⁴

In his preface Lewis images the theme as follows:

We are not living in a world where all roads are radii of a circle and where all, if followed long enough, will therefore draw gradually nearer and finally meet at the centre; rather in a world where every road, after a few miles, forks into two, and each of those into two again, and at each fork you must make a decision....I do not think that all who choose wrong roads perish; but their rescue consists in being put back on the right road.¹⁵

The story itself consists, essentially, of a series of situations involving choice. In The Pilgrim's Regress the very scheme, with its central road to Truth and its many side tracks, confronts John with a choice at every turn. Again, in Screwtape, the choices made by the 'patient' when confronted with temptations are the central interest. Till We Have Faces introduces the theme of choice in the first encounter of the Ugly Sister and Psyche after the latter's 'sacrifice'. The glorious palace in which Psyche claims to be living is totally invisible to her sister, who sees nothing but the wild forest. Can she accept Psyche's story of her blissful union with the god, an account supported by Psyche's integrity and radiance, or will she cling to the negative report of her senses? The situation is a paradigm of human acceptance or rejection of the divine.

In That Hideous Strength the decisions of Mark and Jane Studdock are equally momentous; so are Ransom's in Perelandra when through the dark night he wrestles with his terror of the Un-Man and his responsibility for the Green Lady. In Out of the Silent Planet Devine and Weston stand before the Oyarsa of Malacandra like rebel Avarice and Pride and are called upon to lay down their arms. Their refusal leads on to inevitable judgment.

Throughout the 'Chronicles of Narnia' the Christ figure of the Lion, Aslan, confronts the children at every crisis of the story with choices on which happiness or misery, good or evil, inescapably turn. Digory knows he must reject the arguments of Queen Jadis, Lucy that she must follow Aslan across the ravines, Shasta that he must turn back to rescue Aravis from the lion, Puddleglum and his companions that they must obey Aslan's 'signs' and face the possible consequences of freeing the Prince.

Man's choice leads to the ultimate alternatives of separation from, or union with, God, so that the fourth and fifth themes of Lewis's fiction are, in the widest sense, Hell and Heaven.

Lewis's presentation of the broad way to destruction is often couched in the traditional terms of the World, the Flesh and the Devil, a threefold division consciously employed in Screwtape.

The Flesh includes the sins of Sloth and Gluttony, but in popular thought is usually limited to Lust. Exploitation of sex through sensational journals and paper-backs has narrowed the connotations of 'immorality'. Dorothy Sayers entitled a book 'The Six Other Deadly Sins'; Lewis is just as anxious to counter a one-sided idea of sin. Yet he does not ignore the 'Flesh'.

Outside The Four Loves constructive discussion is rare, but there is a striking exception in the episode of the Red Lizard and the White Stallion in The Great Divorce, a kind of parable of the Christian idea of perversion and normality. The power of lust is also depicted through the temptress Luxuria in the Regress. Our human obsession with sex

bores Screwtape, but in his eighteenth letter he reminds Wormwood that it can be exploited. His twentieth letter contains a shrewd analysis of its darker side in his image of the 'infernal Venus'. But in general, Lewis switches attention from the 'dark gods' of the Laurentian mystique to other deities. In mythological terms, he makes Venus and Dionysius defer to Apollo, Jupiter and Pluto.

Sloth and Gluttony are the forms of the Flesh appropriate to Lewis's children's books. In Narnia, the indulgence of appetite is shown as a frequent peril on the path of duty. The Witch Queen's Turkish Delight corrupts Edmund's palate and dulls his conscience; the silver apple is ambrosially sweet, but Digory knows he must not taste it. Eustace must endure hardship until the bodily softness which a spoilt life has bred in him is overcome. Everywhere, the natural shrinking of the flesh from danger must be controlled by courage.

Lewis's most comprehensive treatment of the World is in Screwtape. There, for instance, Vanity, whether social, sexual or intellectual, is seen as a sentiment which often overrides moral judgment. Screwtape, informed by Wormwood of the 'patient's' recent encounter with smart and affluent worldlings, is very hopeful:

Tell me more. Did he commit himself deeply? I don't mean in words. There is a subtle play of looks and tones and laughs by which a mortal can imply that he is of the same party as those to whom he is speaking. That is the kind of betrayal you should specially encourage, because the man does not fully realise it himself; and by the time he does you will have made withdrawal difficult.¹⁶

He goes on to show how the English fear of being thought humourless can lead to acquiescence in cowardice, cruelty and blasphemy, but concludes

that flippancy is still more effective:

If prolonged, the habit of Flippancy builds up around a man the finest armour-plating against the Enemy that I know, and it is quite free from the dangers inherent in the other sources of laughter. It is a thousand miles away from joy: it deadens, instead of sharpening, the intellect; and it excites no affection between those who practise it....¹⁷

Another analysis of worldliness, or a major aspect of it, is to be found in Lewis's address 'The Inner Ring', which propounds a psychological theory that is illustrated by Mark Studdock's story in That Hideous Strength. Along with the motives of ambition, avarice and vanity, Lewis suggests, a fourth, and powerful, factor often operates in worldliness - the 'lust for the esoteric'.¹⁸

'The Devil', of course, symbolises Pride, that corruption of the spiritual which gives us, to quote Screwtape again, 'A spoiled saint, a Pharisee, an inquisitor, or a magician....'.¹⁹ The worst is the corruption of the best. In The Great Divorce George MacDonald is represented as saying:

'There's something in natural affection which will lead it on to eternal love more easily than natural appetite could be led on. But there's also something in it which makes it easier to stop at the natural level and mistake it for the heavenly....And if it finally refuses conversion its corruption will be worse than the corruption of what ye call the lower passions. It is a stronger angel, and therefore, when it falls, a fiercer devil.'²⁰

Thus, in the planetary romances, Weston's passion for the advancement of Man (though essentially finer than anything in Devine) leads him to murder and exploit alien, but rational, creatures, his 'love of kindred' stifling superior moral laws. Yet his late conversion to a blind faith

in Spirit leads him to a blasphemous confusion of Heaven and Hell which produces worse enormities.

Other portraits of spiritual corruption differ as widely as Jadis in The Magician's Nephew and the domineering wife of The Great Divorce. The latter, because she is neither allegorical nor fantastic, is perhaps the more terrible. In her, energies capable of virtuous employment have been so hopelessly corrupted that she is prepared to barter Heaven for the possession of another's soul.²¹

Hell, as imaged by Lewis, is the state to which all who reject God and are left with self ultimately come. In Wither and Frost, the evil protagonists of That Hideous Strength, who have perverted or denied all values, he pictures it as a disintegration of personality and a loss of human status. In the diabolically possessed Weston of Perelandra is found a similar conception of the 'Un-Man' that owes something to the zombie of voodoo. Weston himself is little more than a ghost - 'an everlasting unrest, a crumbling, a ruin, an odour of decay'²² - but through him, bent on the destruction of all joy, works a dark power which Ransom finds more terrible than any 'suave and subtle Mephistopheles' or 'sombre tragic Satan out of Paradise Lost'.²³

"Do you really mean, at this time of day, to re-introduce our old friend the devil - hoofs and horns and all?" Lewis imagines someone protesting against one of his Broadcast Talks. 'Well, what the time of day has to do with it I do not know,' he replies. 'And I am not particular about the hoofs and horns. But in other respects my answer is "Yes, I do."²⁴

Hence, through imagery neither hackneyed nor comic, the romances convey a serious view of the objective reality of Evil, a view which may be better appreciated with the help of Lewis's own remarks on the supernatural thrillers of Charles Williams:

The frank supernaturalism and the frankly blood-curdling episodes have deceived readers who were accustomed to seeing such 'machines' used as toys and who supposed that what was serious must be naturalistic...the imagination and the spiritual insight had been there from the beginning; and it is these that always justify both the infernal and the paradisaical turns of the story. They are never in excess of what the author most seriously intends. Hence the cathartic value of these fantasies.²⁵

Character is only one method of realising the diabolical; setting and imagery are equally important. In Screwtape and The Great Divorce, two complex (and different) images of Hell are built up. In The Pilgrim's Regress it is symbolised by the northern rocks and southern swamps of the allegorical landscape. Even Narnia has its 'dark island' and its 'Underland', its arctic witch and desert demon. Everywhere Lewis, like Tolkien, can produce thronging images to evoke Evil - darkness, insects, noise, fire, cold, competition, chaos, vacancy and meaningless repetition.

Yet the imagery of Heaven, already touched upon in its connection with Joy, is equally powerful and frequent. Its significance can only be grasped, however, in the context of the whole Heavenly theme.

Salvation and sanctification, in Lewis's fiction, are most often conceived as a restoration of the shattered image of God, from which it follows that the formative process in human life is less an unfolding than a re-making of personality. The most comprehensive map of the Christian life is provided by The Pilgrim's Regress, in which the 'pre-

paratio evangelica' (in nature, the moral law and aesthetics), the evangel itself, the death and rebirth pattern, and the process of soul-making are all depicted. Elsewhere it is less possible to distinguish the 'moments' of Christian experience, but it is roughly true to say that Man's return to God is treated directly in Jane and Mark (That Hideous Strength), symbolically in The Great Divorce and The Last Battle, obliquely in Screwtape and mythically in Till We Have Faces. In 'The Chronicles of Narnia' all the essential elements are to be found, though there is a wise avoidance of any systematic treatment. In Ransom's adventure on Perelandra there is a direct account of the process of sanctification which is also an image of salvation.

Several features characterise this formative process. First, as in MacDonald's theology, fear is allowed 'a low and primitive, yet often indispensable function'.²⁶ This will emerge in the treatment of the Narnia stories. Meanwhile some clue to its employment may be afforded by this quotation from MacDonald:

Until love, which is the truth towards God, is able to cast out fear, it is well that fear should hold; it is a bond, however poor, between that which is and That which creates - a bond that must be broken, but a bond that can be broken only by the tightening of an infinitely closer bond.²⁷

The overcoming of fear figures largely in the formative process, and leads to a stress on the necessity of courage for the acquirement and exercise of all the virtues.

Secondly, the formative process is regarded not as self-expression but as an imitation of, or conformation to, an external pattern.

According to Lewis there is 'a disquieting contrast between the whole circle of ideas used in modern criticism and certain ideas recurrent in the New Testament'.²⁸ There, rather than development being pictured as the unfolding of inherent potentialities, 'we are to think of some original divine virtue passing downwards from rung to rung of a hierarchical ladder, and the mode in which each lower rung receives it is, quite frankly, imitation'.²⁹

This theme of the imitation of virtue, which figured in Lewis's own story, also figures in his fiction - John learns integrity from Vertue, Ransom imbibes the wisdom of the Malecandriens and is rebuked by the innocence of the Green Lady, Jane is first repelled and then attracted by the spirit of Logres, Eustace un-learns and relearns the elements of character. Its fullest expression comes in The Great Divorce, for there the Heavenly Spirits are ampler reflections of the Divine nature, and, as such, superior mentors for lost humanity.

Related to this is a dual conception of Membership (expounded in Transposition) and of the spiritual Hierarchy (discussed in A Preface to Paradise Lost). Christianity escapes the errors both of Individualism and Collectivism:

The Christian is called, not to individualism but to membership in the mystical body. A consideration of the differences between the secular collective and the mystical body is therefore the first step to understanding how Christianity without being individualistic can yet counteract collectivism.³⁰

Lewis goes on to give his own conception of unity in diversity (the theme of 1 Corinthians xii). It is worth emphasising that his 'hierar-

chical world' is a spiritual fellowship in which the members retain direct access to the Head. 'Hierarchy' is not to be identified with the concept of a priestly caste, (as in Eliot's The Cocktail Party), which leads Hilton-Young to remark that 'the layers of the hierarchy are many and intricate, but they are transparent, and through them all shines the light of God himself'.³¹

This brings us to Lewis's method of adumbrating Heaven, which may be termed, to borrow from Charles Williams, the 'Way of the Affirmation of Images'.³²

Lewis has discussed the celestial imagery of the New Testament in 'The Weight of Glory'³³ and, while stressing its authority, has confessed to finding some of it difficult. In his fiction he often adapts its images of light and royalty, but romantic images of celestial mountains, fortunate isles and paradisaical gardens predominate. These, in terms used by the Hermit of the Regress, are the 'good pictures' which the 'Landlord' sends to the Pagans.³⁴ (Some of them, of course, are also found in the Old Testament). To them must be added the re-interpretation of medieval astrology found in the planetary romances and the use made of classical myth, both there and in the tales of Narnia. These are true images of Heaven but not Heaven itself.

Lewis's most independent, and coherent, picture of Heaven is to be found in the Divorce, and his richest vision of the celestial hierarchy in the seventeenth chapter of Perelandra. It is in such memorable passages, perhaps the most distinctive of all his fiction, that he seeks to convey, like MacDonald, something of 'the quality of the real universe,

the divine, magical, terrifying and ecstatic reality in which we all live'.³⁵

All these themes, interconnected as they are, may now be seen as parts of one great theme. To apply what Lewis says of the poetry of Statius to his own fiction, 'Here....we have in no ambiguous form the favourite theme of the Middle Ages - the battle of the virtues and the vices, the *Psychomachia*, the *bellum intestinum*, the Holy War'.³⁶

In the planetary romances the War assumes cosmic proportions. Ransom is increasingly revealed as an instrument of the Divine with a crucial role in the conflict of 'principalities and powers'. Out of the Silent Planet is an episode in the present campaign; Perelandra is a re-enacting of the Primal Drama in which Innocence, as not in Eden, triumphs; That Hideous Strength is prophetic of an eschatological climax. In the spiritual conflict within the various characters, this cosmic war is reflected in the microcosm.

The war within is also the subject of the four religious works. In three a hard-won victory results; in a fourth, The Great Divorce, many lives are depicted, and in some Evil prevails. In Screwtape the infernal forces are disclosed, in the Divorce and Till We Have Faces, the divine, or agents of the divine, in the Regress, both.

In Narnia the Holy War is comprehensively pictured. From the creation story of The Magician's Nephew to the consummation story of The Last Battle the whole cosmic history is unfolded. Throughout, the Divine principle, Aslan, is at war with the changing embodiments of Evil. Narnia is alternately occupied and liberated, subverted and redeemed. Finally it gives place to a new earth and a new Heaven.

CHAPTER V

THEOLOGY INTO FICTION

Much of Lewis's interest as a writer springs from that rare combination of popular theologian and creative artist which, after the Regress, is most apparent in The Screwtape Letters, The Great Divorce and Till We Have Faces. In the first, a theological and ethical treatise is cast into a fictional mould; in the second, Christian doctrine and imaginative creation are in equilibrium; in the third, religious insights only gradually emerge from the narrative. They are thus distinctive types of 'fictionalised' theology, and their art can best be appreciated when this theology has first been studied as it appears in Lewis's directly religious works.

Lewis's theology is, by intention, orthodox and traditional, loyal to scripture and the ecumenical creeds. Within the Anglican communion, itself a via media, he holds a central course, being, he writes, 'a very ordinary layman of the Church of England, not especially "high", nor especially "low", nor especially anything else'.¹ He particularly admires Hooker, the great architect of the Church of England, with his flexible attitude to Church government, his intellectual balance and his charitable temper.²

In all his writings the Protestant and Catholic elements are carefully weighed: the evangelical insights of the reformers are retained, but there is an attempt to recapture the wholeness of the

medieval world picture. His own experience of conversion enables him to appreciate the sense of liberation and joy in early Protestantism:³ his freedom from chronological snobbery, and his historical breadth, oblige him to speak sympathetically, or at least courteously, of medieval or Roman piety.⁴ He is too well-informed, or too charitable, to repeat the cruder charges against either 'Puritanism' or 'Popery'. Yet, in The Problem of Pain, he repudiates the more rigid formulations of Calvinism⁵ (like George MacDonald before him) and, in The Allegory of Love, deprecates the Roman conception of penance.⁶ The central, mediating position of his theology is particularly apparent in Mere Christianity.

Lewis is not, of course, a professional or systematic theologian. On some controversial topics he is content to reserve judgment, or hold his counsel, and decries the tendency to label, and then dismiss, particular thinkers, for 'One very effective way of silencing the voice of conscience is to impound in an Isa the teacher through whom it speaks'.⁷ He quotes from any Christian writer in whom he finds a particular insight clearly grasped or well expressed.

In no doubt about the authority of Scripture, he is neither literalistic nor radical in his view of its inspiration. He defers to the steadier findings of modern scholarship, and disowns (but without rancour, and with careful safeguards) 'the Fundamentalist view of the Bible' as clearly as he disowns 'the Roman Catholic's view of the Church'.⁸ Here, as in much else, MacDonald's Unspoken Sermons prepared the way. He shares the modern tendency to regard scripture more as historical revelation than as inspired proposition, but avoids the radical view that

it gives a merely human testimony to divine events: there was a 'pressure from God' upon the writers. Like his friend Austin Farrer in The Glass of Vision (1948), he finds the heart of inspiration and the root of theology in scripture's profound images and symbols of Christ's person and work. He is nearer to Brunner than to Barth or Bultmann. Neither Biblicism nor demythologising appeal to him.

His treatment of the relationship of faith to reason (and so of 'Grace' to 'Nature', 'Special' to 'General' revelation) is, broadly, Augustinian, avoiding the extremes of irrationalism (the severance of faith from reason) and rationalism (their identification). His preface to the Regress shows that the attacks on reason of Luther and Barth go too far for him in the one direction and the reliance on reason of Butler and Erasmus too far in the other.⁹ Everywhere he attaches importance to the praeparatio evangelica afforded by reason, conscience, and 'longing', but does not suggest that they can save.¹⁰ He has confidence in the role of apologetics without supposing it to be a substitute for the preaching of the gospel.

His view of the relationship of faith and reason is close to that expressed by Augustine, and it is this that gives him confidence that apologetics serves a useful function:

In certain things pertaining to saving doctrine, which we are not yet capable of perceiving by reason but shall be some day, faith precedes reason; and this faith cleanses the heart, so that it may receive and endure the great light of reason. The prophet thus speaks quite rationally when he says, Nisi credideritis, non intellegitis - 'If you will not believe, you shall not understand' (Isa. vii, 9, LXX)....If therefore it is reasonable that faith should precede reason to bring us to certain great matters which cannot yet be understood,

then undoubtedly, in however small a degree, reason, which persuades us to it, is likewise antecedent to faith. Hence the apostle Peter warns us that we should be prepared to answer everyone who asks of us a reason for our faith and hope (1 Peter iii, 15).¹¹

Despite, or because of, his loyalty to reason, Lewis is neither a rationalist nor a 'Naturalist' but a thoroughgoing 'Supernaturalist',¹² and resists any tendency to recast the traditional metaphysics of Christianity in purely 'spiritual' or ethical terms. His universe has two (or more) levels, and he regards miracles as a supersession, not a suspension, of Natural Law. This metaphysical scheme also allows him to defend the validity of prophecy and the efficacy of prayer.¹³ Miracles is his most elaborate treatment of a special topic, and its discussion of the meaning of miracles, with its division into those of the 'Old Creation' and those of the 'New Creation', draws on MacDonald.

Lewis's Supernaturalism, along with his cogitations on the problem of Evil (and, it seems, his early encounter with the occult) inclined him towards Dualism, which is 'next to Christianity...the manliest and most sensible creed'.¹⁴ Reason and Revelation refute Dualism, yet its element of truth to experience leads him to take the references of Christ and St. Paul to Satan more literally than most of the liberal or neo-orthodox theologians, as, for example, reviews of his work in The Modern Churchman make clear.¹⁵ To this is related his stress on Hell and Heaven and (though this is largely confined to his fiction) his interest in eschatology.

In his treatment of the story of the Fall he again declines a merely existential interpretation. He recognizes its metaphorical dress

but believes that it refers to a historical event whose consequences are real and apparent. He even ventures to suggest that in Hooker's view 'the doctrine of the Fall did not loom quite large enough'.¹⁶

Yet his stress on the Fall co-exists with a firm belief in the reality (however limited in scope) of a general revelation to Man's reason and conscience. His references to a Natural Law are frequent. He lays the foundations of his Christian apologetic with it in Mere Christianity, and seeks to establish its universality (against the relativist theories of many anthropologists and psychologists) in the quotations appended to The Abolition of Man. Pagan myths present it in a distorted and perverted, but not completely worthless, form. He deplores the weakening of its political implications by the new theories of sovereignty that arose in the sixteenth century, and approves Hooker's defence of Natural Law as politically and theologically vital:

In the first book of Hooker we find that God Himself, though the author, is also the voluntary subject of law. 'They err who think that of the will of God to do this or that there is no reason beside his will' (1,1,5). God does nothing except in pursuance of that 'constant Order and Law' of goodness which He has appointed to Himself. Nowhere outside the minds of devils and bad men is there a sic volo, sic jubeo. The universe itself is a constitutional monarchy.¹⁷

What is there about Lewis's theology which impels it towards, or lends itself to, imaginative and fictional representation?

A genuine creative gift is, of course, a thing per se and not something contingent on a particular formulation of belief. Yet men have been both Christians and creative writers without bringing their two sides into a vital relationship, and others, whose work has had a

clear relationship to their faith, have seldom embodied it and explicated it quite so comprehensively as Lewis does. There is, for instance, little that has been said above that could not be deduced (as Chapter IV perhaps demonstrated) from the strictly fictional parts of his work.

First, then, there is Lewis's unusually strong combination of faith and reason. The 'Barthian' has been inclined to regard all apologetics with suspicion, and, if he has been austerely puritan, the use of fiction as a vehicle has hardly commended itself to him. Bunyan is the great exception, for one must disallow those religious writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries whose fictional sugar so thinly coated their didactic pill. On the other hand, the Deist, or over-rationalistic Christian, will tend to regard fiction as a strangely figurative, superfluous and obscure method of imparting those truths which have merely to be pointed out for them to be understood and accepted. For Lewis, both Reason and Romanticism are valuable, and even necessary allies of the faith.

Secondly, there is Lewis's rational view of the universe as an ordered cosmos which 'rings true' when properly tested, as a structured hierarchy in which the physical, mental and spiritual orders are intimately related. Nowhere is he more at one with MacDonald than in this. 'Nature,' MacDonald writes, 'is brimful of symbolic and analogical parallels to the goings and comings, the growth and the change of the highest nature in Man. It could not be otherwise. For not only did they issue from the same thought, but the one is made for the other!'¹⁸ Even more confidently he asserts:

The man who will not speculate at all can make no progress. The thinking about the possible is as genuine, as lawful, and perhaps as edifying an exercise of the mind as the severest induction.¹⁹

(The same exercise of imaginative speculation characterises G.K. Chesterton). Neither MacDonald nor Lewis goes so far as to say with Keats that 'what the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth', but speculations which take their rise from 'divine philosophy' and are not clearly contrary to, or forbidden by, scripture, but rather drawn out from it, are their delight.

The perception of similarity in dissimilarity is, of course, the vital function of metaphor and the infallible mark of the poet. Both MacDonald and Lewis are poets (though their strictly poetic gift is unequal to their conceptions), and both are literary critics writing, broadly, in the romantic tradition. The figurative elements of Scripture are, therefore, particularly congenial to them, and their own theologising tends in the direction of apocalyptic, parable, symbol and analogy. Both have faith in metaphor which, says Lewis, 'though not the organ of truth, necessarily, is supremely the instrument of meaning'. He defends it, along with analogy (conceptualised metaphor) in such essays as 'Transposition', 'The Weight of Glory',²⁰ and 'Bluspels and Flalanspheres'.²¹

It is not surprising, therefore, that Lewis's popular theology is characterised by a perpetual flow of metaphor and analogy. In a single chapter of Mere Christianity (the collected Broadcast Talks), for example, there are spiritual applications of such everyday activities as 'putting the clock back', choosing the wrong road, painting a picture, multiplying numbers, making allies or enemies, and calling in the doctor

(I,5). In a later chapter there are references to driving a car, playing tennis and drawing a straight line, whilst more extended analogies are based on a band playing a tune and a fleet of ships sailing in formation. Book IV, 'Beyond Personality: or First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity', contains extensive analogies drawn from the three dimensions (IV,2), an author writing a novel (IV,3), toy soldiers (IV,5), 'dressing up', rats in a cellar (IV,7), eggs hatching (IV,8), toothache, and re-building a house (IV,9).

In The Problem of Pain, as elsewhere, images in the popular theology sometimes anticipate scenes in the fiction. References to the lion and the lamb (IX) look forward to Narnia, but it is Perelandra that is more immediately in view. The discussion of 'The Fall of Man' (V), in particular, takes us halfway from the plain doctrine to its full-scale re-casting in the romance:

What exactly happened when Man fell, we do not know; but if it is legitimate to guess, I offer the following picture - a "myth" in the Socratic sense, a not unlikely tale.

Allusions here to the 'idolatry of artefacts', and to the 'brutes sporting before Adam' are followed (X) by references to a world 'like a picture with a golden background', to 'That fierce imprisonment in the self', and to the joy of 'the eternal dance', which prefigure whole episodes of Perelandra.

Transposition makes clear that the non-fictional occurrence of an image or idea is not necessarily prior to the fictional. The address on 'The Inner Ring' appeared before That Hideous Strength (see Chapter XIII, below), and a critical comment on the élan vital preceded Weston's speeches in Perelandra, but a passing remark that 'Nothing that has not

died will be resurrected'²² may, or may not, pre-date the treatment of this theme in The Great Divorce. In any case, date of publication is no sure guide to date of composition; there are indications, for example, that the Narnian stories were begun long before 1950.²³ Then again, the theme of "longing" discussed in 'The Weight of Glory' had been given a full-scale treatment eight years earlier in The Pilgrim's Regress.

Reminiscence outweighs anticipation in Miracles (1947). The reference to riding bare-back on 'those winged, shining and world-shaking horses which perhaps even now expect us with impatience, pawing and snorting in the King's stables'²⁴ looks back to The Great Divorce,²⁵ as does the remark that 'If we must have a mental picture to symbolise Spirit, we should represent it as something heavier than matter'.²⁶ The sustained metaphor which compares the descent of Christ to that of a diver recalls Perelandra.²⁷ Yet there are anticipations of The Magician's Nephew in the discussions of Nature and Supernature in chapters II and IV.

These, and other passages, show how clearly Lewis's popular theology and his fiction are interwoven. In fact, it is impossible to draw a clear demarcation line between them. The Screwtape Letters are rightly listed by publishers among his religious works, and yet, as I hope to show, they have the imaginative quality and artistic unity of fiction in a high degree.

CHAPTER VI

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS

With the publication of The Screwtape Letters in 1942 Lewis emerged from comparative obscurity into sudden fame. C.E.M. Joad credited him with having 'the rare gift of being able to make righteousness readable'. The Times Literary Supplement stated that 'if The Pilgrim's Regress was from many points of view a disappointment, here he comes very much nearer to complete success' and concluded that 'on the whole the book is brilliantly successful'.¹ Four years later its praise was even less qualified when, referring to The Great Divorce as a 'pendant' to Screwtape, it spoke of 'the concentrated central drive of that theological tour de force'.²

In Christian circles the book enjoyed enormous popularity, many writers hailing it with glee as powerful ammunition in the hard campaign against popular apathy, or antipathy, to Christian doctrine and ethics. Charles Williams cast his review in Time and Tide³ into the form of a letter purporting to be from 'Snigsozzle' to 'Scorpuscle' and commented, 'I hope the usual measures have been taken to cause the letters to be admired for their wit, their psychology, their invention; and the routine suggestion promulgated that the book should then be put right away by readers on a shelf with any other writings by Lewis - whoever Lewis is'. There was a subsequent tendency among others to imitate the manner of the book without, naturally, the wit of either Lewis or Williams.

By 1954 the book had gone through twenty-three editions and sold nearly a quarter of a million copies. Its re-publication as a paperback in 1955 brought it to an even wider public, and by 1961 it had been translated into fifteen languages.

Despite some parallels with MacGowan's Infernal Conference to be noted later, Screwtape, after two decades, still strikes one as astonishingly original and isolated. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral employs the same traditional framework of 'the world, the flesh and the devil' for its study in temptation, and both look back to the spiritual conflict as depicted in the morality plays, but Screwtape's affinity, so far as its content and purpose are concerned, is rather with the nineteenth century collections of sermons. Lewis aims to reach as wide a public as did Simeon or Spurgeon.

MacDonald's Unspoken Sermons⁴ are echoed in much of Screwtape's correspondence, as the selections from them in Lewis's anthology reveal. The theme of spiritual 'dryness' in the eighth letter is a typical example.

Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do our Enemy's will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys.

This looks back to MacDonald's sermon 'The Eloi':

He could not see, could not feel Him near; and yet it is 'My God' that He cries. Thus the Will of Jesus, in the very moment when His faith seems about to yield, is finally triumphant. It has no feeling now to support it, no beatific vision to absorb it. It stands naked in His soul and tortured, as He stood naked and scourged before Pilate. Pure and simple and surrounded by fire, it declares for God.⁵

Cast into fictional form, many other insights of MacDonald figure in Screwtape, which may be seen, in its religious aspect, as a successful bid to recapture a wider reading public for 'sermonising'.

The fact that content may be readily distinguished from craft is not, with this type of didactic fiction, necessarily a fault; its 'thoughts' are designed to be detachable from their context. The pill, in fact, is separable from the sugar that makes it palatable, and all the more so because it is no new panacea but the old medicine of Christian doctrine and ethics as expounded in innumerable homilies down the ages. Lewis does not covet originality of content. His prescription is 'given' in 'mere Christianity', in the 'belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times'.⁶

The material is embodied in thirty-one letters, of some 900 words each, purporting to be from Screwtape, an elderly devil, to Wormwood, a junior tempter, advising him on how to keep his 'patient' from 'the Enemy' (God) and bring him safely to 'Our Father Below' (the Devil). The correspondence ranges over the varied tactics of the infernal campaign and constitutes a case history of the patient's fluctuating spiritual progress and ultimate 'escape'.

The 'plot' is quite simple. The 'patient' becomes a Christian (L2) and overcomes initial difficulties in his relations with his mother, and in his first attempts at prayer (L3,4). The outbreak of war brings new strains and problems (L5-7), and a period of spiritual dryness further tests his faith (L8,9). A new friendship with a worldly, middle-aged couple is bad for his spiritual growth (L10-12), but he recovers (L13)

and begins to learn humility and patience (L14,15). He remains constant to the church of his choice (L16), overcomes attacks of sexual temptation (L18-20), and resists peevishness and possessiveness (L21). He falls in love with a Christian girl (L22) and benefits from the Christian circle in which she moves (L24). Courtship and his new friendships have their own dangers (L25-27), but his increasing charity almost makes Screwtape despair (L28). The first air-raid tries his temper and courage but does not shake his faith (L30), and it is in a state of grace that, shortly afterwards, he dies in another bombardment (L31).

The topics discussed by Screwtape arise naturally from the patient's circumstances and condition, changing or re-combining in Kaleidoscopic fashion as one or another sector of 'Mansoul' is attacked, but the sequence is not so inconsequent as might at first appear.

Letter 23 indicates a threefold division which examination verifies - 'The World and the Flesh have failed us; a third Power remains'. Thus letters 10 - 13 discuss the lure of the World, letters 17 - 22 of the Flesh, and letters 23 - 28 of the Devil. Other letters cover such topics as prayer, other Christians, the Churches, Time and Eternity, and War. Some letters digress, always skilfully, on to a related subject. Certain themes such as 'reason', 'dryness', and 'pleasure' recur; there are several witty lessons in the use of vogue words, and many incidental touches of satire. A complete analysis would show that the letters, for all their brevity, are an amazingly comprehensive treatise on Christian ethics and belief, but a specimen section will suffice to indicate their thoroughness:

LETTERS 10 - 13, THE 'WORLD'

10 (The patient meets two Worldlings)

Its Insidiousness: the role of vanity, pride and shame

Neglected Aspects: Vanities, Friendships, Use of Time

Digression: "Puritanism"

Disguised by (1) The split mind (2) Vanity in having 'rounded' personality

11 Role of types of Laughter: (1) Fun and Joy its enemies
(2) Jokes and the English 'sense of humour' are corruptible
(3) Flippancy most effective

12 Effects: (1) dim uneasiness (2) spiritual unreality
(3) emotional deadness (4) separation from God

13 (The patient returns to Greece)

Enemies of Worldliness: Pleasure

Digression: 'Detachment' - Diabolical and Divine

Allies of Worldliness: (1) Substitution of fashion for personal tastes (2) Separation of thought and action

Such an analysis, however, can only hint at what, in effect, the letters are: a kind of Intelligent Person's Guide to Christianity, a handbook of Christian morals, and a critique of contemporary thought rolled into one. As a piece of exposition they recall, by their lucid distinction of topics and neat transitions of argument, the somewhat earlier popularisations of philosophy of C.E.M. Joad, whilst for dialectic so devastating in its impact, and so exhilarating in its swift succession of ideas, we have to turn to Joad's own inspiration, the prefaces of Bernard Shaw. Like them they set the reader either underlying the maxims and indexing the ideas or searching for weapons to combat their insidious persuasion.

Half Screwtape's impact comes from its attack on 'modern' attitudes and its unabashed contempt for mere climates of opinion, yet essentially, like all Lewis's works, it is affirmative, and is too enchanted by its insights to be either obsessed or distorted by what it attacks. Its movements are initiated and controlled by an over-riding spiritual purpose. Again, without being comprehensive, it is amazingly catholic in its scope. Certain omissions there are - among the temptations, sloth and envy are hardly touched upon, among factors in the Christian life the Scriptures hardly figure - but these are largely imposed by the limitations of length and the concentration on one 'case history'. The letters are remarkably free from bias and evade Butler's old gibe at moralists who 'Compound for sins they are inclined to By damning those they have no mind to'. The form itself imposes a check on any spurious 'righteous indignation' whilst the subtlety and inwardness of the treatment of human aberrations persuades us that Lewis understands what he nevertheless declines to pardon. Finally, as befits the author of Mere Christianity, the letters are remarkably free from sectarian bias, though here and there the Anglican viewpoint is revealed.

An examination of the craftsmanship of Screwtape, reveals that much of the book's initial appeal springs from the sharp, immediate impact of the epistolary method, so 'much more lively and affecting', according to Richardson,⁷ than impersonal narrative. The attention is arrested by the economy with which situation, characters and theme are presented, and by the excitement of a conflict already under way. Everything, including Screwtape's current topic, is given in the first three sentences:

My Dear Wormwood,

I note what you say about guiding your patient's reading and taking care that he sees a good deal of his materialist friend. But are you not being a trifle naif? It sounds as if you supposed that argument was the way to keep him out of the Enemy's clutches.

The epistolary method is also shown to have staying power as Screwtape's fluent pen sweeps on with ever-changing interest through thirty-one letters. All that the reader requires for the plot to be intelligible - the gist of Wormwood's reports on his tactics and their effects on the 'patient' - and all that Lewis has to convey, constructive as well as subversive, is effortlessly accommodated, whilst the limitations and artificialities to which the method is prone in naturalistic fiction are here hardly felt.

The epistolary form is, of course, peculiarly appropriate to the religious purpose. Half the New Testament consists of letters, and Screwtape's stream of exhortation and rebuke, doctrine and instruction, consciously imitates and inverts their technique. Whereas Paul wrote 'letters to young churches' (the title supplied by Lewis for J.B. Phillips's popular translation),⁸ Screwtape writes letters to a young tempter.

This mockery and inversion of the divine order, the stock-in-trade of the diabolic, as witness the 'black mass', extends to other aspects of the correspondence. After all, as Lewis insists, the devils cannot invent anything. Thus the angelic hierarchy is paralleled by the devilish 'Lowerarchy', the Enemy (God) has His titles mocked by Our Father Below, whilst to the Joy of Heaven is opposed the Miserific Vision. For his basic idea of 'moral inversion' Lewis has recently acknowledged a debt to Stephen McKenna's Confessions of a Well-Meaning Woman.⁹

The passage (Letter 22) in which this last conception figures is

a good example of how the Heavenly 'notes', such as Joy, Knowledge, Harmony and Fellowship, are contrasted with the 'notes' of Hell.

He's a hedonist at heart. All those fasts and vigils and stakes and crosses are only a facade. Or only like foam on the sea shore. Out at sea, out in His sea, there is pleasure, and more pleasure. He makes no secret of it; at His right hand are "pleasures for evermore". Ugh! I don't think He has the least inkling of that high and austere mystery to which we rise in the Miseri-fic Vision. He's vulgar, Wormwood. He has a bourgeois mind. He has filled His world full of pleasures. There are things for humans to do all day long without His minding in the least - sleeping, washing, eating, drinking, making love, playing, praying, working. Everything has to be twisted before it's any use to us. We fight under cruel disadvantages. Nothing is naturally on our side. (Not that that excuses you. I'll settle with you presently. You have always hated me and been insolent when you dared.)

This emphasis on the joy and pleasure of the Christian life (a typical instance of how Screwtape's enlightenment of Wormwood serves the religious purpose) is a leit-motiv of Lewis's fiction which appears frequently in these letters. Earlier, in discussing the causes of human laughter, Screwtape had warned Wormwood about the laughter arising from Joy, a phenomenon incomprehensible and offensive to the devils, 'a direct insult to the realism, dignity and austerity of Hell'.¹⁰ Equally offensive to Screwtape is the truth Lewis culls from MacDonald that in Heaven 'all that is not music is silence'.

Music and silence - how I detest them both! How thankful we should be that ever since our Father entered Hell - though longer ago than humans, reckoning in light years, could express - no square inch of infernal space and no moment of infernal time has been surrendered to either of those abominable forces, but all has been occupied by Noise - Noise, the grand dynamism, the audible expression of all that is exultant, ruthless, and virile - Noise which alone defends us from silly qualms, despairing scruples and impossible desires.¹¹

Elsewhere Screwtape speaks of Hell as 'The Kingdom of Noise'.¹²

The twenty-second letter, from which both these passages are taken, exhibits another characteristic of Hell - its furious competition and devouring egoism. Screwtape had earlier reminded Wormwood that Hell is utterly opposed to the Enemy's plan for endowing creatures with individuality:

We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over. Our aim is a world in which Our Father Below has drawn all other beings into himself....¹³

Here he threatens Wormwood with a future reckoning and reminds him that incompetent tempters are liable to fall prey to the voracious appetites of their superiors.

Lewis owes this idea of 'spiritual cannibalism', as he himself points out in his recent preface, to Lindsay's A Voyage to Arcturus, where the ruthless self-assertion of such aggressive creatures as Ooze leads to the actual assimilation - or 'sorbing'¹⁴ as it is called - of another creature. Power is the sole ambition of Hell, so that knowledge, along with reason, is sought merely as a means to power. This is a conception which also figures, later, in the Un-Man of Perelandra. As Screwtape expresses it - 'Alas, alas, that knowledge, in itself so hateful and awkward a thing, should yet be necessary for Power!'¹⁵

These notes of the infernal are further suggested in the ingenious names which Lewis has devised for his devils. The hints of torture and bitterness in 'Screwtape' and 'Wormwood' give way to merely disgusting

associations in 'Toadpipe' and 'Slubgob'. 'Glucose' echoes such unpleasant words, as 'obese', 'gloomy' and 'morose'. 'Triptweeze' suggests the cunning and malice of some friskier tempter, whilst 'Slumtrimpet' has a disquieting wrongness (a fallen 'Slimtrumpet' perhaps?) and appropriate associations of 'slum' and 'strumpet'.

Both the ingenious devils and the whole structure of Hell are the more effective in that they are made to throw oblique shafts of satire at human foibles, individual and corporate. Screwtape, as his name suggests, is a bureaucrat - 'his Abyssal Sublimity Under Secretary Screwtape'¹⁶. The devils, like the Europeans, are at war and have their High Command, their Intelligence Department and their secret police. Tempters, like theological students, have been to a Training College, and in Letter 19 Screwtape's unflattering references to the Principal of this establishment put him in danger of being charged with 'heresy'. Scholars do not escape. Screwtape gibes at their obsession with the 'Historical point of view',¹⁷ and is himself a pathetic believer in the ability of 'research' to unmask the Enemy's real aims.

These are incidental touches, however, which enliven the correspondence without dominating it. More important in the broad structure of the letters are the narrative threads provided by the struggle for the 'patient's' soul and the subsidiary duel between the two devils. When the patient becomes a Christian (Letter 2) Wormwood is threatened with the 'usual penalties'. As the temptations of worldliness draw the patient from the Enemy, Screwtape's tone to Wormwood becomes more urbane. Conversely, Wormwood's 'excellent progress' (Letter 12) and the satisfaction

Screwtape derives from it, fill the reader with anxious sympathy for the patient. The patient's return to the fold (Letter 13) calms this anxiety but subjects Wormwood to further veiled threats. Subsequent efforts by the tempter, and some indiscretions on the part of his uncle, trim the diabolic balance of power, but when the patient falls in love with a thoroughgoing Christian girl, Screwtape, his misunderstanding with the infernal police tided over, shows his claws (Letter 22). The patient's spiritual graph still has its ups and downs, but his death in an air-raid in a state of grace provides a sudden eucatastrophe. Screwtape is left to settle accounts with the discredited Wormwood.

Luther, who once flung his ink-pot at the devil, advocates a subtler attack in the quotation which prefaces Screwtape - 'The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn'. Texts of scripture being out of fashion in modern controversy, Lewis adopts a similar subversive technique and, in as sustained a piece of irony as any since Fielding's Jonathan Wilde, undermines the foundations of many anti-Christian positions, content to make them sag and totter where he cannot blow them sky-high. Those aspects of his craft already described are mainly directed to this work of demolition.

The reality of a spiritual realm, of objective Good and Evil, is assumed, and we are left to see how this assumption illuminates the human situation, and to consider its practical implications. The emphasis is switched from intellectual assent to personal involvement. In the words of the Epistle of James, 'Thou believest that there is one

God; thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble'.¹⁸ Thus the existence of Screwtape is coolly taken for granted, and, by a fortunate 'discovery' of the author's, we are privileged to eavesdrop on the enemy propagandist. A two-fold unmasking results. First, our own weakness and insecurity is painfully disclosed (and, conversely, God is shown to be our only refuge). Secondly, the diabolical strategy is given away (and, ultimately, its desperate futility exposed).

It follows that there are four main elements in the reader's reactions (in so far as Lewis is successful in his aim), elements which may be represented by these four exclamations: (1) How terrible is sin! (avarice, lust, anger etc.) (2) What joy there is with God! (3) What subtle temptations there are! (4) How futile is rebellion! Of these, (1) and (3) are the immediate, whereas (2) and (4) are the ultimate effect of Lewis's subversive technique.

Consider, for example, a recurring feature in the exposure of the infernal tactics, Screwtape's stress on the power of words to confuse and mislead, that secret weapon of what he calls the 'philological arm'. Screwtape, realising that the power of emotive words and loaded terms has been enhanced by our modern ideological warfare, urges Wormwood to exploit the situation. He is a connoisseur of the potent cliché, the fashionable adjective, the damning label. The patient is to be encouraged to think of doctrines not as true or false 'but as "academic" or "practical", "out-worn" or "contemporary", "conventional" or "ruthless"'.¹⁹ Wormwood is shown how the word 'phase' may be fruitfully employed, and reminded of the 'blessed word "Adolescent"'.²⁰ "Puritanism" has many triumphs to its credit,

for 'By it we rescue annually thousands of humans from temperance, chastity, and sobriety'.²¹ Minor traps such as 'best', 'right' and 'important' are not to be despised. 'Unhealthy' is a powerful bogeyman in cases of obstinate chastity, whilst horror of the Same Old Thing and a delusive trust in the Future may be aroused by 'reactionary' and 'stagnant'. The ambiguous terms 'experience' and 'real'²² are also a fruitful source of diabolical confusion. In Letter 30, for instance, the devilish utility of the word 'real' is thus summarised by Screwtape:

The general rule which we have now pretty well established among them is that in all experiences which can make them happier or better only the physical facts are "Real" while the spiritual elements are "subjective"; in all experiences which can discourage or corrupt them the spiritual elements are the main reality and to ignore them is to be an escapist. Thus in birth the blood and pain are "real", the rejoicing a mere subjective point of view; in death, the terror and ugliness reveal what death "really means".

This critique of some modern vogue words is balanced by a rehabilitation of traditional moral terms. Here the third element, the exposure of temptations, passes over into the first, the horror of sin. 'Worldliness', in the form of 'the old warnings about Worldly Vanities, the Choice of Friends, and the Value of Time',²³ is now regarded as an antiquated conception, quite out of fashion. Lewis re-establishes it in contemporary terms. Gluttony strikes us as a text-book sin, hardly relevant nowadays. Lewis shows how it persists in inverted form, in the 'gluttony of Delicacy' of the fastidious elderly lady, or the vanity of the male gourmet.²⁴ Other neglected, or distorted terms which Lewis refurbishes, to turn now from the vices to the virtues, include Chastity, Humility and Charity.

In all this linguistic renovation, Lewis is exposing the infernal policy, with its confusion of reason, its misdirection of attention, and its corruption of instinct. Examples of his psychological penetration are his exposition of the 'Generous Conflict Illusion' in Letter 26, and his theory of the law of 'diminishing returns' in Letter 12. Here is part of its account of the man who fears to face God, but who fails, in turning from Him, to obtain satisfaction:

As this condition becomes more fully established, you will be gradually freed from the tiresome business of providing Pleasures as temptations. As the uneasiness and his reluctance to face it cut him off more and more from all real happiness, and as habit renders the pleasures of vanity and excitement and flippancy at once less pleasant and harder to forgo (for this is what habit fortunately does to a pleasure) you will find that anything or nothing is sufficient to attract his wandering attention.

The subsequent picture of a wasted life is one of Lewis's most effective renderings of the misery of a sin 'weary, flat, stale and unprofitable'.

One further aspect of this subversion of the reader's stock responses is found in those passages where a fearful thrill (one element in the above portrait) is launched at his complacency. Here are two examples:

....Keep everything hazy in his mind now, and you will have all eternity wherein to amuse yourself by producing in him the peculiar kind of clarity which Hell affords....²⁵
If....you can finally secure his soul, he will be yours forever - a brim-full living chalice of despair and horror and astonishment which you can raise to your lips as often as you please.²⁶

The impact, and dangers, of this kind of writing, derive from what may fairly be termed its 'sensationalism'. Lewis's equivalent of the

Hell-fire element in the preaching of the older divines, it is prone, despite the wit of its presentation, to disturb some and antagonize others. A full discussion would range far afield, but it may be stated briefly that here, as elsewhere, it is most effective, spiritually, when presented as the inevitable end-product of present, observable, mental states, as it is in the picture of the wasted life in Letter 12. Its more sensational appearances in Screwtape arise from the fact that the devilish correspondence demands, or at least invites, the exercise of that imaginative awareness of the infernal which Lewis shares, as he shares his awareness of the supernal, with Charles Williams.²⁷

For, finally, the work's total effect is remarkably affirmative, despite the severe, self-imposed discipline of its form. Screwtape, that indefatigable sepper of human complacency and folly, is seen to be himself undermined by a deeper Destiny whose workings he ultimately fails to understand. His hollow assertions of the triumphs of Hell cannot escape being a reluctant tribute to the superiority of Heaven. He admits that 'To be greatly and effectively wicked a man needs some virtue', and his own machinations can only seek to manipulate what is 'given' by God.

The Screwtape Letters, like the other imaginative works of Lewis, are sown with 'bright shoots of everlastingness', and culminate in a 'triumph of Joy'. The patient has eluded the Hell-hounds and entered his sanctuary:

Pains he may still have to encounter, but they embrace those pains. They would not barter them for any earthly pleasure. All the delights of sense, or heart, or intellect, with which you could once have tempted him, even the delights of virtue itself, now seem to him in

comperison but as the half nauseous attractions of a raddled harlot would seem to a man who hears that his true beloved whom he has loved all his life and whom he had believed to be dead is alive and even now at his door. He is caught up into that world where pain and pleasure take on transfinite values and all our arithmetic is dismayed.²⁸

In March, 1961, a new edition of Screwtape appeared with a new preface and a tail piece entitled 'Screwtape Proposes a Toast'.

Screwtape's address to the annual dinner of the Tempters' Training College (first written for American readers, as its allusions to 'Togetherness' and 'Being like Folks' suggest) is neither as concise, as witty nor as universal in its appeal as the letters. Nevertheless, its attack on the less attractive aspects of Democracy is shrewd. Screwtape finds contemporary society nauseatingly insipid and conformist, devoid of the great Sinners and Saints of the past, but considers the prevalent attitude of I'm as good as you favourable to his cause.

In the preface, after commenting wryly on the often unflattering reasons for the high sales of Screwtape, Lewis answers the question of whether he really 'believes in the Devil'. His belief, he says, after guarding against certain misconceptions, is an opinion, not part of his creed - 'It seems to me to explain a good many facts'. Actual presentations of Angels and Devils can only be speculative and symbolic. His own symbol for Hell, in this twentieth century, is naturally 'something like the bureausrey of a police state or the offices of a thoroughly nasty business concern'.

He declines to provide an 'official' interpretation of his names, but supposes that 'Scrooge, screw, thumbscrew, tapeworm and red tape all

do some work in my hero's name, and that slob, slobber, slubber and gob have all gone into Slubgob'.

For his apparent insight into temptation no learned source need be sought; "My heart" - I need no other's - "sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly" '.

He ends by confessing that the projecting of himself into a world that was 'all dust, grit, thirst, and itch....almost smothered me before I was done'. He regretted that he lacked the genius to balance Screw-tape's advice to Wormwood with 'archangelical advice to the patient's guardian angel'.

Yet he did, in fact, produce something approaching this in The Great Divorce.

CHAPTER VII

THE GREAT DIVORCE

The Great Divorce is a triumph of didactic fiction - a work that charms the reader without seeking to disguise its 'palpable design'. A clear, strong theme is expressed in powerful and coherent imagery; psychological insight and spiritual penetration combine to make a work of compelling interest told in a style that is by turns witty and poetic.

It consists of a series of brilliant variations on one of Lewis's central themes - the crucial nature of human choice. Its dream of an encounter with George MacDonald, Lewis's spiritual 'master', penetrates to the heart of his vision; throughout sounds the note of 'inexorable love', the leit-motiv of his theology; at its climax comes a typical enactment of the 'triumph of Joy'. It is quintessential Lewis.

In the compass of some 25,000 words, material that might have packed some massive tome of moral theology is skilfully digested and artfully deployed. Clearer, briefer and more charitable than The Pilgrim's Regress, as acute and alive as Screwtape, and almost as dramatic and sensuous as Perelandra, The Great Divorce has not yet won the recognition it merits.

'I seemed to be standing in a bus queue by the side of a long, mean street' begins the story, delicately indicating its 'dream' form. It goes on to tell how Lewis waits with a squabbling crowd to board the 'bus that is to take them on an excursion from the sprawling, twilight

Grey Town. A 'wonderful vehicle' arrives and ascends with them to a land of early morning, where, in celestial light and by the side of the Heavenly People who greet them, they are revealed as mere Ghosts. The Grey Town is Hell (or Purgatory, to those who decide not to return), for the Heavenly People, former earthly friends, are come from 'Deep Heaven' to invite them to stay. But a spiritual death and re-birth is necessary before these wraiths, forsaking illusions, can assume enough solidity to enjoy the realities of Heaven.

Dialogues between the Ghosts and the Heavenly People, or Spirits, form the substance of the subsequent narrative, interspersed with Lewis's own exchanges, first with his fellow Ghosts, and then with George MacDonald, one of the Spirits. MacDonald's replies to his questions and complaints provide a kind of chorus, and bring out the significance of the dramatic and decisive dialogues.

The book is divided into sections without numbers or titles. An analysis will clarify its structure better than a discursive account. Only the main theme of each encounter, conversation or dialogue is indicated.

Analysis of 'The Great Divorce'

Sec.	pp.	Narrative: CONVERSATION: <u>DIALOGUE</u> : (Theme)
First	Setting:	Dusk in the Grey Town - 'the Valley of the Shadow of Death'.
1	13 - 16	The Queue: motives for leaving (offended dignity, social snobbery, avarice, jealousy, intellectual snobbery etc.)
		1st CONVERSATION: the Tonsle-headed Poet
2	17 - 25	<u>The Journey</u>

1st CONVERSATION: (spoilt intellectualism)

2nd CONVERSATION: the Intelligent Man

Exposition - The Grey Town; Napoleon (egotism)

3rd CONVERSATION: the Ecclesiastical Ghost (modernism)

Second Setting: Morning in the Heavenly Country - 'the Valley of the Shadow Life'.

3 26 - 29 The Heavenly Country - arrival and reactions of the Ghosts.

Arrival of the Heavenly People.

4 30 - 34 1st DIALOGUE: the Big Ghost & the redeemed Murderer (Pharisaism)

5 35 - 44 2nd DIALOGUE: the Episcopal Ghost & his Friend (Apostasy)

6 45 - 48 Episode of the Intelligent Man (materialism)

7 49 - 53 4th CONVERSATION: the Hard-bitten Ghost (cynicism)

8 54 - 58 An attack of Doubt

3rd DIALOGUE: the well-dressed woman and a Spirit (vanity)

9 59 - 76 Encounter with GMD

5th CONVERSATION: Lewis & GMD (central exposition: Heaven & Hell)

4th DIALOGUE: the Grumbling Lady & a Spirit

The coquette; miscellaneous ghosts

5th DIALOGUE: the Artist & his Friend (reputation)

10 77 - 81 6th DIALOGUE: the Domineering Wife & 'Hilda' (lust for power)

11 82 - 96 7th DIALOGUE: the Possessive Mother & her Brother (maternal possessiveness)

6th CONVERSATION: Lewis & GMD (affection and appetite)

8th DIALOGUE: the Man with the lizard & the flaming Spirit (lust)

7th CONVERSATION: Lewis & GMD (death and rebirth)

12 97 - 105 The entry of the Lady

8th CONVERSATION: Lewis & GMD (charity)

9th DIALOGUE: the Dwarf-Tragedian & the Lady (self-pity)

13 106 - 115 9th DIALOGUE: the Dwarf-Tragedian & the Lady (self-pity)

The Triumph of Joy

9th CONVERSATION: Lewis & GMD (pity and Joy: Hell & Heaven)

14 116 - 118 Vision of the symbolic Chessboard

10th CONVERSATION: Lewis & GMD (vision and dream)

Morning dawns; the awakening

As the brief preface makes clear, The Great Divorce is designed to combat the 'disastrous error' that 'reality never presents us with an absolutely unavoidable 'either-or''. The marriage of Heaven and Hell is an impossibility: at each fork in life's road we must 'make a decision'. If we have chosen the wrong road, our 'rescue consists in being put back on the right road'.¹

The Ghosts have all chosen wrong turnings, and the situation of Screwtape is thus reversed. There, the 'patient' chose the right road, and was subjected to a Tempter seeking to lure him off on to by-ways to Hell. Here, the ghosts, far advanced along wrong roads, are offered heavenly invitations to return. The survey of the wrong roads is not an exhaustive treatment of the deadly sins (anger, sloth and gluttony are not

represented) but an admonitory selection of the perils of the World, the Flesh and the Devil. Compared with Screwtape, the emphasis is on the perennial rather than on the contemporary forms which these perils assume.

Essentially the dialogues are studies in forms of Pride - an inversion of the situation in Perelandra. There the Bent One seeks to shake the Lady out of obedience into rebellious self-assertion; here the Celestial Spirits seek to root out the Ghosts 'from under an intolerable Me'.

Every episode emphasizes the crucial nature of human choice. The thought, and the word, echo through the book. 'What would you like to do if you had your choice?' - 'Is any real choice offered to them?' - 'What concerns you is the nature of the choice itself' - 'there are innumerable forms of this choice' - 'ye have heard enough to see what the choice is' - 'The choice of ways is before you'.²

An obvious danger, with such re-iteration of one theme, is monotony. Lewis's scheme involves a series, actually some score, of separate conversations, half of which the narrator merely overhears. An episodic and repetitive form is necessitated, and the problem of securing a sense of progression seems formidable. Nor would it seem likely, if it were not for the precedent of Screwtape, that such a solid diet of moralising could be made palatable. The artistry which triumphs over these dangers is worth careful study.

Lewis's technique may be analysed under the three aspects of structure, symbolism and style.

First, then, by keeping his story short, Lewis curbs any tendency

for his situations to be inflated with novelistic detail or lengthy sermonising. Brevity and the absence of chapter headings encourage continuous reading. How he skilfully interweaves description, narrative, conversation and dialogue, and mixes diverse types of people and different kinds of sins, will, to some extent, be clear from the analysis. So, for instance, the first three speakers after the arrival in Heaven, the 'Big' the 'Episcopal' and the 'Hard-bitten' Ghosts, are beautifully contrasted. Nor do these dialogues pall before, by the introduction of George MacDonald, a new interest is focused on them.

Then the opportunities for surprise afforded by the unusual basic ideas are seized. When Lewis first glances out of the 'bus', it is not to exclaim, 'Hullo! We're already moving', but, 'Hello! We've left the ground'³ (yet a backward glance shows that this surprise has been prepared). Into the Tousel-headed Poet's recital of his woes slips the remark that 'He had jumped under a train' and then 'been sent to the grey town'.⁴ The most telling use of surprise, however, comes much later when Lewis tells MacDonald of his arrival by the 'big gulf beyond the edge of the cliff'. MacDonald picks a blade of grass and - 'Using its thin end as a pointer, he made me see, after I had looked very closely, a crack in the soil so small that I could not have identified it without this aid'...."through a crack no bigger than that ye certainly came"⁵.

Suspense is created with equal skill. Like Ransom on Perelandra, Lewis experiences, throughout his visit to the heavenly country, 'a feeling of freedom, but also of exposure, possibly of danger'. The light, brooding on the distant mountains, is ambiguous - is it 'The

promise - or the threat - of sunrise?' Suspense becomes grimly humorous in the Hard-Bitten Ghost's foreboding of rain: "It hadn't occurred to you that with the sort of water they have here every reindrop will make a hole in you, like a machine-gun bullet."⁶

Effective climaxes are provided by two episodes which rise above the even flow of the narrative - the central encounter with George MacDonald, a tribute to his Teacher of considerable emotional force, and the final, ninth dialogue, that of the Lady and the Dwarf Ghost.

Additional strength is given by the scriptural frame of reference which the story presupposes. The first dialogue, for instance, retells the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Ghosts' alarm at the increasing brightness of the 'radiant abyss' recalls that 'everyone that doeth evil hateth the light'.⁷

The basic symbolism of the book lies in the contrasted settings of the grey city and the bright country, which emphasise the divorce of Hell and Heaven.

Hell is a sprawling, grey city of mean streets in seemingly endless evening twilight that recalls the ghostly London of Charles Williams's All Hallow's Eve. It is miserable, colourless and insubstantial. Its inhabitants are continually quarrelling and drifting apart, and its area constantly increasing, for 'You've only got to think a house and there it is'.⁸ Therefore, like the galaxies of the expanding universe, its people repel each other into increasing loneliness. The 'Intelligent Man', who explains it to Lewis, hopes to return from Heaven with real commodities that will create real needs and provide an economic bond. Then he intends

to build a real house, for the night will eventually fall and 'no one wants to be out of doors when that happens'.⁹

Heaven is a spacious landscape, drenched in the light and coolness 'of summer morning....a minute or two before the sunrise'.¹⁰ It is glorious, colourful and, to the insubstantial ghosts, solid and hard as diamond - a symbol of eternity which Lewis adapted from an American tale of 'scientific-fiction'.¹¹ The details of its symbolic landscape, its golden apples, lions and unicorns, though in the paradisaical tradition, are freshly rendered:

Before us green slopes made a wide amphitheatre, enclosing a frothy and pulsating lake into which, over many-coloured rocks, a waterfall was pouring....On earth, such a waterfall could not have been perceived at all as a whole; it was too big. Its sound would have been a terror in the woods for twenty miles. Here, after the first shock, my sensibility 'took' both as a well-built ship takes a huge wave. I exulted. The noise, though gigantic, was like giants' laughter: like the revelry of a whole college of giants together laughing, dancing, singing, roaring at their high works.¹²

Later he perceives, with double vision, that the waterfall 'was also a bright angel who stood, like one crucified, against the rocks and poured himself perpetually down towards the forest with loud joy'.¹³ There could not be a better contrast with the self-clinging of the Ghosts than this complex symbol of self-giving.

The contrasted symbols of devouring lust and divine energy in the eighth dialogue are particularly effective. The 'little red lizard.... twitching its tail like a whip'¹⁴ torments its owner with fiery insinuations until he allows the Burning One to kill it. Then there materializes in its place 'the greatest stallion I have ever seen, silvery white but with mane and tail of gold. It was smooth and shining, rippled with swells of

flesh and muscle, whimpering and stamping with its hoofs'.¹⁵

In the texture of the writing certain recurring elements of style may be isolated.

First, many statements are given a peculiar force. There is the straightforward, quotable aphorism, such as this of the White Spirit - 'We know nothing of religion here: we think only of Christ'.¹⁶ There is irony, as in the departure of the modernist clergymen (Ecclesiastical Ghost) who, rejecting Heaven for theological speculation, wanders off singing 'City of God, how broad and far' [my italics].¹⁷ Occasionally there is a kind of celestial repartee that recalls the Bishop in The Bishop's Candlesticks,¹⁸ as in these remarks of the Big Ghost and the redeemed murderer:

'....I only want my rights. I'm not asking for anybody's bleeding charity.'

'Then do. At once. Ask for the Bleeding Charity. Everything is here for the asking and nothing can be bought.'¹⁹

Next, the vocabulary of the various Ghosts is carefully noted. Current colloquialisms are well caught, as in the Ghosts' reactions to their excursion: 'I'm not going this trip for my health' - 'It gives me the pip!' - 'It's a fair knock out' - 'only an advertisement stunt'.²⁰ 'Vogue' words are skilfully used in the conversation of the more cultured characters. For the Ecclesiastical Ghost ideas are 'beautiful'²¹ rather than true or false.

The qualities of the narrative and descriptive passages cannot be thus isolated from their rich and sensuous texture which ranges from the grim to the glorious. The faces of the Ghosts are thus described:

They were all fixed faces, full not of possibilities but of impossibilities, some gaunt, some bloated, some

glaring with idiotic ferocity, some drowned beyond recovery in dreams; but all, in one way or another, distorted and faded.²²

With this is contrasted Lewis's first sight of George MacDonald:

On one of the rocks sat a very tall man, almost a giant, with a flowing beard....Here was an enthroned and shining god, whose ageless spirit weighed upon mine like a burden of solid gold; and yet, at the very same moment, here was an old weather-beaten man, one who might have been a shepherd - such a man as tourists think simple because he is honest and neighbours think 'deep' for the same reason. His eyes had the far-seeing look of one who has lived long in open, solitary places; and somehow I divined the network of wrinkles which must have surrounded them before re-birth had washed him in immortality.²³

The artistry of the conversations and dialogues may best be studied in a typical passage. This speech of the Ecclesiastical Ghost in section two is conveniently self-contained:

'Excuse me,' he said, 'but I couldn't help overhearing parts of your conversation. It is astonishing how these primitive superstitions linger on. I beg your pardon? Oh, God bless my soul, that's all it is. There is not a shred of evidence that this twilight is ever going to turn into a night. There has been a revolution of opinion on that in educated circles. I am surprised that you haven't heard of it. All the nightmare fantasies of our ancestors are being swept away. What we now see in this subdued and delicate half-light is the promise of the dawn: the slow turning of a whole nation towards the light. Slow and imperceptible, of course. "And not through Eastern windows only, When daylight comes, comes in the light." And that passion for "real" commodities which our friend speaks of is only materialism, you know. It's retrogressive. Earth-bound! A hankering for matter. But we look on this spiritual city - for with all its faults it is spiritual - as a nursery in which the creative functions of man, now freed from the clogs of matter, begin to try their wings. A sublime thought.'²⁴

The honeyed tones soothe the ear after the harsh abuse of the Big Man, and the cosy optimism of the sentiments almost dispels for a moment the image of the grey town and the ominous rumours of nightfall, but the

irony is unmistakable. Every foible of character is as shrewdly observed as the traits of Prioress or Monk in Chaucer's Prologue. The decorative quotation from Clough, and subsequent fragments of Arnold,²⁵ reveal a tendency to replace logical argument by stock quotations from the poets. The ingenious application of floating phrases of scripture (the 'spiritual city' comes from Hebrews) reveal his aesthetic attitude to belief, or what he later calls 'points of view'.²⁶ A thought is 'sublime' rather than 'true'. His allusions to 'primitive superstition' and 'nightmare fantasies of our ancestors' indicate a nodding acquaintance with anthropology and comparative religion, and exemplify that 'chronological snobbery' and reverence for 'climates of thought' which Lewis regards with suspicion. His indulgent parade of faded metaphors ('swept away', 'nursery', 'try their wings') masks an intellectual hollowness. Finally his abuse of 'materialism', his emphasis on the 'spiritual', and his reference to 'the clogs of matter', indicate a leaning to the Manichean heresy which suggests that he will not find the 'solidity' of Heaven to his liking.

These traits are finely worked out in the dialogue in which he subsequently participates.

When Christian apologetics succeeds in arousing interest it is still peculiarly liable to charges of smugness, arrogance and harshness. The satirical elements of the monologue quoted above, moreover, exemplify that 'subversive'²⁷ method of controversy which often pays for its destructive power by antagonising the reader. Now didactic, and particularly religious, fiction is concerned to win and retain a sympathetic hearing. Lewis is not content with securing interest - he wishes to win acceptance.

Certain features of the book are determined by this wish.

Here, undoubtedly, the dialogue form, by providing expression for antagonistic viewpoints, is a distinct asset. It reveals Lewis's readiness, and ability, to 'give the devil his due', perhaps the most characteristic feature of his 'popular theology'. The risk that the reader will be content to echo the case for the prosecution is countered less by the wit and charity of the Heavenly Counsellors than by the new context in which the whole debate is placed.

The objections and doubts of the Ghosts, which voice those of the reader, are not restricted to the dialogues. The Hard-Bitten Ghost - 'the kind of man I have always instinctively felt to be reliable'²⁸ - is given a free hand, and lets off a number of casual, but startling, squibs. When Lewis suggests that if the Ghosts stay long enough in the Heavenly Country they will gain solidity, and walk unhurt over its diamond-hard turf, he retorts

'What would you say if you went to a hotel where the eggs were all bad; and when you complained to the Boss, instead of apologising and changing his dairymen, he just told you that if you tried you'd get to like bad eggs in time?'²⁹

Following this, Lewis himself voices doubts and fears, avoiding the cocksureness which is another danger of apologetics. His return to belief arises from the subsequent encounter with George MacDonald.

The effectiveness of transferring the higher levels of the argument to a historical character is not entirely vitiated by the consideration that this character must, necessarily, be a mouthpiece of the author. An author's confession of a spiritual debt to another, as of Plato to Socrates, or Dante to Beatrice, generally succeeds, when felt as sincere,

in winning the reader's sympathy. It shows humility and gratitude. The reality of Lewis's debt to MacDonald is unquestionable, and the fidelity of his attempt to convey the quintessence of his 'Master's' teaching may be verified by a reference to MacDonald's sermons. It is in the difficult problems of free-will, human destiny and God's righteousness, that Lewis turns to MacDonald. His confidence is justified by the deep insight and charity which emanates, in consequence, from the subsequent conversations. These are rounded off in MacDonald's comments on the ninth and final dialogue.

In this final dialogue of the Dwarf Ghost and the Lady, the encounter of self-pity and Charity provides an effective climax.

The entry of the Lady, attended by her heavenly entourage, - 'a vision like incarnate April' - marks the triumph of Joy. The humble soul, whose name on earth was Sarah Smith, is here the exalted saint, shedding life and love abroad:

'....Redeemed humanity is still young, it has hardly come to its full strength. But already there is joy enough in the little finger of a great saint such as yonder lady to waken all the dead things of the universe into life.'³⁰

In her former husband, the Dwarf Ghost, who leads a tall 'Tragedian' on a chain, the schizophrenia of a lifetime of self-pity is dramatically symbolized. The Dwarf can hardly speak from himself any longer - his personality is almost consumed in his theatrical persona. A lifelong addiction to emotional blackmail has eaten away his soul. All that has sustained him in Hell has been the consoling picture of his wife 'here alone, breaking your heart about me'.³¹ Now, the realisation that her happiness, as one 'in Love', is assured, is a terrible blow.

Even so, the joy and love which emanate from the Lady almost re-
kindle his spirit. But 'This was not the meeting he had pictured; he
would not accept it'.³² Lewis allows no easy victory over self-will. The
Tragedian strikes his melodramatic attitudes and wallows in his emotional
 clichés; the Dwarf dwindles and the Lady launches her last appeal:

'...Pity was meant to be a spur that drives joy to help misery. But it can be used the wrong way round. It can be used for a kind of blackmailing. Those who choose misery can hold joy up to ransom, by pity...Did you think joy was created to live always under that threat? Always defenceless against those who would rather be miserable than have their self-will crossed? For it was real misery. I know that now. You made yourself really wretched. That you can still do. But you can no longer communicate your wretchedness. Everything becomes more and more itself. Here is joy that cannot be shaken. Our light can swallow up your darkness: but your darkness cannot now infect our light. No, no, no. Come to us. We will not go to you. Can you really have thought that love and joy would always be at the mercy of frowns and sighs?....'³³

But the Dwarf has disappeared, and the Tragedian, rejected by the Lady ('I never knew you')³⁴ vanishes also. The triumphal progress of the Lady, Lewis's lingering doubts - 'Is it really tolerable that she should be untouched by his misery, even his self-made misery?'³⁵ - and MacDonald's final commentary, form the culmination of the argument, which gains tremendous force from the cumulative effect of the dialogues. Here is Lewis's most potent expression of his theology of salvation. Some of the questions which it raises will be discussed in Chapter XX.

The last section ends with a swift, and finely-managed return to the waking world. Alarmed by the imminence of sunrise, Lewis clutches at his Teacher's robes.

....But it was too late. The light, like solid blocks, intolerable of edge and weight, came thundering upon my head. Next moment the folds of my Teacher's garment were only the folds of the old ink-stained cloth on my study table which I had pulled down with me as I fell from my chair. The blocks of light were only the books which I had pulled off with it, falling about my head. I awoke in a cold room, hunched on the floor beside a black and empty grate, the clock striking three, and the siren howling overhead.³⁶

Following so soon after The Screwtape Letters (1943), Perelandra (1943) and That Hideous Strength (1945), The Great Divorce (1945), brought to a close the central, creative period of Lewis's writing career. So comprehensive and definitive was its treatment of Lewis's favourite themes that there was an interval of five years before he published his next imaginative work. This proved to be The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the first of The Chronicles of Narnia: Lewis had avoided the danger of repetition by venturing into a new field - the children's story.

C H A P T E R VIII

THE THEOLOGICAL ROMANCE

The Screwtape Letters and The Great Divorce have few connections with the more notable novels of the last two decades, but they can be linked with earlier examples of what I shall call the theological romance. Before discussing Till We Have Faces (1956), which is separated by date and character from Lewis's better-known romances, I propose to relate Lewis's work to this tradition.

It must first be realised, however, that the theological romance is only one of the influences on Lewis's fiction. The influence of medieval allegory, and of Bunyan, on The Pilgrim's Regress have already been examined. The influence of Bishop Wilkins, and of Wells and Lindsay, on the planetary romances will be examined in Chapter X. Milton's Paradise Lost, the classic example of the interweaving of theology and poetry, will be related to Perelandra in Chapter XII. The relationship of the Narnia stories to earlier children's books also demands separate attention. Here, after a brief reference to John Macgowan, I shall discuss four authors, all Christians and all writers of fiction, whose influence on Lewis is of prime importance. They are George MacDonald, G.K. Chesterton, Charles Williams and J.R.R. Tolkien.

John Macgowan, an eighteenth century minister of religion, wrote an unusual book, Infernal Conference (1772), which is, in several respects, a forerunner of The Screwtape Letters.¹

This work, some three hundred pages long, is arranged in eighteen dialogues purporting to be the recorded conversation of various devils on whom 'the Listener' has eavesdropped. Its introduction speaks, like Lewis, of two errors regarding the Devil; in this case the first is to attribute all our sin to him, the second to deny his influence over us. The author then continues:

I am perfectly satisfied, that, however justly the guilt of men may be charged on their own corruptions, infernal spirits do exist, and are fully employed in forwarding their wicked designs and purposes. Yes, I have learned so much of the art and address of diabolical spirits in this matter, that as I shall, I trust, avail myself much of the very singular discovery, so, from a principle of benevolence to mankind, I think myself fully justified, without further apology, in communicating it to the public.²

Many of the dialogues, as with all the letters in Screwtape, are between an uncle (Fastosus) and his nephew (Avaro). Others involve Infidelis and Impiator, Discordans and Crudelis.

The oblique, ironical method, the exploitation of human weaknesses, the review of intellectual fashions, and the promotion of a special vocabulary to combat righteousness, all bring the book close to Screwtape. Further details of these resemblances are given in Appendix A.

The tremendous debt of all Lewis's works to George MacDonald (1824-1905), Scottish poet, sermon writer and novelist, is nowhere more movingly confessed than in The Great Divorce where, in the visionary encounter discussed in the previous chapter, Lewis recalls his discovery of Phantastes:

I tried, trembling, to tell this man all that his writings had done for me. I tried to tell how a certain frosty afternoon at Leatherhead Station when I first bought a

copy of Phantastes (being then about sixteen years old) had been to me what the first sight of Beatrice had been to Dante: Here begins the New Life. I started to confess how long that Life had delayed in the region of imagination merely: how slowly and reluctantly I had come to admit that his Christendom had more than an accidental connexion with it, how hard I had tried not to see that the true name of the quality which first met me in his books is Holiness.³

In the preface to his anthology of MacDonald, Lewis provides a sketch of his life (based on the biography by his son, Dr. Greville MacDonald)⁴, an assessment of his literary achievement, and some indications of his own debt. This chapter is concerned only with Lewis's own expression of the spiritual and imaginative intuitions which he found in Phantastes, and other works - especially the Curdie stories and Lilith - which he calls 'mythopoeic'. An account of Lewis's theology would also need to examine the influence of Unspoken Sermons, to which he acknowledges a debt 'almost as great as one man can owe to another'.⁵ Even in the fiction their fundamental influence can be felt.

MacDonald's influence on Screwtape and The Great Divorce has already been discussed. His contribution to the strange events and creatures of Narnia is equally apparent. What follows is an attempt to show that as a purveyor of Christian doctrines through powerful myths and symbols he has had an influence on Lewis both deep and extensive.

As might be expected, the events and figures of Phantastes made a lasting impression on Lewis. Among them are certain potent symbols of evil which figure in the wanderings of Anodos, first of all in that fairy forest where the trees are sentient creatures. Some, like the Beech Tree Woman, who aid the wanderer in his quest, are benign powers; others are

evil spirits, like the malevolent ash which stalks abroad at night:

But the most awful of the features were the eyes. These were alive, yet not with life. They seemed lighted up with an infinite greed. A gnawing voracity, which devoured the devourer, seemed to be the indwelling and propelling power of the whole ghostly apparition.⁶

This picture of the self-devouring nature of sin and evil reappears in many of Lewis's tales, from the shadowy sinners of the Regress, through the Man-destroyers of That Hideous Strength, to the consuming pride of Narnia's White Witch.

The impression made by the Ash is reinforced in the episodes concerned with the Maid of the Alder, whose connection with the Green Enchantress of The Silver Chair is clear. The climax of Anodos's slavery to her bewitching sweetness comes when he discovers that she is betraying him to his 'awful foe', the Ash, and that her dazzling beauty is a thin facade. The Alder Maid is merely a walking shell, a ghostly mockery, hollowed out behind and within by the consuming power of self-love. Only later is her true nature made plain to Anodos:

But the chief thing that makes her beautiful is this: that, although she loves no man, she loves the love of any man; and when she finds one in her power, her desire to bewitch him and gain his love (not for the sake of his love either, but that she may be conscious anew of her own beauty, through the admiration he manifests), makes her very lovely - with a self-destructive beauty, though; for it is that which is constantly wearing her away within, till, at last, the decay will reach her face, and her whole front, when all the lovely mask of nothing will fall to pieces, and she be vanished for ever.⁷

This image is re-shaped by Lewis in the Ghost Dwarf of The Great Divorce.

These are not the only symbols of evil. There is the dark house of Chapter VIII, in which an ominous old woman, voicing a philosophy as

grim as Weston's on Perelandra, declares that 'The light doth but hollow a mine out of the infinite extension of the darkness'. There is the subsequent fatal curiosity (like Digory's in The Magician's Nephew) bringing the shadow which falls on Anodos and disenchant all it touches. This symbolises a scepticism, rooted in sin, which for all its destructive power comes to be cherished by Anodos:

I began to be rather vain of my attendant, saying to myself, "In a land like this, with so many illusions everywhere, I need his aid to disenchant the things around me....I will not see beauty where there is none. I will dare to behold things as they really are. And if I live in a waste instead of a paradise, I will live knowing where I live."⁸

This is precisely the sentiment expressed by the dwarfs in The Last Battle.

Images such as these are the dark side of the haunting metaphysics of Phantastes. The influence of its 'goodness', its 'holiness', though it pervades Lewis's fiction, is harder to demonstrate. Nevertheless, the influence of one deeply grounded intuition (it is the core, too, of Lilith) can be confidently asserted. It is the pervasive and climactic image of death and re-birth, found so frequently in Lewis's own characters - John, Ransom, Jane, Orual, Eustace and many a figure in The Great Divorce. It is an image central to all Christian experience, but the strange and beautiful form in which it first invaded Lewis's imagination is found in the climax of Phantastes:

Another self seemed to arise, like a white spirit from a dead man, from the dumb and trampled self of the past. Doubtless, this self must again die and be buried, and again, from its tomb, spring a winged child; but of this my history as yet bears not the record. Self will come to life even in the slaying of self; but there is ever something deeper and stronger than it, which will emerge at least from the unknown abysses of the soul; will it be

as a solemn gloom, burning with eyes? or a clear morning after the rain? or a smiling child, that finds itself nowhere, and everywhere? 9

Spiritual symbolism is not the only link between Phantastes and Lewis's fiction. Memories of its swiftly-changing scenes underlie many of his vivid pictures, as later comments are intended to reveal. They are particularly evident in Perelandra, The Silver Chair and The Magician's Nephew.¹⁰

In the line of 'theological romancers' G.K. Chesterton is a link between his predecessor, MacDonald, and his successors, Charles Williams and C.S. Lewis. Just as MacDonald's The Princess and the Goblin was a landmark in Chesterton's development,¹¹ so Chesterton's The Everlasting Man (1925) was a landmark for Lewis. The hint it provided for The Pilgrim's Regress has been noted in Chapter III.

Chesterton was a pioneer, a prolific pioneer, in imaginative apologetics, and exercises a far-reaching influence on Lewis, his heir. They share a great deal. Both castigate the heterodoxies of their age; both find theology in the fairy tale, fantasy and longing; both relish analogy, metaphor and parable; both affirm the joy of Christian experience. Chesterton, it is true, is more flamboyant, wilder in his flights of fancy, more gaily daring in his use of paradox, and, conversely, not such a scholar, not so systematic. The brilliant journalist and the witty don have their distinctive strengths.

Heretics (1905), Chesterton's first, and seminal book, an exuberant onslaught on the Spirit of the Age, is the prototype of the Regress and Screwtape, and swarms with ideas congenial to Lewis. How apt a comment

on Ransom's conflict with Weston is this critique of the Shavian Superman:

Mr. Shaw cannot understand that the thing which is valuable and lovable in our eyes is man - the old beer-drinking, creed-making, fighting, failing, sensual, respectable man. And the things that have been founded on this creature immortally remain; the things that have been founded on the fancy of the Superman have died with the dying civilisations which alone have given them birth.¹²

A later passage anticipates the policy of N.I.C.E. in That Hideous

Strength:

...the scientific civilisation in which Mr. McCabe believes has one rather particular defect; it is perpetually tending to destroy that democracy or power of the ordinary man in which Mr. McCabe also believes. Science means specialism, and specialism means oligarchy. If you once establish the habit of trusting particular men to produce particular results in physics or astronomy, you leave the door open for the equally natural demand that you should trust particular men to do particular things in government and the coercing of men.¹³

Orthodoxy (1908), Chesterton's Credo, which corresponds to Lewis's Surprised by Joy, is even more packed with germinal ideas. The following aphorism is a neat epitaph for Wither and Frost in That Hideous Strength - 'Exactly as complete free thought involves the doubting of thought itself, so the acceptance of mere "willing" really paralyzes the will'. A later argument in the same chapter ('The Suicide of Thought') anticipates the preface to The Great Divorce:

Every act of will is an act of self-limitation. To desire action is to desire limitation. In that sense every act is an act of self-sacrifice. When you choose anything, you reject everything else.

When, in his planetary romances, Lewis attacks the cosmic pessimism of Wells he is reviving Chesterton's strictures:

Herbert Spencer...was an imperialist of the lowest type. He popularised this contemptible notion that the size of

the solar system ought to overawe the spiritual dogma of men...And his evil influence can be seen even in the most spirited and honourable of later scientific authors; notably in the early romances of Mr. H.G. Wells. Many moralists have in an exaggerated way represented the earth as wicked. But Mr. Wells and his school made the heavens wicked. We should lift up our eyes to the stars from whence would come our ruin.¹⁴

In Chesterton's fifth chapter, 'The Flag of the World', two of Lewis's favourite subjects are treated - the fallacy of Chronological Snobbery, and the necessity of metaphor in religious discussion. And, more important, if a parallel be needed for the way in which Lewis's questions, hopes and fears were answered by Christianity, that chapter's eloquent conclusion provides it.

Again, the view of Nature given in chapter VII, 'The Eternal Revolution', is similar to Lewis's in Miracles, and a remark that 'For the purpose even of the wildest romance results must be real; results must be irrevocable' would stand as a preface to all his tales.

Chesterton, of course, wove these, and kindred ideas into a number of fantasies such as The Man Who Was Thursday (1908), Manalive (1911) and The Flying Inn (1914), but to discuss these would take us too far afield. Rather let this remark from Orthodoxy sum up his own, and Lewis's romances:

The aeons are easy enough to think about, anyone can think about them. The instant is really awful; and it is because our religion has intensely felt the instant, that it has in literature dealt much with battle and in theology dealt much with hell. It is full of danger, like a boy's book: it is at an immortal crisis.¹⁵

Chesterton had a great influence on Charles Williams, whose supernatural thrillers come next in the line of the theological romance. 'The

most obvious influence on Williams's stories is that of G.K. Chesterton' writes Anne Ridler,¹⁶ and Lewis includes him among the authors whom Williams 'seemed to have at his fingers' ends'.¹⁷

Lewis was drawn to Williams by his novel The Place of the Lion, but it was not only this, and such novels as The Greater Trumps and All Hallow's Eve, that he enjoyed. Since Williams, as Canon Roger Lloyd puts it, 'could never, even if he had tried, have written a single line without a religious overtone',¹⁸ Lewis also found an expression of his own convictions in Williams's criticism and poetry, and later in his conversation.

You have only to compare Williams's 'A Dialogue on Hierarchy'¹⁹ with Lewis's chapter on hierarchy in A Preface to Paradise Lost, or note Lewis's acknowledgment of a debt to Williams's Milton criticism,²⁰ or compare Williams's remarks on Merlin with the figure depicted in That Hideous Strength,²¹ to perceive their affinity. Lewis's preface to Essays Presented to Charles Williams and his commentary on the Taliessin poems are, in part, an acknowledgment of a personal debt.

Apart from a common liking for fantasy, Chesterton, Williams and Lewis share convictions and ideas rather than literary forms. Chesterton's romances have a wayward fancy which is inimitable; Williams, for his narrative vehicle, draws on occult lore (gained, in part, from the Order of the Golden Dawn), and in his poetry develops the Arthurian legend. Lewis turns to allegory, to science fiction, to the fairy story. In addition, despite his supernatural machinery, Williams has more of the gifts of the true novelist. His social realism, and his portrayal of women characters, alone, distinguish him from Lewis. Sybil Coningsby (The

Greater Trumps), Chloe Burnett (Many Dimensions), and Lester Furnivall (All Hallow's Eve) are not paralleled in Lewis's fiction.

Yet these characters embody distinctive Christian insights which, it seems, have influenced Lewis as they influenced others who read Williams's books and became his friends.

Williams attached great significance to the command 'Bear ye one another's burdens', which was, for him, the key to the Christian's duty to love his neighbour. It became the unifying spirit of his fiction and poetry (as well as of his own conduct) and he was continually trying to work out its implications and express its meaning. In 'The Way of Exchange', a pamphlet published in 1941,²² he argues that the practice of bearing one another's burdens, what he calls the 'principle of exchange, substitution, and co-inherence', can be made the basis of a deeper spiritual fellowship. He believes that this principle, already exemplified in social intercourse, in family relationships and in the experience of great art, can be given a practical application. By means of voluntary compacts we can take over at least a part of each other's anxieties and distresses. In this way, Sybil Coningsby helps her bewildered brother, and Pauline Anstruthers mystically participates in the sufferings of her ancestor.

Such a compact has two aspects: it involves not only a 'living for others' but a 'living from others'. As 'unselfishness', the first aspect is an ethical principle frequently invoked, as Screwtape notes in his twenty-sixth letter. The second aspect is less widely appreciated, though it is an essential element in the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. It

is this concept of 'living from others' which has affected Lewis's later novels.

In Perelandra it is the key to the relationships between Ransom, the Queen and the King. Apparently, it is the Queen who bears the burden of temptation, and yet, in different ways, Ransom and the King are also tested. In their joint deliverance from evil, each has something to give and something to receive, and the giving and receiving are of equal value and require equal grace. The King receives the dominion of his planet from Maleldil (God), with a joy and gratitude all the greater because the gift comes to him through Perelandra (the Archangel of Venus), through his Queen, and through Ransom.

The scope of 'co-inherence' is illustrated not only by this central event, but by the relationship between man and woman, as idealised in the King and Queen. It is the King who is called upon to name the creatures of Perelandra, but his Queen plays an essential part. Her ignorance of the names he coins surprises him:

"I had thought these things were coming out of your mind into mine, and lo! you have not thought of them at all. Yet I think Maleldil passed them to me through you, none the less [my italics]....It may be that in this matter our natures are reversed and it is you who beget and I who bear."²³

The doctrine of 'living from others' is extended in the subsequent 'meditation' to cover the whole field of 'personal' relationships. Relations between the various species of beasts, between the different 'worlds' of rational creatures, and between the eldila (Angels), all illustrate it. So do the inter-relationships of these orders of Creation.

This is the clearest instance of the influence of Williams's prin-

ciple of 'co-inherence', but it also gives a distinctive accent to Lewis's treatment of personal relationships in That Hideous Strength and Till We Have Faces.

Through reading The Place of the Lion and the other supernatural thrillers, Lewis must also have been impressed by the quasi-mystical visions through which Williams reveals the supernatural realm. In Many Dimensions there is the Stone from the crown of Solomon which has the power to transcend time and space, and brings to its possessors visions of the supernal or infernal worlds. In The Greater Trumps, the moving chess men, with the associated Tarot cards, bring to their owners power over the elements, and impart a mystical knowledge through their enactment of the cosmic dance. The closing vision of Perelandra gives the same insight into the manifold complexities and inter-relationships of the cosmos. In The Great Divorce there is a similar symbolic use of a chess board. The visions which bring Till We Have Faces to a close are of a rather different kind.

Among those who met with Williams at Oxford to discuss the art of narrative and read work in progress was J.R.R. Tolkien, the friend and colleague to whom Lewis dedicated The Screwtape Letters. His children's story The Hobbit appeared before the Narnia stories; his adult trilogy The Lord of the Rings was not published until 1954, though he had worked on it since 1940 and Lewis had seen parts of it in manuscript by 1945.²⁴

Of The Lord of the Rings Lewis has written:

If Ariosto rivalled it in invention (in fact he does not) he would still lack its heroic seriousness. No imaginary world has been projected which is at once multifarious and so true to its own inner laws; none so

seemingly objective, so disinfected from the taint of an author's merely individual psychology; none so relevant to the actual human situation yet so free from allegory. And what fine shading there is in the variations of style to meet the almost endless diversity of scenes and characters - comic, homely, epic, monstrous, or diabolic.²⁵

Its relevance 'to the actual human situation', its Christian sense of values, and its treatment of spiritual conflict relate The Lord of the Rings to the theological romance, though the theology of 'Middle Earth' is immanent rather than transcendent. There is no mention of religion: both the natural and the supernatural conflicts of which earthly religions speak are objectified in the story. It enacts the 'battle of good and evil'.

Though the characters and scenes of Tolkien's epic have the variety of The Faerie Queene, Aristotle's demand for unity of action is sufficiently met to make possible some indication of its plot.

Many creatures dwell in 'Middle Earth'. Men inhabit its central kingdoms of Gondor and Rohan, but half-forgotten races survive on its fringes - Elves in its ancient forests, Dwarfs in its mines, Trolls and Orcs in its caverns, Hobbits ('halflings') in their remote and secluded Shire. White Wizards like Gandalf, and the 'halfelven' rangers like Aragorn, patrol its borders on mysterious errands.

Not all its wizards are 'white'. In this 'Third Age' a powerful sorcerer, Sauron, the Dark Lord of the eastern realm of Mordor, is re-asserting his malign influence. Rings of Power, forged long ago, have come into his possession, and through the agency of his nine 'ringwraiths' he is seeking the One Ring which will give him supremacy.

Frodo, the hobbit, has inherited a magic ring from his uncle, Bilbo, and now Gandalf identifies it as the One Ring. (Earlier, as related in

The Hobbit, it had long been in the possession of the creature Gollum). He knows that no one can wear it for long without being corrupted by its power. Nor can anyone destroy it except in the fires of Mount Doom, in Mordor, where it was forged. A council of Elves, Men and Hobbits decide that it must be destroyed, and lay this task upon the 'Fellowship of the Ring' - Frodo, with his servant Sam and his kinsmen Pippin and Merry, Gandalf the Wizard, Aragorn the Ranger, Boromir of Gondor, the Dwarf Gimli and the Elf Legolas.

Book I traces the adventures and dispersal of the Fellowship, Book II follows the fortunes of Rohan and Gondor and the preparations of Sauron. Book III deals with the War of the Ring, and recounts Gondor's deliverance, first by the cavalry of Rohan and the fleet of Aragorn (revealed as its rightful king), and ultimately by Frodo who succeeds in destroying the One Ring.

The overcoming of corrupted power by sacrificial love is obviously at the heart of the story, but, as Lewis insists, no simple allegorical interpretation will suffice. The characters, the landscapes and the adventures are as concrete as epic, and as circumstantial as history. It is simply that everything seems part of a metaphysical, as well as a physical drama, and that every note sounded carries spiritual overtones.

The kinship of Tolkien's epic and Lewis's fiction is as extensive as it is elusive. It is less a matter of 'sources', or even of 'influence' than of a common heritage of myth and legend and a similar imaginative response to Christian belief and ethics. Imaginatively and spiritually, Tolkien and Lewis speak the same language.

One qualification is necessary. Though the kinship can be seen in Lewis's directly religious novels, and still more in the planetary romances, it only forces itself on one's attention in 'The Chronicles of Narnia', for only in Narnia does Lewis follow Tolkien by inventing a world of his own. With this in mind, four broad similarities may be distinguished: a distinctive sense of values, a fondness for populating an invented world with 'a diversity of creatures', a taste for the 'peculiar flavour or quality' of places and objects, and the use made of traditional narrative patterns.

In Tolkien's treatment of the conflict of good and evil, as in Lewis's, the struggle is arduous and the issue finely balanced. Crucial and agonising choices are thrust upon the characters, of whom heroic qualities are demanded. Loyalty and obedience are fundamental. Courtesy, affection, and 'natural piety' mark the sympathetic characters. Without courage no virtue is unassailable. Roughly, one might say that whereas 'sincerity' (truth to one's self) is the touchstone of most modern novelists - Gide is the typical example - 'honour' (truth to received, objective values) is the touchstone of Tolkien and the writers of the theological romance. The virtues they admire are those depicted in Wordsworth's 'Happy Warrior'.

Tolkien's moral code is exemplified in Aragorn, Gandalf, Frodo, Sam, and prince Faramir of Gondor. Prince Boromir, the wizard Saruman, and Denethor (Steward of Gondor), all, in various ways, fall away from it. Frodo, through his patience with the despicable Gollum, and his agonizing journey to Mount Doom, goes beyond it. Sauron and his slaves seek to

pervert and destroy it.

These are only a few of Tolkien's 'diversity of creatures', not all of whom are directly involved in the moral conflict. As in Celtic mythology, the high Elfs stand rather apart from the human issues. So does Tom Bombadil, a sort of personification of natural forces. So do the ancient tree folk, the Ents of the Forest of Fangorn. But they all play a vital part in the action.

As in legend, the beasts also participate in events, of whom the most notable are the eagle Gwahair, the horse Shadowfax, and the giant spider Shelob. Also sub-human in status (although an uncertainty about this raises moral difficulties in parts of the epic) are the trolls, goblins and orcs who ally themselves with Sauron.

Much interest arises from the contrasted natures of Elfs, Dwarfs and Hobbits. The first are as aetherial as their forests, the second as hard as their mines, the third as homely as their Shire. Hobbits are Tolkien's own invention. He succeeds superbly in creating a rich and consistent world for them. Contrast also enhances his treatment of the human races in his story, but no complete account is possible here.

Tolkien believes that the chief pleasure of fantasy lies in the artist's exercise of his power as a 'sub-creator', and Lewis agrees with him.²⁶ 'Middle-Earth' and 'Narnia' show their pleasure in this sort of creation.

It appears also in the detailed geography of their invented worlds, for both of which maps are provided. As I have suggested, it is their taste for what Lewis calls 'the peculiar flavour or quality' of places

(and objects) which fascinates them.

Tolkien, in his essay on 'Fairy Stories',²⁷ has stressed the importance of 'things' as against people in such tales. Lewis has noted the difficulty of talking about them in a critical vocabulary tailored to the realistic, psychological novel. The Times Literary Supplement coined a useful expression in speaking of the 'series of sensations'²⁸ which writers like MacDonald and Lewis leave with the reader. 'Sensation' is the term used by Lewis himself for the complex images which nature and literature assumed for him as a boy. Thus he speaks of the 'northernness' of Norse saga, and the 'red-skinners' of Longfellow's poems.²⁹

In the same way one would like to talk of the 'Elfinery' of Tolkien's story, of the 'Homeliness' of its Hobbits, the 'glamour' of its wands, mirrors, phials, swords, armour, rings etc., and the 'earthiness' of its Dwarfs, and so go on inventing terms to convey the essence of its diverse scenes. There is an obvious danger in such 'jargon', but an accepted language for these external 'sensations' has not been worked out, as an accepted language for the sub-conscious had not been worked out when Lawrence sought to diverge from the study of 'character' in another, internal direction.

Yet, one must stress, a treatment of Tolkien's and Lewis's fiction which uses only the critical instruments of the realistic novel will never come near their essential qualities.

This is true, also, of their use of traditional narrative patterns. The subject demands a separate treatment, but two points can be usefully made in closing this survey of the theological romance.

First, there are certain stock elements of narrative to which fantasy (and the theological romance) naturally turn, and which the realistic novel has now largely relinquished to the adventure story. They include pursuit, rescues, resurrections, desperate stands, mysterious errands, 'boote' in the guise of 'bale', evil coming home to roost, premonitory visions, eleventh hour deliverances, 'possessions', unmaskings and apotheoses. All these could be illustrated from The Lord of the Rings and 'The Chronicles of Narnia'. They tend to be combined in larger patterns, of which the battle and the quest are most popular.

Secondly, in the theological romance, these patterns are used for a distinctive purpose. They become 'objective co-relatives' of religious dogma and experience. This, certainly, is how they have been used by MacDonald and Chesterton, Tolkien, Lewis and, to a certain extent, Williams. Far more than in the realistic novel, a plot becomes the vehicle of the author's vision.

CHAPTER IX

TILL WE HAVE FACES

This re-telling of the myth of Psyche, Lewis's most recent work of fiction, has three things in common with Dymer, the heroic poem published some thirty years earlier. It embodies a myth in a realistic story, traces the spiritual growth of a single character from that character's own viewpoint, and occupied Lewis's mind for many years.

Of Dymer, Lewis has stated, 'what simply "came to me", was the story of a man who, on some mysterious bride, begets a monster: which monster, as soon as it has killed its father, becomes a god. This story arrived, complete, in my mind somewhere about my seventeenth year'.¹

Till We Have Faces had, also, a youthful origin. 'This re-interpretation of an old story,' writes Lewis, 'has lived in the author's mind, thickening and hardening with the years, ever since he was an undergraduate. That way, he could be said to have worked at it most of his life.'²

Setting his story in the barbarous kingdom of Glome, somewhere to the north of the Greeklands, Lewis makes Orual, the ugly half-sister of Istra (Psyche), his central figure. The story, which purports to be her record of the story of Psyche, consists first of a long complaint against the gods, and then of a rather later, and briefer, recantation.

The strange title is related to the central theme of the soul's encounter with the divine, and derives from Orual's final confession - 'How can they [the gods] meet us face to face till we have faces?'³ There is an obvious echo of St. Paul's oft-quoted words, 'For now we see through

a glass darkly; but then face to face'⁴, but both title and story owe more to an incident in George MacDonald's Lilith. Mr. Vane, the narrator of that visionary romance, encounters, in one of his excursions into 'otherworld', two grotesque figures who are little more than animated skeletons. In their desperate attempts to walk, and their faltering attempts to help each other, this pathetic pair, some former lord and lady, are expiating their sins through a penitential process which may yet endow them with spiritual life. As Mr. Vane has it explained to him, 'they are pretty steadily growing more capable, and will by and by develop faces; for every grain of truthfulness adds a fibre to the show of their humanity'⁵.

Thus Orual's story shows how, through re-living her experience and wrestling to set it down, an aged, embittered Queen, whose veiled features reflect the bleakness of her soul, gains self-knowledge and peace. Life, in Keats's well-known image, is 'a vale of soul-making'⁶, and Orual, through the grains of truth wrung from her, at last acquires a soul.

In her earlier narrative, however, she is at pains to indict the gods by presenting life as 'a vale of tears'. Life as a child at her father's court was 'poor, nasty, brutish, and short', but she has deeper matters to complain of.

I will accuse the gods; especially the god who lives on the Grey Mountain. That is, I will tell all he has done to me from the very beginning, as if I were making my complaint of him before a judge. But there is no judge between gods and men, and the god of the mountain will not answer me. Terrors and plagues are not an answer.⁷

The god of the Grey Mountain, it appears, is the son of Ungit, the primitive Aphrodite whose temple stands near the banks of the river Shennit facing the city of Glome. There Orual and her younger sister, Redival,

lived as children at the court of Trom, their father. The King's savage temper - he is capable of beating his daughters, sending a faithful servant to the mines, or castrating a presumptuous youth - is matched by the bleak winters, summer droughts and periodic plagues of an uncertain country, and by the dark interior of Ungit's shrine, with its temple prostitutes and blood-stained stone. There is nothing elsewhere in Lewis's fiction so stark, naturalistic and plain as these early chapters.

Only two people are dear to Orual, - the 'Fox', a Greek slave set free to teach the sisters their letters, and Istra (Psyche) the beautiful child of Trom's second wife. The Fox represents the enlightenment (and limitations) of Greek rationalism. His philosophical dicta, his allegiance to Nature and Reason, and his half ashamed enthusiasm for the poets do something towards civilising Orual, though his stoical resignation is beyond her. One part of her accepts his teaching, one part is violent and rebellious, one part feels the attraction, and repulsion, of Ungit, whose cult is abhorred by the Fox as a false and hateful superstition.

Lewis's intention is suggested in his brief preface to the novel:

Recently, what seemed to be the right form presented itself and themes suddenly inter-locked: the straight tale of barbarism, the mind of an ugly woman, dark idolatry and pale enlightenment at war with each other and with vision, and the havoc which a vocation, or even a faith, works on human life.

The antithesis of idolatry and enlightenment is found in Ungit and the Fox. The havoc wrought by a vocation is shown in Orual's love for Psyche.

Psyche, a child of surpassing beauty, both of body and character, leads even the Fox to confess, 'I could almost believe that there really is divine blood in your family', and to call her 'prettier than Aphrodite

herself'. As for Orual, she adores Psyche:

I wanted to be a wife so that I could have been her real mother. I wanted to be a boy so that she could be in love with me. I wanted her to be my full sister instead of my half sister. I wanted her to be a slave so that I could set her free and make her rich.⁸

Psyche's beauty leads to her receiving votive offerings from the townspeople, and her skill in nursing the Fox through the plague to her being credited with healing powers. She is obliged to 'touch' the afflicted townsfolk who threaten the palace, and is acclaimed by some as a goddess. But when famine, pestilence and drought persist, they turn against her, naming her, for her presumption, 'the Accursed'. Then the aged priest of Ungit, adding to this list of woes the King's lack of a male heir, voices Ungit's displeasure, and insists that the guilty one must be found, tied to the Holy Tree on the Grey Mountain, and offered as a sacrifice to the 'Shadowbrute'. The victim, though accursed, must also be pure.

The Fox fights in vain against the dark, confused mythology of this superstition. 'Holy wisdom,' says the priest, 'is not clear and thin like water, but thick and dark like blood. Why should the Accursed not be both the best and the worst?'⁹

Trom, who has been trembling for his own skin, is inwardly relieved when the lot points to Psyche, and brutally crushes Orual's frenzied outburst of fury and grief. Yet later, battered and bruised, Orual seizes a sword and attacking the faithful captain, Bardia, who guards Psyche's prison, gains by her courage his permission to talk with Psyche. There follows the first of the conversations of Orual and Psyche

which are the core of the book (Chaps.VII, X-XI and XIV).

The subtlety of these emotional and spiritual conflicts between the two half-sisters lies in the ambivalency of Orual's account. For whilst we never depart from her viewpoint, or lose sympathy with her case, her words and attitudes begin to betray the corroding power of a possessive love of whose essential selfishness she is hardly aware.

('Love is too young to know what conscience is,' reads the novel's prefatory quotation from Shakespeare.¹⁰) The theme is that corruption of affection which Lewis discusses in The Four Loves,¹¹ and had portrayed in The Great Divorce, but here it is seen from the inside.

Psyche's serenity wounds Orual. She comes to comfort, not to be comforted, and blindly seeks to shatter Psyche's resignation so that her own motherly care may be needed. Psyche can think of others, forgive Redival's malicious meddling, and glimpse some high vision which reconciles the Fox's pure, but sterile reasonings with the dark, but vital worship of Ungit. Worst of all to Orual, Psyche half anticipates, in her ambiguous role as 'Bride' or 'Victim' of the god, some fulfilment of her childhood dreams of a golden palace on the mountain top. (We recognize this 'longing for home' as one of Lewis's recurrent themes). "I am going to my lover," she cries. "I only see that you have never loved me," Orual complains. "It may well be you are going to the gods. You are becoming cruel like them."¹²

Psyche's 'cruelty' haunts the visions which assail Orual while she raves in fever through the days of longed-for rain that follow Psyche's sacrifice. Then, to rouse her from apathy, Bardia teaches her swordsmen-

ship, and when she recovers strength accompanies her on her self-imposed mission to recover any relics of Psyche from the Tree. They find none. But below it, in 'the secret valley of the god', as Bardia calls it, Psyche herself stands radiant beyond the stream. Her crucial encounter with Orual follows.

Gradually, said Psyche's story of her strange transportation to the valley and of the mysterious bridegroom who comes to her by night, a fundamental barrier to the happiness of their re-union is forced on them. Psyche, in bridal robes, is already in the marble palace of the divine husband to whom her obedience is now due, offering wine and cakes to her guest. Orual still sits on a rock in the forest, eating berries and accepting water from the cupped hands of a ragged Psyche, watching the rain glisten on both their faces. In vain Orual strives to force Psyche from her mad 'delusion' - 'the world had broken in pieces and Psyche and I were not in the same piece'.¹³

Of this crucial encounter Lewis writes:

The central alteration in my own version consists in making Psyche's palace invisible to normal, mortal eyes - if "making" is not the wrong word for something which forced itself upon me, almost at my first reading of the story, as the way the thing must have been. This change, of course, brings with it a more ambivalent motive and a different character for my heroine and finally modifies the whole quality of the tale.¹⁴

Against the evidence of Orual's senses stands the indelible impression of Psyche's radiant joy, of her manifest health and strength, and of her never-yet-questioned integrity. But jealousy, need, scepticism, horror possess Orual. 'I saw in a flash that I must choose one opinion or the other; and in the same flash knew which I had chosen.'¹⁵ Psyche's

'madness' is the straw at which she grasps. She hurls waves of emotion at Psyche's 'vile' 'obsession' in a frantic effort to sweep her away, but they break on Psyche's rock-like assurance, and new-found marital obedience.

The meaning of the parable Lewis has devised is probably this. Faith precedes knowledge.¹⁶ Psyche has believed in her heavenly palace and now sees it; believes in her unseen husband and will one day see him. Orual has not believed and does not see; does not see and will not believe. It is not that faith is demanded without evidence, but that the evidence is the witness of spiritual beauty and super-human love. The divine is a dark 'mystery' (to this much Ungit truly testifies) but one which, in the words of G.K. Chesterton, 'branches forth in all directions with abounding natural health'.¹⁷ Had Orual deferred to Psyche's evident spiritual grace she too would, presumably, have seen. Now she is left to clutch at mutually incompatible theories to explain away Psyche's testimony. Human affection has fought the claims of a higher love and, out off from its fountain head, is poisoned.

What MacDonald says of the Rich Young Man (Matt. xix, 16-22) may be applied to Orual:

A time comes to every man when he must obey, or make such refusal - and know it....The time will come, God only knows its hour, when he will see the nature of his deed, with the knowledge that he was dimly seeing it so even when he did it: the alternative had been put before him.¹⁸

It is Lewis's theme of the crucial choice.

Back across the stream, in the twilight, Orual sees, for a moment, the palace. But is it a true seeming? Even as she doubts it fades, and

again she arraigns the gods. 'They set the riddle and then allow a seeming that can't be tested and can only quicken and thicken the tormenting whirlpool of your guess-work.'¹⁹

Her friends have their own explanation of Psyche's husband - a divine monster hints Bardis, a cunning outlaw insists the Fox. Orual, therefore, plans to re-visit Psyche to rescue her from infamy and shame: 'there is a love deeper than theirs who seek only the happiness of their beloved'²⁰ is her self-justification. The Fox, in this at least, sees more deeply: 'There's one part love in your heart, and five parts anger, and seven parts pride'.²¹

Orual's theories are an insult that Psyche with agonized charity surmounts, but then, tormented by Orual's self-wounding and her threat to kill them both,²² she is tortured into disobedience and consents to destroy her own happiness:

"Oh, Orual - to take my love for you, because you know it goes down to my very roots and cannot be diminished by any other, newer love, and then to make of it a tool, a weapon, a thing of policy and mastery, an instrument of torture...."²³

Orual is adopting the tactics employed by the possessive mother and the 'Tragedian' of The Great Divorce,²⁴ but we are seeing this moral blackmail from the other side.

The God's wrath and Psyche's lamentations follow. In blazing splendour the god appears to Orual though she still resists the light he throws on her motives:

"Now Psyche goes out in exile. Now she must hunger and thirst and tread hard roads. Those against whom I cannot fight must do their will upon her. You, woman, shall know yourself and your work. You also shall be Psyche."²⁵

Knowing that her conduct will not bear his scrutiny, nor her story his scepticism, Orual withholds the truth from the Fox and strives to remake Psyche in her memory as she would have had her.

Outwardly, things go well for her. During the long illness leading to the King's death she strengthens her right to the throne, assisted by the Fox's wise counsel and Bardia's loyal service. She makes a clever compact with the new, rationalising priest of Ungit. She adopts a veil which gradually lends her mystery, authority, even dread. She challenges and kills in personal combat the neighbouring king who demands the surrender of his rebel brother, winning her people's favour and then marrying Redival to her new ally. After her father's death she effects many reforms, reorganizes the kingdom, defeats its enemies and restores its fortunes (Chaps XVI-XX).

In all this, as indeed throughout the book, we regard her with considerable sympathy and even admiration. So do the Fox and Bardia, who spend their intelligence and energy in her service. Inwardly empty, and fruitlessly seeking news of Psyche, whose weeping haunts her, she nevertheless achieves a certain equilibrium.

This is ultimately shattered by an experience which comes to her in old age and leads her to write a final indictment of the gods. Touring neighbouring realms, she finds an isolated shrine where a cult of Istra (Psyche) has sprung up. The story told her by the priest of the shrine (substantially the version of Apuleius) maddens her with its distortions and its theory of jealousy. To the crimes of the gods against her she now adds this, that 'they have now sent out a lying story in which I was given

no riddle to guess, but knew and saw that she was the god's bride, and of my own will destroyed her, and that for jealousy.'²⁶

She thus concludes:

I say, therefore, that there is no creature (toad, scorpion, or serpent) so noxious to man as the gods. Let them answer my charge if they can. It may well be that, instead of answering, they'll strike me mad or leprous or turn me into beast, bird, or tree. But will not all the world then know (and the gods will know it knows) that this is because they have no answer?²⁷

She closes her narrative, like the hero of Henley's poem Invictus, with a dramatic defiance of the gods. In 'the fell clutch of circumstance' her head is 'bloody but unbowed'.

In the shorter, second part of the narrative (four chapters as against twenty-one) the coil Orual has wound is unwound:

Not many days have passed since I wrote those words No answer, but I must unroll my book again....To leave it as it is would be to die perjured; I know so much more than I did about the woman who wrote it.²⁸

No sooner had the act of writing made her re-live her experience than a succession of blows crumbled her self-satisfaction. First the eunuch, Tarin, Kedival's former admirer, now a prosperous ambassador, puts it into Orual's mind that her false and foolish sister may have suffered loneliness through her own neglect and merits some pity. Then, while Orual toils over her writing (sifting motives like one sorting a mound of mingled grain), Bardia falls ill, and she awakens to the knowledge of the pitiless, jealous demands she had made on his time and energy. He dies, and her devouring love for him, now exposed, trembles at the bitter complaints of the wife whose husband, in all but the bond of marriage, she had monopolised. 'You're full fed. Gorged with other men's lives;

women's too. Bardia's; mine; the Fox's; your sister's; both your sisters'." ²⁹

Some days later her presence at the rite of the Year's birth leads her to note the strange comfort simple folk derive from Ungit, and, significantly, not from the statuette of Aphrodite newly imported from Greece but from the bloody and shapeless stone. Its faceless surface, in which a thousand faces may be imagined, obsesses her. "Who is Ungit?" she asks.

The answer comes in one of those strange visions, or 'seeings', which now assail her even in daylight. Taken by the king her father to the bowels of the earth, she gazes into a mirror in which the reflection of her ruinous face, like that of some spider gorged with men's lives, wrings from her the cry "I am Ungit".

Waking, she goes to drown herself in the Shennit, but the voice of the god restrains her:

"You cannot escape Ungit by going to the deadlands, for she is there also. Die before you die. There is no chance after." ³⁰

Brooding over this, she reaches this interpretation:

To say that I was Ungit meant that I was as she; greedy, blood-gorged.

She fears that 'the gods will not love you...unless you have...beauty of soul'. ³¹

Another vision (Lewis's interpretation of the task of gathering wool from the golden rems) makes her despair of acquiring this beauty, but gives her a new insight into the nature of divine wrath. Yet still she clings to the comfort that she had at least loved Psyche truly, and

reads over her own account of the love she lavished on her. But the self-deception has worn thin.

So, when she is granted the opportunity in another 'vision' to present her case to the gods, her deeper motives gush out in terrible, damning frankness - her hatred of their beauty, their 'theft' of Psyche's love, their gift to her of an enlightenment denied herself:

But to hear a chit of a girl who had (or ought to have had) no thought in her head that I'd not put there, setting up for a seer and a prophetess and next thing to a goddess.... how could anyone endure it?³² What should I care for some horrible, new happiness which I hadn't given her and which separated her from me? Do you think I wanted her to be happy that way?... Did you ever remember whose the girl was? She was mine. Mine; do you not know what the word means?³³ Mine! You're thieves, seducers....³⁴

This, her real 'word', is its own condemnation, as Orual realises:

Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they [the gods] hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?³⁵

Then, in the vision, the Fox appears, not to condemn her, but to shame her by confession. He had a part in her error. His own teaching had ignored the necessity of sacrifice, which Ungit's priest, however darkly, had perceived. Orual protests the Fox's love for her, and confesses that she knew his 'reasons' for not returning to his beloved Greece, when he was freed, were only rationalisations of his pity and love for her.

With the Fox as inspired chorus, Orual now watches a final series of visions in which Psyche performs unscathed those tasks of which Orual had borne some of the anguish. A final vision sums up the story:

And now Psyche must go down into the deadlands to get beauty in a casket from the Queen of the Deadlands, from death herself; and bring it back to give it to Ungit so that Ungit will become beautiful. But this is the law for her journey. If, for any fear or favour or love or pity, she speaks to anyone on the way, then she will never come back to the sunlit lands again.³⁶

Past the people pleading with her to be their goddess, past the Fox with his sceptical reasoning, Psyche walks unflinching, but when she meets Oruel, holding out her blood-stained arms, she is more severely tested. Oruel sees that she was Psyche's worst enemy. As the beauty of the gods is increasingly revealed, says the Fox, jealous mortals, "mother and wife and child and friend will all be in league to keep a soul from being united with the Divine Nature."³⁷

Psyche returns, deified, bearing the casket of beauty, which Oruel penitently receives. Bowed in awe before the glorious god who now comes to judge, she hears only these words as she glimpses two beauteous reflections in the pool - 'You also are Psyche'.

Here, Oruel's account, preserved by Amon the priest, breaks off near the end of a comment which death halted.

In assessing the place of Till We Have Faces among Lewis's work, The Times Literary Supplement remarked that 'As a religious allegory Till We Have Faces does not rank with The Pilgrim's Regress or The Great Divorce',³⁸ and this is a reasonable estimate. Yet its merits must not be overlooked. The same review speaks approvingly of the 'unforced narrative of the earlier part of the book', though here this commentary has not done justice, for example, to the finely executed portrait of the Fox, or the many skilful adaptations of the source material.

The limitation imposed by having Orual as mouthpiece, though this is essential to the conception, partly accounts for the comparatively weaker impact. The style is chastened and the narrative line undeviating. More important, the moments at which the recalcitrant elements of the myth fuse with the spiritual intention are rarer and their emotional power less than in the earlier novels.

The failure of Ungit to fulfil her symbolic function is partly to blame. The imagination is puzzled, and in danger of being side-tracked, by the untypically Laurentian flavour of this dark goddess. Ungit's erotic associations prove largely irrelevant, and Orual's subsequent identification with her is liable to puzzle or mislead. The explicit point that Orual, like her, is gorged with the blood of men, and the less overt identification with Cupid's angry mother in the original tale, is ingenious rather than satisfying. Moreover, as a symbol of the necessity (existentially, that is) of sacrifice, that 'without shedding of blood there is no remission' (Heb. ix, 22), Ungit has serious drawbacks.

Yet, though the work is flawed, its intention is ambitious and worthwhile. Self-justification is the subtlest and most recalcitrant foe of spiritual enlightenment. The art was to lie in presenting Orual's core of self-complacency and selfish love so subtly, and so sympathetically, and in allowing her to document such an impressive case against the gods, that its subsequent disintegration would shatter the like defences in the reader. It is as if the Ghost Dwarf of The Great Divorce had been allowed, from the start, to tell the story of his marriage to a saint from his own point of view.

The retrospective light thrown by the recantation is interesting both technically and theologically. Readers will follow Lewis's 'message' with varying degrees of success and pleasure, but none, perhaps, will escape some mingled shock of novelty and recognition at the surprise sprung by the second part. Orual, in her own way, illustrates G.K. Chesterton's testimony to the coming of faith, that in its beam 'The whole land was lit up, as it were, back to the first fields of my childhood'.³⁹

Not unworthily, the novel rounds off Lewis's didactic quartet, his epistles to the sceptics, addressed to those who, like Orual, in Milton's words:

doubt His ways not just,
As to His own edicts found contradicting;
Then give the reins to wandering thought,
Regardless of His glory's diminution,
Till, by their own perplexities involved,
They revel more, still less resolved,
But never find self-satisfying solution.⁴⁰

In Chapter XX Till We Have Faces will be compared with Francois Mauriac's The Knot of Vipers, which treats the same theme in a contemporary setting.

CHAPTER X

THE PLANETARY ROMANCES

Lewis's planetary romances, Out of the Silent Planet (1938), Perelandra (1943), and That Hideous Strength (1945), form a trilogy on the theme of the 'cosmic war', with Elwin Ransom, the Cambridge philologist, as their central figure. They have a triple origin - psychological, theological and literary.

Their psychological origin lies, according to Surprised by Joy, in Lewis's boyhood. He frankly admits that his early, obsessive interest in the planets probably had a psycho-analytical explanation. (This is not to say that the imaginative and intellectual features of his later romances can be completely interpreted in terms of this early obsession).

The idea of other planets exercised upon me then a peculiar, heady attraction, which was quite different from any other of my literary interests. Most emphatically it was not the romantic spell of Das Ferne. "Joy" (in my technical sense) never darted from Mars or the Moon. This was something coarser and stronger. The interest, when the fit was upon me, was ravenous, like a lust. This particular coarse strength I have come to accept as a mark that the interest which has it is psychological not spiritual; behind such a fierce tang there lurks, I suspect, a psychoanalytical explanation. I may perhaps add 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, more elusive, and genuinely imaginative, impulse. That the ordinary interest in scientifiotion is an affair for psychoanalysts is borne out by the fact that all who like it, like it thus ravenously, and equally by the fact that those who do not, are often nauseated by it. The repulsion of the one sort has the same coarse strength as the fascinated interest of the other and is equally a tell-tale.¹

Lewis does not make the connection himself, but this ravenous appetite for planetary 'scientifiction' would seem to be an aspect of that 'passion for the Occult' which he discusses in Surprised by Joy,² when describing the influence exercised on him by the matron at Chartres. It was a 'ravenous, quasi-prurient desire for the Occult, the Preternatural as such',³ which revived in Lewis, at Oxford, after the 1914-18 War, under the influence of Yeats and Meeterlinck. He expressed it, and rejected it, through the magician who tempts Dymor. Later, Lewis says, he 'tried to describe it in a novel'.² This is a reference to That Hideous Strength, where a link with the planetary theme is explicitly made. Through the 'macrobes' (evil, spiritual beings) Mark Studdock feels the lust for the extra-terrestrial and the Occult combined - a desire that 'leaped to him across infinite distances with the speed of light....salt, black, ravenous'.⁴

One 'genuinely imaginative impulse' by means of which Lewis exercised this heedy impulse was his interest in astrology and the medieval picture of the cosmos. This lore, familiar to him through his studies of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,⁵ contributes much to his conception of Malecandra and Perelandra, and affects the structure and themes of all three planetary romances.

Much of their supernatural 'machinery' and psychological symbolism is a theological and imaginative transmutation of astrology. He evinces, like Holst in his well-known suite, an intimate knowledge of the Medieval view of the planets. He had already displayed this in his essay 'The Alliterative Metre',⁶ where he supplies a specimen passage which renders

their 'characters' with considerable success. He says, in the same essay, that 'the characters of the planets, as conceived by medieval astrology, seem to me to have a permanent value as spiritual symbols - to provide a Phenomenologie des Geistes which is specially worthwhile in our own generation. Of Saturn we know more than enough. But who does not need to be reminded of Jove?'⁷ In the planetary romances, medieval astrology is frequently used as a source of spiritual symbols, particularly in the closing episodes of That Hideous Strength.

Lewis goes further than this, however, and revives aspects of that Medieval 'world picture' which have been described for us by such scholars as A.O. Lovejoy⁸ and E.W.W. Tillyard⁹. The major concepts noted by Tillyard - the Chain of Being, the Corresponding Planes and the Cosmic Dance - all figure in these romances. Lewis's universe is packed 'full of life'¹⁰, organic, rational and spiritual; the recurrent concept of 'hierarchy' continually draws attention to correspondences between these levels; the final vision of all three romances is conveyed in terms of a celestial dance. In Out of the Silent Planet and That Hideous Strength these concepts are frequently in mind. In Perelandra they provide a pattern for the whole work.

This revival of archaic ideas is, of course, attended by difficulties and dangers. Cosmic concepts based originally on Ptolemaic astronomy are applied to the Copernican solar system and the twentieth century picture of the galaxies. Inevitably, they experience stresses and strains, and yet, aesthetically at least, the result is not so odd as one might expect. An expansion of the scale of time and space sets one free from

twentieth century preconceptions. In a world like Malacandra, whose civilised history spans the geological epochs, we shake off what Lewis calls our 'chronological snobbery'.^{//} The medieval and modern pictures, seen from afar, have equal claims to consideration. The twentieth century, in its pursuit of physical phenomena, may have become dead to metaphysical realities of which earlier centuries were aware.

Lewis seems to have been interested from an early age in the theological implications of the scientific picture of the cosmos. He was not the first to consider the problems it raises and the speculations it invites. Medieval theology and modern science had already met in the seventeenth century, and an examination of the issues then discussed provides an interesting background to Lewis's planetary romances.

The treatment, in philosophy and fiction, of the cosmic voyage and 'the plurality of worlds' has recently aroused considerable interest. Marjorie Hope Nicolson mainly describes the moon voyage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but has something to say of recent writers, including Lewis. Roger Lancelyn Green, who deals with planetary, as well as moon, voyage, is particularly informative about more recent fiction. Roger Sheckleton throws light on the course and antecedents of the seventeenth century debate on 'the plurality of worlds'.¹²

All three reveal that many of the theological implications of Lewis's planetary romances were anticipated by seventeenth century works on the moon voyage and the plurality of worlds. These, which arose from Galileo's revolutionary discoveries, seem to have been stimulated by the first English translation (1634) of Lucian's two cosmic voyages, the True

History and the Icaromenippus. Originating in Lucian, (with sidelights from Cicero's Somnium Scipionis and Plutarch's De Facie in Orbe Lunare), the tradition runs via the Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa's De docta ignorantia, which taught the movement of the earth and the plurality of worlds, through Giordano Bruno, Campanella and Charles Sorel to Johan Kepler's Somnium (published posthumously in 1634), with byways in Ariosto, Rabelais, Cervantes and others. Most popular and influential in the seventeenth century was the story of Domingo Gonsales' flight to the moon by the aid of 'gansas' (a species of wild swan), as told in Bishop Godwin's The Man in the Moone (published 1638). Almost as popular was the serious discussion it immediately provoked in John Wilkins's The Discovery of a World in the Moone (1638). Perhaps the topic is most often recalled today through the satiric moon-voyage of Cyrano de Bergerac, and the elegant and amusing Conversations of Fontenelle.¹³

But it is, undoubtedly, the work of John Wilkins, later Bishop of Chester,¹⁴ (the primary source of both Cyrano and Fontenelle), that holds most interest for the student of Lewis; and that not so much in his influential account of the 'four several ways' in which space-flights might be effected as in his speculations regarding the possibility, and implications, of a plurality of worlds.

The full title of Wilkins's fascinating work, published anonymously in 1638, is 'The Discovery of a World In The Moone. Or, A Discourse Tending, To Prove, that 'tis probable there may be another habitable World in that Planet.'¹⁵ Its argument is carried forward by means of a number of 'Propositions', of which the second (particularly applicable to Lewis's

romances) asserts, 'That a plurality of worlds doth not contradict any principle of reason or faith', whilst the thirteenth maintains, 'That 'tis probable there may be inhabitants in this other World, but of what kinde they are is uncertaine'.

Wilkins's speculations raise many of the issues involved in Out of the Silent Planet and Perelandra, particularly those relating to the status of rational inhabitants of other worlds, 'concerning whom,' he writes, 'there might be many difficult questions raised, as whether that place be more inconvenient for habitation than our World (as Kepler thinks) whether they are the seed of Adem, whether they are there in a blessed estate, or else what meanes there may be for their salvation, with many other such uncertaine enquiries, which I shall willingly omit,....'¹⁶ Later, he pushes his speculations further, and continues:

Wherefore Campanella's second conjecture may be more probable, that the inhabitants of that world, are not men as we are, but some othere kinde of creatures which beere some proportion, and likeness to our natures. Or it may be, they are of a quite different nature from anything here below, such as no imagination can describe; our understandings being capable only of such things as have entered by our senses, or else such mixed natures as may bee composed from them. Now, there may be many other species of creatures besides those that are already knowne in the world; there is a great chasme betwixt the nature of men and Angels; It may bee the inhabitants of the Planets are of a middle nature between both these. 'Tis not improbable that God might create some of all kindes, that so he might more compleatly glorifie himselfe in the works of his Power and Wisdome.¹⁷

The relevance of this passage to the Ransom trilogy is at once apparent. The planetary romances give 'a local habitation and a name' to these speculations regarding alien creatures, and attempt to illuminate the 'many difficult Questions' raised by Wilkins, and by later and less

pious, space-and-time philosophers. They are an imaginative answer, by a more daring metaphysician, to those 'Uncertaine Enquiries, which,' says John Wilkins, 'I shall willingly omit'.

I have no evidence that Lewis had read Wilkins's book when he came to write the Ransom stories, but his own views on these questions, as expressed in chapter VII of Miracles, resemble those of Wilkins, and recall many of the themes of the romances.¹⁸

He begins by alluding to a widely-held modern opinion that 'now that we know the real immensity of the Universe' we can no longer believe in miraculous interventions on Man's behalf: 'We have discovered our insignificance and can no longer suppose that God is so drastically concerned in our petty affairs'.¹⁹ He contests the popular supposition that the immensity of the universe has only recently become apparent, and points out that it was discussed by such writers as Ptolemy, Boethius and Dante. For him, the problem is rather why the 'spatial insignificance of Earth...should suddenly in quite modern times have been set up as a stock argument against Christianity and enjoyed, in that capacity, a brilliant career'.²⁰ The conception of infinite space, and therefore of the Earth's relative insignificance, follows, he suggests, from the three-dimensional character of our apprehension of reality, and gives rise to the problem of whether this infinite space is empty or contains bodies.

He continues:

If it were empty, or if it contained nothing but our own Sun, then that vast vacancy would certainly be used as an argument against the very existence of God. Why, it would be asked, should He create one speck and leave all the rest of space to nonentity? If, on the other hand, we find (as we actually do) countless bodies floating in

space, they must be either habitable or uninhabitable. Now the odd thing is that both alternatives are equally used as objections to Christianity. If the universe is teeming with life other than ours, then this, we are told, makes it quite ridiculous to believe that God could be so concerned with the human race as to 'come down from Heaven' and be made man for its redemption. If, on the other hand, our planet is really unique in harbouring organic life, then this is thought to prove that life is only an accidental by-product in the universe and so again to disprove our religion. It seems that we are hard to please.

The conception of 'a universe teeming with life other than ours', and its possible bearings on the Christian doctrine of redemption, is particularly relevant to Lewis's first two planetary romances.

After further discussion of these two objections to Christianity, in which he notes that 'It is a profound mistake to imagine that Christianity ever intended to dissipate the bewilderment and even the terror, the sense of our nothingness, which come upon us when we think about the nature of things', Lewis reverts, in terms reminiscent of Wilkins, to the doctrine of redemption, as effected by the possibility of life on other worlds:

The sceptic asks how we can believe that God so 'come down' to this one tiny planet. The question would be embarrassing if we knew (1) that there are rational creatures on any of the other bodies that float in space; (2) that they have, like us, fallen and need redemption; (3) that their redemption must be in the same mode as ours; (4) that redemption in this mode has been withheld from them. But we know none of them. The universe may be full of happy lives that never needed redemption. It may be full of lives that have been redeemed in the very same mode as our own. It may be full of things quite other than life in which God is interested though we are not.

In these passages from Miracles Lewis seems to have his planetary romances in mind. Out of the Silent Planet is concerned with 'happy lives

that never needed redemption'; Perelandra with the redemption, or, rather, preservation, of rational creatures on Venus, where the theme of 'Paradise Retained' is related to Christian theology.

This discussion of Miracles and the seventeenth century interest in the 'plurality of worlds' has been designed to show that Lewis's blend of theology and planetary voyage is not the isolated freak of fancy which at first it seems. Lewis's originality lies, rather, in his employment of certain features of current science-fiction to give his reformulation of the seventeenth century debate a contemporary appeal.

When Lewis wrote Out of the Silent Planet, science-fiction, despite its respectable antecedents in Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, was still largely confined to the sensational pulp magazines of America. In the 'thirties only Olaf Stapledon, in his cosmic 'histories', had brought a powerful intellect and a sweeping imagination to bear on it. In Lest and First Men (1931) he had traced Man's development beyond a World State and catastrophic atomic wars into the almost limitless future. Man literally 'remakes' himself many times, and gains radically new powers until, after the lapse of geological epochs, he begins new phases of his history on Venus and, ultimately, on Neptune. In Star Maker (1937), Stapledon had scanned an even vaster horizon. His narrator, after numerous visits to worlds remote in space and time, moves gradually towards a merger with the Cosmic Mind. Finally, he becomes aware of our own space-time cosmos as only one of innumerable other 'universes' created by a transcendent and prolific Deity.

In The Abolition of Man (1944), Lewis reveals himself as 'a man

rather prone to think of remote futurity - a man who can read Mr. Olaf Stapledon with delight'.²¹ Yet Stapledon (whose prolific ideas figure unacknowledged in much of subsequent science-fiction) has had less influence on him than one might have expected. He contributes, but not exclusively, to the 'planetary imperialism' of the scientist, Weston, the theme of 'man-moulding' in That Hideous Strength, and to the general distaste evinced by Lewis for a godless 'scientism'. The main ideas and patterns of Lewis's artistically concentrated romances had been formulated before he read Stapledon's gigantic sketches.

Both writers, in fact, owe a debt to H.G. Wells, but whereas Stapledon exploits the cosmic sweep of The Time Machine and An Outline of History, Lewis responds to the strongly symbolic element in the patterns and images of The War of the Worlds and The First Men in the Moon.

Lewis's acquaintance with Wells's early scientific romances goes back to his early reading at preparatory school in 1908 and the years immediately following. In Surprised by Joy, after referring to his schoolboy taste for fiction of the Quo Vadis type, he remarks, 'What has worn better, and what I took to at the same time, is the work of Rider Haggard; and also the "scientifiction" of H.G. Wells'. He was helped to understand Wells by his uncle, A.W. Hamilton, who 'told me all the science I could then take in' and 'thus provided the intellectual background'.²² The cosmic stories, notably The First Men in the Moon²³ and The War of the Worlds,²⁴ seem particularly to have fascinated him, and his brief preface to Out of the Silent Planet acknowledges their influence:

Certain slighting references to earlier stories of this type which will be found in the following pages have

been put there for purely dramatic purposes. The author would be sorry if any reader supposed he was too stupid to have enjoyed Mr. H.G. Wells's fantasies or too ungrateful to acknowledge his debt to them.

Externally, Lewis's debt to Wells is two-fold. First there are the borrowings, or modifications, of the 'technical' features of his stories, some of which had been used by earlier writers of planetary voyages. They include the pseudo-scientific force used to motivate the rocket (Wells's 'Cavorite' and Lewis's 'Weston Rays'); the first encounter with the inhabitants of another world (Wells's Selenites, Lewis's sorns and hrossa); and the creation of a landscape and creatures in keeping with the supposed characteristics of the satellite or planet (Wells's account of Mars and the physiology of his Martians, Lewis's account of the Malecandrians).

Secondly, and more important, is Wells's practice (again not new) of comparing, directly or obliquely, the imagined social order with that of Earth, as in Cavor's interview with the Grand Lunar - a tradition which goes back to Gulliver's conversations with the Emperor of Brobdingnag, and beyond. This appears, very much transformed, in the interviews of Ransom, Devine and Weston with the Oyarsa of Malacandra.²⁵

There are further specific debts to Wells. The Selenites, whose 'knowledge is stored in distended brains',²⁶ and particularly the Grand Lunar himself, lead to 'The Head' in That Hideous Strength, a 'creature' who evokes the same mingled horror and fascination.²⁷ The ascent of Bedford and Cavor to the moon's surface after their battle with the Selenites anticipates Ransom's ascent of the caverns of Tai Harendrimar after his

fight with Weston.²⁸ There is the same specialisation of function among the varieties of the Selenites as among the three races of Malacandra. Finally, Bedford and Cavor, 'the comic scientist and the jaunty and painfully clubbable man' as V.S. Pritchett calls them,²⁹ are forerunners of Devine and Weston.

Yet these, and other features, are used for different ends than those Wells had in mind, for all the moral and philosophical implications are Lewis's own. In The First Men in the Moon Wells, speculating about the future of applied science, feels the lure of a terrestrial imperialism. Admittedly, he is sometimes abashed by his vision of the destruction likely to accompany the exercise of Man's increasing powers, but his attitude to Bedford's aggressive and greedy outbursts is ambiguous. 'What a home for our surplus population!'³⁰ says the intoxicated Bedford of the moon. Later, he plans to 'put the thing on a sounder footing. Come back in a bigger sphere with guns'.³¹ This glimpse of terrestrial colonialism is obviously ironical, but no alternative picture of inter-planetary relations is offered. Lewis, on the other hand, in Weston and Devine, definitely pillories this 'imperial theme',³² and, like Bedford in a temporary mood of pessimism, envisages the unholy alliance of human ambition and scientific power as 'the very Devil'.³³

Dreams of human expansion had grown in later scientific fiction, both in the pulp magazines and in more reputable works. Olaf Stapledon's Last and First Men, as previously pointed out, was known to Lewis, and shows Man remaking himself and subjugating Venus with half-reluctant, but ruthless efficiency.³⁴

In Ransom's account of Professor Weston, Lewis pronounces judgment on the fully-developed form of Bedford's doctrine:

He was a man obsessed with the idea which is at this moment circulating all over our planet in obscure works of "scientifiction", in little Interplanetary Societies and Rocketry Clubs, and between the covers of monstrous magazines, ignored or mocked by the intellectuals, but ready, if ever the power is put into its hands, to open a new chapter of misery for the universe. It is the idea that humanity, having now sufficiently corrupted the planet where it arose, must at all costs contrive to seed itself over a larger area: that the vast astronomical distances which are God's quarantine regulations, must somehow be overcome. This for a start. But beyond this lies the sweet poison of the false infinite - the wild dream that planet after planet, system after system, in the end galaxy after galaxy, can be forced to sustain, everywhere and for ever, the sort of life which is contained in the loins of our own species - a dream begotten by the hatred of death upon the fear of true immortality, fondled in secret by thousands of ignorant men and hundreds who are not ignorant. The destruction or enslavement of other species in the universe, if such there are, is to these minds a welcome corollary.³⁵

What particularly stirred Lewis to attack this philosophy was the assumption behind Wells's insect-like Selenites and bloodthirsty Martians (the prototypes of our current 'bug-eyed monsters' and 'Things from outer space') that the inhabitants of other worlds must be both repulsive and malevolent. This conception flatters the reader's ego and tends to produce fear, hatred and cruelty. It arouses the wrath of the theologian in Lewis, who, as a corrective, offers his alternative vision of the harmony - personal, social and religious - of his Malacendrians, a harmony threatened by the 'bent' creatures of Thulcandra (Earth); and, again, the unfallen innocence of the Lady of Perelendra, subjected to devilish temptations through the agency of a possessed Weston. In brief, whereas Wells recalls those writers who portrayed the aborigines of the New World as

painted devils, Lewis recalls those who portrayed them as Noble Savages.³⁶

It is interesting to note what an unpleasant impression the insect-like Selenites made on Lewis, as several reflections of Ransom,³⁷ taken along with Lewis's remarks in Surprised by Joy, reveal. As a child Lewis had a pathological fear of insects, which he traces, in part, to a revolting 'out-out' in one of his childish picture-books.³⁸ He finds a place for this fear, and exorcises it, in the episode in Perelandra where Ransom encounters a gigantic, insect-like creature in the caverns beneath Tai Harendrimar.³⁹

A further conception which gripped Lewis's imagination in The First Men in the Moon was Wells's impressive picture of 'the infinite and final night of space'.⁴⁰ He would appear to have this in mind when he writes, 'my early reading...had lodged very firmly in my imagination the vastness and cold of space, the littleness of Man'.⁴¹ Yet, by the time he came to write Out of the Silent Planet, he had countered this impression of 'cold vacuity' by an utterly different conception of the 'ocean of radiance'.⁴²

Nevertheless, Wells's imaginative pictures of scenes outside man's present environment have left their impression on Lewis's planetary romances. Such 'images' are, for him, one of the most valuable aspects of non-naturalistic narrative, and Wells's gift for conveying the very sensation of an un-earthly scene, for sustaining the 'extra-terrestrial' note, won his unqualified admiration.⁴³ One passage in The First Men in the Moon, which he singles out for praise,⁴⁴ is worth quoting at length as an example of the effects he has sought to achieve in his own stories. Bedford is vainly searching for his space vehicle whilst the sun nears

the lunar horizon.

I looked up with a start and the sky had darkened now almost to blackness, and was thick with a gathering multitude of coldly watchful stars. I looked eastward, and the light of that shrivelled world was touched with a sombre bronze, westward, and the sun - robbed now by a thickening white mist of half its heat and splendour - was touching the crater rim, was sinking out of sight and all the shrubs and jagged and tumbled rocks stood out against it in a bristling disorder of black shapes. Into the great lake of darkness westward, a vast wreath of mist was sinking. A cold wind set all the crater shivering. Suddenly for a moment I was in a puff of falling snow, and all the world about me grey and dim... Over me, about me, closing in on me, embracing me ever nearer, was the Eternal, that which was before the beginning, and that which triumphs over the end; that enormous void in which all light and life and being is but the thin and vanishing splendour of a falling star, the cold, the stillness, the silence, - the infinite and final Night of space.⁴⁵

Lewis notes how this passage seeks 'to trouble us with Pascal's old fear of those eternal silences which have gnawed at so much religious faith and shattered so many humanistic hopes: to evoke with them and through them all our racial and childish memories of exclusion and desolation: to present, in fact, as an intuition one permanent aspect of human experience'. [my italics]⁴⁴

The landscapes and seascapes of Malacandra and Perelandra are, in part, Lewis's emulations of this vivid scene, and his own 'intuitions' of 'permanent aspects of human experience'.

Another writer of major importance to Lewis was David Lindsay, an author now almost forgotten, whose strange novel, A Voyage to Arcturus (1920), influenced Lewis as much as The War of the Worlds.

The novel centres on Maskull, a dynamic character transported to the Arcturan planet, Tormance, by the mysterious Krag, to engage in a

quest for Muspel, the ultimate Deity. His desperate pilgrimage involves him in many encounters, and conflicts, with the planet's strange, diverse inhabitants, and in a protracted struggle to pierce through the deceptions of Crystalmen, the engaging, pervasive but corrupting Devil of this universe, and attain to the sublime detachment of Muspel.

E.H. Visiak gives an acute appreciation of this novel by a 'strange mystical genius'⁴⁶. He claims for it a uniquely disturbing effect on the reader's mind and nerves:

The reader's very intellect is assailed; his imagination is appalled. The story is an allegory, the characters are mere abstractions and types, the environment is fantastic, the atmosphere is rarefied; yet the illusion is complete, the terrific conception is revealed - but not at all by any potent art of expression for the diction is plain even to crudeness.

A Voyage to Arcturus is, superficially considered, the sort of extravaganza that might have been written by Jules Verne if he had possessed the faculty of inventing psychological instead of scientific, or mechanical, novelties.

This 'stupendous ontological fable', which Visiak compares with Paradise Lost, touches Lewis's interests at many points, and, as his essay 'On Stories' reveals, showed him new possibilities in the planetary romance. He calls it

....the most remarkable achievement in this kind....
 Unaided by any special skill or even any sound taste in language, the author leads us up a stair of unpredictables. In each chapter we think we have found his final position; each time we are utterly mistaken. He builds whole worlds of imagery and passion, any one of which would have served another writer for a whole book, only to pull each of them to pieces and pour scorn on it. The physical dangers, which are plentiful, here count for nothing: it is we ourselves and the author who walk through a world of spiritual dangers which makes them seem trivial. There is no recipe for writing of this kind. But part of the secret is that the author (like

Kafka) is recording a lived dialectic. His Tormance is a region of the spirit. He is the first writer to discover what 'other planets' are really good for in fiction. No merely physical strangeness or merely spatial distance will realize that 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.⁴⁷

A Voyage to Arcturus was obviously an important discovery for Lewis. It suggested a form for his spiritual and imaginative intuitions. As the planet Tormance 'swims into his ken', it opens a way for Malacandra and Perelandra.

The appeal of the 'worlds of imagery and passion...of spiritual dangers', was probably intensified by the Scandinavian nomenclature, which would satisfy his taste for 'northernness'. The characters have such names as Krag, Maskull, Ooeaxe, and Dreamsinter, whilst the settings include Starkness, the Wombflash Forest and the Mornstab Pass. They are intimately fused with the psychological and metaphysical aspects of the story and are, in fact, 'objective co-relatives' of aspects of Man's primal nature which the author has isolated and intensified. The personages embody such primal elements as the pure altruism of Joiwind, the devouring 'will to power' of Ooeaxe, and the essential femininity of Sullenbode.

Lewis does not choose to create such startlingly surrealist personages. He requires creatures of the sunlight and the waking world, rather than these star-begotten figures of a haunting, nightmarish world. Yet the bold techniques of such non-naturalistic characters must have assisted in the creation of Hyci and Augray, Tor and Tinidril.

Again, the impressive metaphysic would grip his imagination. His

own darts of 'joy' are not unlike the intermittent drum-tap messages which summon the intrepid voyager, Maskull, from his involvement in the world of Crystalman. But Lewis does not share the hyper-puritanical contempt for pleasure evinced by Krag, Maskull's stern mentor amid the allurements and perils of Tormance. For Lewis, pleasure, though often a distraction, is essentially a creation and ally of God, keeping alive that vital element which responds to the heavenly call.⁴⁸

More specific influences may be traced. Lewis shares with Lindsay the notion that the food and drink of a strange region sharpen the newcomer's faculties. The 'gnawl water' of Tormance enabled Maskull to perceive 'beauties and wonders which he had not hitherto suspected';⁴⁹ the bubble trees of Perelandra so sharpened Ransom's senses that 'all the colours about him seemed richer and the dimness of that world seemed clarified'.⁵⁰ Both writers, however, may owe this device to George MacDonald's Phantastes, where Anodos says of the food in fairy land, 'it not only satisfied my hunger, but operated in such a way upon my senses that I was brought into far more complete relationship with the things around me'.⁵¹

Both Lewis and Lindsay introduce new colours into their imagined worlds. On Tormance, Maskull sees two new colours which, like our own, have emotional effects. 'Just as blue is delicate and mysterious, yellow clear and unsubtle, and red sanguine and passionate, so he felt ulfire to be wild and painful, and jale dreamlike, feverish and voluptuous.'⁵² Lewis adapts this notion to his spiritual beings, the Oyeresu. In Ransom's cottage the Oyarsa of Malecandra appears as a cylinder of light, which

Ransom is afterwards quite unable to visualize. Later, when Malacandra and Perelandra manifest themselves more fully, he perceives various hues outside our normal range, and a 'scientific' explanation is offered.⁵³

Yet these are details when compared with Lindsay's revelation of what planets are 'really good for in fiction'. What Lewis shares, above all, with Wells and Lindsay is their ability to utilize the planets as symbols of some 'permanent aspect of human experience' or some 'lived dialectic'.⁵⁴

Such symbolism is to be distinguished from allegory, as Lewis makes clear in his prefatory note to Perelandra, where he writes, 'All the human characters in this book are purely fictitious and none of them is allegorical'. Wayland Hilton-Young has suggested that 'Out of the Silent Planet is an allegory of the three parts of man; reason, emotion and will',⁵⁵ but this oversimplifies the status of the three races of Malacandra. Primarily they are to be taken as creatures who may, in fact, exist on other worlds.

Lewis clarifies the distinction between allegory and symbolism in The Allegory of Love. After observing that, 'It is of the very nature of thought and language to represent what is immaterial in picturable terms', he distinguishes two modes of expressing these intangibles. 'You can start with an immaterial fact, such as the passions which you actually experience, and can then invent visibilia to express them....This is allegory'. By analogy, 'it is possible that our material world in its turn is the copy of an invisible world', and, says Lewis, 'The attempt to read that something else through its sensible imitations, to see the arch-

type [sic] in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism or sacramentalism'.

In this sense the planetary romances are symbolic.

Lewis continues:

...for the symbolist it is we who are the allegory. We are the 'frigid personifications'; the heavens above us are the 'shadowy abstractions'; the world which we mistake for reality is the flat outline of that which elsewhere veritably is in all the round of its unimagenable dimensions.⁵⁶

He notes, truly, that the modern reader prefers symbolism to allegory, for, certainly, the modern symbolist movement has not been accompanied by any widespread revival of allegory. It is significant, also, that Lewis's acknowledged 'master', George MacDonald, was, in such works as Phantastes and Lilith, a symbolist rather than an allegorist. Thus, through the symbolism of his romances, Lewis increases his appeal to the modern reader and draws closer to the sources of his own inspiration.

The discussion of science-fiction in this chapter has been intentionally selective. Much of the field is not particularly relevant to Lewis's planetary romances, since its exponents have used the form for a variety of purposes. Lewis, in the main, has confined his interest to the symbolists, or myth-makers.

He himself takes the view that science-fiction is not a homogeneous genre; not, in fact, a genre at all in the literary sense:

There is nothing common to all who write it except the use of a particular 'machine'. Some of the writers are of the family of Jules Verne and are primarily interested in technology. Some use the machine simply for literary fantasy and produce what is essentially Marchen or myth. A great many use it for satire; nearly all the most pungent American criticism of the American way of life

takes this form, and would at once be denounced as un-American if it ventured into any other. And finally, there is the great mass of hacks who merely 'cashed in' on the boom....You can, if you wish, class all science-fiction together; but it is about as perceptive as classing the works of Ballentyne, Conrad and W.W. Jacobs together as 'the sea-story' and then criticising that.⁵⁷

This view is widely different from that implied by Kingsley Amis in his New Maps of Hell, and, though the disagreement is partly a matter of terminology, it points to an important difference in their attitudes to fiction, and to human nature.

Amis's preliminary definition of science-fiction merely indicates what Lewis calls the 'machine':

Science fiction is that class of prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is hypothesised on the basis of some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology, whether human or extra-terrestrial in origin.⁵⁸

A little later he offers a definition that has more to say of purpose:

...science-fiction presents with verisimilitude the human effects of spectacular changes in our environment, changes either deliberately willed or involuntarily suffered.⁵⁹

It is obvious from the references here to 'verisimilitude' and 'human effects' that Amis has the sociological value of science-fiction in the foreground of his mind, as his subsequent survey and discussion bear out. In fact, his interests lie almost exclusively in Lewis's third category, that of 'satire' and social criticism. This is in line with the interests of his own fiction.

Amis seems to regard the tendency of some writers to expatiate on their planetary settings as an irrelevance, a view which contrasts strongly with Lewis's reference to 'the idea of otherness which is what we are

always trying to grasp in a story about voyaging through space'.⁶⁰

Amis makes only a passing reference to Lewis's romances, noting that, along with Williams, he is an exception to many 'rules' about science-fiction. His own discussion of 'fantasy' is limited to the generally sensational 'wish-fulfilment' type to be found in the pulp magazines. (His implied limitation of the term to such purposes is typical of a modern attitude which Lewis discusses in An Experiment in Criticism.) It is strange, however, in view of Amis's title, that his book does not include a discussion of That Hideous Strength.

A much clearer, and more sympathetic idea of the tradition in which Lewis works can be obtained from Bernard Bergonzi's recent book The Early H.G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romances.⁶¹ He sharply distinguishes Wells from Jules Verne who, as Lewis writes, is 'primarily interested in technology'.⁶² Nor does he find that Wells's primary interest lies in what was to become his later preoccupation, that is, sociological criticism. Instead, he sees the early Wells as an imaginative artist with a gift for symbolism and myth-making. He maintains that the longer romances 'abound in suggestions of archetypal imagery',⁶³ and remarks of The Time Machine that 'Since it is a romance and not a piece of realistic fiction, it conveys its meaning in poetic fashion through images, not by the revelation of character in action'.⁶⁴

Both these comments could be appropriately applied to Lewis's romances. So, above all, could this, with which this introduction to the planetary romances may appropriately close:

In Wells the symbolic element is inherent in the total fictional situation.⁶⁵

CHAPTER XI

OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET

Ever since the Italian astronomer, Schiaparelli, announced, following the oppositions of 1877 and 1879, that he had observed 'canals' on its surface, Mars has fascinated the tellers of 'space-and-time'¹ stories. This is made clear by R.L. Green, who has given a full account² of the numerous, but now largely forgotten, storytellers who made their imaginative voyages to Mars in the period 1880 to 1917.

The novelist Percy Greg (1836-89) was the first into the field with his long, two volume story, Across the Zodiac (1880), which tells of a voyage to Mars in 1830 in a machine motivated by 'apergy'. Next came Hugh MacColl, in 1889, with Mr. Stranger's Sealed Packet, to be followed by Robert Cromie, in 1890, with A Plunge into Space. The publication of Mars (1896) by the American astronomer Percy Lowell gave a further impetus. Wells drew on it for 'The Crystal Egg' (in Tales of Space and Time, 1899), and in 1898 produced his account of a Martian invasion of Earth in The War of the Worlds. Lowell's later book, Mars and its Canals (1911), gave Edgar Rice Burroughs what scientific background he needed for A Princess of Mars (1917), and for his subsequent Martian thrillers. Mark Wicks in To Mars via the Moon (1911) was more prosaic and scientific. In contrast, Edwin Lester Arnold, in his charming fantasy Lieut. Gulliver Jones, had been little concerned with any authentic, scientific background.

What Lewis seems chiefly to have inherited from these tales of Mars, or at least from The War of the Worlds, is the conception (common

to Greg, Cromie, Arnold and Wells) of a world far older than our own.³ Green considers that Lewis's story is the masterpiece among these Martian chronicles, referring in his chapter 'Tormance and Malacandra' to 'The greatness of the theme and the universal application of the struggle'.⁴ Marjorie Nicolson, for her part, calls it 'the most beautiful of all cosmic-voyages and in some ways the most moving'.⁵

Green's account of the planetary voyage stops short of the science-fiction stories which have proliferated since 1930, and especially since the war. These are dealt with in Science and Fiction (1957) by Patrick Moore, who prefers the story which is faithful to current scientific knowledge. He has written space-travel stories himself, but like the better-known tales of A.C. Clarke, who shares his scientific approach, they post-date Lewis's planetary romances. Clarke, the author of such novels as The Sands of Mars, writes as a serious exponent of inter-planetary travel. The second edition of his The Exploration of Space (1959) is the standard account, from the 'progressive' camp, of the scientific factors involved.

Both the 'scientific' and the 'fantastic' trends persist. Whilst Clarke epitomises the first, Ray Bradbury, in The Silver Locusts, a hauntingly poetic evocation of Earth-men on Mars, is the contemporary exponent of the second. Out of the Silent Planet, true to its Wellsian lineage, strikes a balance between fact and fancy.

The story opens with neither poetic fantasy nor scientific parade but with the quiet figure of Ransom, a Cambridge philologist, benighted on a walking tour in the West Country. Presented in a plain style,

relieved by occasional vivid touches ('the sky was the colour of dark slate') it gradually assumes the air of an unpretentious thriller of the John Buchan school. Ransom's anxiety to find lodgings for the night, his arrival at the faintly ominous house, his glimpse of the idiot boy's struggle with its occupants, and his recognition of Devine, a school acquaintance whom he recalls with distaste, seem simple, but effective counters in the initial moves of some tale of crime and detection. Our curiosity is aroused. Is the boy being used for illegal experiments? Is the strange structure behind the house a laboratory - or what?

Even what follows - the doctored drink, the bid for freedom, and the stunning blow - are familiar properties, though Ransom's strange 'dream' already foreshadows the planetary voyage. (Yet even the premonitory vision is found in Buchan's stories.)

Devine and Weston, I have already suggested,⁶ are counterparts of Bedford and Cavor. The physicist, Weston, makes little impression at this stage, but Devine, (who is to figure prominently in That Hideous Strength), is vividly presented. His degenerate public-school facade, and excruciatingly facetious patter, are obviously drawn from life.

Chapter three marks the transition from plain thriller to planetary romance. Ransom's gradual realisation of his position is skilfully managed. He awakes in a room 'remarkably warm', but gazing through the skylight, 'He had never seen such a moon - so white, so blinding and so large'. He notes that the walls seem to slope outwards; rising, he finds himself 'leaping from the bed'; he feels 'a continuous faint vibration', hears a bombardment as of 'small tinkling missiles', and vaguely realises

that he is in 'some kind of airship'.

The next move is more startling. He suddenly remembers that there is 'no full moon at all that night', and then realises, with terror, that 'The thing wasn't the Moon at all'. (Ransom's confessed ignorance of astronomy helps here, as it does throughout.) The climax comes with Weston's explanation - 'it's the earth'. We enjoy the confirmation of our suspicions. Ransom is in a space-ship 'Standing out from Earth about eighty-five thousand miles'.⁷

Chapters four to six are less concerned with the technicalities of inter-planetary propulsion and navigation (largely kept secret from Ransom) than with two subjects which have gripped the popular imagination ever since Wells published The War of the Worlds - 'outer space' and 'creatures from other worlds'. Lewis's aim is to effect a change in our attitude, a change paralleling that which Ransom himself undergoes. This theme, which may conveniently be termed 'the reversal of preconceptions', first appears when Ransom's initial conception of space, along Wellsian lines, as 'black, cold vacuity' is transformed. Sunbathing in the 'changeless noon', he experiences a bodily and mental well-being never felt on earth. A 'severe delight' possesses him as he gazes at the brilliant stars. Their astrological and mythical associations fill his mind. The dark abyss becomes 'an ocean of radiance'. As they near their destination - as light diminishes, temperature falls, and gravity increases -

He wondered how he could ever have thought of planets, even of the Earth, as islands of light and reality floating in a deadly void. Now, with a certainty which never afterwards deserted him, he saw the planets - the "earths" he called them in his thoughts - as mere holes or gaps in the living

heaven - excluded and rejected wastes of heavy matter and murky air, formed not by addition to, but by subtraction from, the surrounding brightness.⁸

The conception of Space has yielded to the conception of Heaven.⁹

Yet by the end of the voyage Ransom has reason for being terribly afraid, and here the second theme appears. He has learned that their destination is Malacandra, a planet which Weston and Devine have visited before. Further, he has overheard remarks of Devine about 'human sacrifice' and creatures called 'Sorns' which have given him an appalling prevision of his fate.

He had read his H.G. Wells and others. His universe was peopled with horrors such as ancient and mediaeval mythology could hardly rival. No insect-like, vermiculate or crustacean Abominable, no twitching feelers, rasping wings, slimy coils, curling tentacles, no monstrous union of superhuman intelligence and insatiable cruelty seemed to him anything but likely on an alien world....He saw in imagination various incompatible monstrosities - bulbous eyes, grinning jaws, horns, stings, mandibles. Loathing of insects, loathing of snakes, loathing of things that squashed and squelched, all played their horrible symphonies over his nerves. But the reality would be worse: it would be an extra-terrestrial Otherness - something one had never thought of, never could have thought of.¹⁰

The gradual exorcism of this 'cosmic bogey', which obsesses Ransom throughout the early days on Malacandra, and reasserts itself later, is a central theme in the romance.

(Presumably Lewis had not read Wells's Star Begotten (1937), in which the idea that Martians might be bombarding humanity with cosmic rays in order to produce desirable transmutations makes some amends for his earlier blood-sucking monsters. The scientist, Keppel, complains that 'all these pseudo-scientific story writers...make their Martians monsters

and horrors, inhuman in the bad sense, cruel. Why should they be anything of the sort?'

Davis, the central character, shares Ransom's preconception. 'To be inhuman implied to him, as to most of us, malignant cruelty; it seemed impossible that it could mean anything else'. Later, however, 'The dream-Martians were no longer repulsive creatures, grotesques and caricatures, and yet their visible appearance was not human'¹¹.)

The strange world in which Ransom's further adventures are set gives Lewis scope to exercise his descriptive powers, seen at their best in his depiction of the Malescandrian scene.

Its imaginative coherence springs from the fusion of two complementary images. The first, derived mainly from The War of the Worlds, but finally based on the contemporary cosmology of Eddington, is that of an archaic world further advanced along the path of evolution than Earth.¹² The second is the intuition, or 'sensation', of 'Northernness', which first sounded a deep chord when Lewis read Tegner's Drapa:

I knew nothing about Balder; but instantly I was uplifted into huge regions of northern sky, I desired with almost sickening intensity something never to be described (except that it is cold, spacious, severe, pale, and remote)....¹³

Later, Wagner's music evoked the same intuition:

Pure "Northernness" engulfed me: a vision of huge, clear spaces hanging above the Atlantic in the endless twilight of Northern summer, remoteness, severity....¹⁴

Significantly, Arthur Rackham's illustrations to Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods had already forged a link in his mind between the two images of the Nordic and the Archaic.

These images provide the imaginative substratum of the Malacandrian scene, but in this kind of story more than aesthetic coherence is required. The reader demands a plausible, 'scientific' basis for the planetary scene presented to him. Lewis 'solves' his chief problem, to account for the survival of life on a cooling planet with an attenuated atmosphere,¹⁵ by the bold supposition that Schiaparelli's notorious 'canals' are immense 'canyons' - 'gigantic feats of engineering' from some remote epoch.¹⁶ In these handramit, as the Malacandrians call them, the residual atmosphere has collected,¹⁷ and warm springs, gushing from their walls, raise the temperature at the equator to that of an English autumn.

Other features of the Malacandrian scene are deduced from the low Martian gravity. This allows the ridged walls of the handramit to be steeper than earthly peaks - 'needling shapes of pale green, thousands of feet high' rising to more than Alpine crests in a veritable 'riot of rock'. Ransom's first glimpse of this 'theme of perpendicularity' comes as he notices the 'unnatural' height of the waves on the 'sheets of dazzling blue soda water' which constitute the Malacandrian lakes. Gradually, as his mind copes with the initially confusing welter of sense impressions, he finds the same theme in other aspects of the landscape. Lewis's 'lively visualising power' is expressed in a number of homely, but vivid similes. The herandra, swelling above the further canyon wall, 'looked like the top of a gigantic red cauliflower - or like a huge bowl of red soapuds': the immense 'trees', or vegetables, appeared 'like a plump of organ pipes, then like a stack of rolls of cloth set up on end, then like a forest of gigantic umbrellas blown inside out'.¹⁸

On this 'perpendicular theme'¹⁹ the later variations are soundly based. In keeping with it are the spindly sorns ('spooks on stilts'²⁰) glimpsed by Ransom on landing, and more intimately described later. It culminates in the awesome grove of Meldilorn with its titanic blooms.

Ransom's flight from Weston and Devine, and the dreaded sorns, leads to the series of adventures which constitutes the story's middle section (chapters 8-16).

His encounter with an alien intelligence provides the first climax. As Clarke observes, 'There have been many portrayals in literature of these fateful meetings'²¹, and we are reminded here, in the tense mutual inspection of Ransom and the hross, of the Selenites' examination of their human captives,²² or of Maskull's strange encounters with the inhabitants of Tormance.

Ransom's friendship with Hyoui is facilitated by his linguistic ability, which enables him to recognize as rational speech the sounds emitted by the strange creature which rises from the water. The hross is described as follows:

It had a coat of thick black hair, lucid as seal-skin, very short legs with webbed feet, a broad beaver-like or fish-like tail, strong fore-limbs with webbed claws or fingers....It was something like a penguin, something like an otter, something like a seal; the slenderness and flexibility of the body suggested a giant stoat.²³

The description may seem at first to lack inevitability, though the hint of worm animality (at least in contrast with the sorns) is suited to the poetic and pastoral tastes later credited to the hross.

Ransom's first reaction to Hyoui is 'an indescribable thrill of mingled attraction and repulsion'. There is a 'shy, ineluctable fascina-

tion of unlike for unlike' which contends, at first, with 'sudden losses of confidence' when Ransom's tendency to expect human features in a rational creature is shocked by the hrossa's alien physiology:

But starting from the other end you had an animal with everything an animal ought to have - glossy coat, liquid eye, sweet breath and whitest teeth - and added to all these, as though Paradise had never been lost and earliest dreams were true, the charm of speech and reason.²⁴

'As though Paradise had never been lost....' - the words recall Lewis's conjecture, quoted in the previous chapter, that 'The universe may be full of happy lives that never needed redemption'. This theme of Paradise Retained is worked out during Ransom's idyllic sojourn with the hrossa, for in these happy weeks his preconceptions are radically changed.

At first, a simple technology leads him to regard their culture as 'old stone-age', but he soon discovers that they have poetry and music of great depth. Moreover, their knowledge of astronomy is considerable, and they are able to point out a bright planet, Thulcandra (the 'silent' planet), as his own probable home. He learns from them of the seroni (sorns), and of a third race, the pfifltriggi, each with its own culture and special gifts. The scientific sorns and the technically minded pfifltriggi apparently live at peace with each other and with the hrossa, but Ransom cannot rid himself of his preconception of the sorns as a dominating elite.

He discovers, too, that the hrossa are 'a species naturally continent, naturally monogamous', and comes to the conclusion 'that it was not they, but his own species, that were the puzzle'.²⁵ We are reminded of Gulliver's re-education among the houghnhnms, though the tone of the

account, and the oblique hits at humanity, are milder.

Ransom's pride suffers a further blow when he gleans from the hrossa 'a first sketch of civilised religion'.²⁶ The hrossa communicate with, and obey, eldila - spiritual beings who are themselves subject to 'Oyarsa', the arch-eldil and planetary ruler of Melacandra. He in turn is subject to 'Maleldil the Young', who made and rules the world. The Melacandrian scene opens out upon cosmic vistas.

This Melacandrian Utopia is a less negative society than that of Swift's Houyhnhnms. Reason, it is true, controls emotion, but there is emotion to be controlled. The restricted sexual relations of his monogamous hrossa seem rather to indicate Lewis's taste for the Romantic idea of the 'supreme moment' than a Swiftian disgust of bodily function. The hrossa are neither bloodless nor austere. They are warmer, more poetic, more adventurous, and argumentative than Swift's cold and conformist horses.

Their social and family relationships anticipate the view of a Christian society sketched later in Mere Christianity. In both pictures everyone works, there is no manufacture of luxuries, and no class divisions. 'To that extent a Christian society would be what we now call Leftist'. In both, obedience of citizens to magistrates, children to parents, and wives to husbands is envisaged: 'its family life and its code of manners' are 'rather old-fashioned - perhaps even ceremonious and aristocratic'.

'Thirdly,' Lewis concludes in Mere Christianity, 'it is to be a cheerful society: full of singing and rejoicing, and regarding worry or

anxiety as wrong'.²⁷ This is a typical and welcome note. Joy is what most Utopias lack. The hrossa display it in every activity.

Ransom's education proceeds apace. Both his physique and his grasp of Malacandrian improve. More importantly, his general outlook is being changed. He perceives more clearly the fallen condition of humanity. During the hunt of a water beast, in which Ransom participates, his friend Hyci is treacherously shot down from ambush by Weston and Devine. Ransom's insight into the 'bent' nature of man is confirmed.

His new wisdom and confidence are severely tested when an order comes from the eldila that he is to travel alone to Meldilorn - the sacred island of the Malacandrians. As he leaves the handramit and embarks on the stupendous climb to the harandra, home of the sorns, his old fears revive:

Those old terrestrial fears of some alien, cold intelligence, superhuman in power, sub-human in cruelty, which had utterly faded from his mind among the hrossa, rose clamouring for readmission.²⁸

But when, from the thin air and numbing cold of the harandra, he stumbles into the cavern of Augray, the sorn, his fears are gradually dispelled. He no longer views a sorn as an ogre or ghost but as a 'goblin' or 'gawk' and then, later, when he sees the sorns skinning 'like full-rigged ships' over the harandra, as a 'Titan' or 'Angel':

He had thought them spectral when they were only august, and his first human reaction to their lengthened severity of line and profound stillness of expression now appeared to him not so much cowardly as vulgar.²⁹

From Augray, Ransom learns more about the eldila, the races of Malacandria, and Oyarza. Finally, in 'the bleakest moment in all his

travels',³⁰ he is shown Thulcandra, the only silent member of the planetary system of Arbol, and finds it to be his own planet, Earth.

His journey with Augray teaches him more, especially of Malacandra's remote past, when gigantic forests flourished on the harandra. Then he himself is questioned about Thulcandra by the learned sorns, as Gulliver was questioned by the Emperor of Brobdingnab, and his recital of human vice and folly appals them as it appalled the benevolent monarch: 'They were astonished at what he had to tell them of human history - of war, slavery and prostitution'.³¹ They perceive that our society lacks the coherence and justice which flow from a rightly-ordered hierarchy of beast, hneu (rational creature), eldil, Oyarsa and Maleldil. We are obsessed by 'problems of lifting and carrying', and narrowed in sympathy by having only one kind of hneu.

At this point most of the novel's themes have clearly emerged, and await their full expression in the episode at Meldilorn.

The 'reversal of preconceptions', which began with the substitution of the concept of Heaven for that of Space, has led on to Ransom's unexpected pleasure in the new world to which he has been brought - 'he learned that Malacandra was beautiful; and he even reflected how odd it was that this possibility had never entered into his speculations about it'.³² His universe is no longer 'peopled with horrors', but with creatures whose lives are superior, aesthetically, morally and spiritually, to his own. Even the sorns are no longer the cosmic bogey-men of his nightmare imaginings. Finally, he is beginning to view his own world - the 'silent planet' - in a new light.

Ransom, in fact, is undergoing a process of re-education (intensified at Meldilorn, and resumed in Ferelandra) which, by imaginative illumination, trial and error, ordeal, and direct instruction, is designed to free him from fear, despair and complacency. When the time comes for the hnakra hunt he is a fitter and more courageous man. 'Perhaps, too, there was something in the air he now breathed, or in the society of the hrossa, which had begun to work a change in him'.³³

Now comes the gradual disclosure of a spiritual world, the interview with the Oyarsa, the hints of warfare with 'principalities and powers'. Ransom's personal adventure is being taken up into the larger theme of the Cosmic Drama, which is to emerge fully in Ferelandra.

Meldilorn, sacred isle of the eldils, 'home' of Oyarsa, shrine and temple of the Malecandrians, is the setting for the climax of Ransom's adventure. His descent into the broad handramit, with its sapphire lake, is a return to warmth, colour, assurance, and new revelations:

Amidst the lake there rose like a low and gently sloping pyramid, or like a woman's breast, an island of pale red, smooth to the summit, and on the summit a grove of such trees as man had never seen. Their smooth columns had the gentle swell of the noblest beech-trees; but these were taller than a cathedral spire on earth, and at their tops, they broke rather into flower than foliage; into golden flower bright as tulip, still as rock, and huge as summer cloud....The old dreams which he had brought from earth of some more than American complexity of offices or some engineers' paradise of vast machines had indeed been long laid aside. But he had not looked for anything so classic, so virginal, as this bright grove - 34

Meldilorn corresponds in function to the Tai Harendrimar of

Perelandra and anticipates the Rivencell of Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings.³⁵ It echoes Arthur's Avilion, the island of Pan in The Wind in the Willows,³⁶ and Shakespeare's isle in The Tempest. It is a place where earthly needs receive a heavenly provision.

In his first leisurely hours on Meldilorn Ransom learns more about the three Malacandrian species, especially about the pfifltriggi, but more important is the further unfolding of the Cosmic Drama. He has been told that the island is full of eldila, and faintly, at the edge of vision, senses their presence. Subjected to their inspection, he is overcome by a 'sense of awe'. 'His feeling was less than fear; it had in it something of embarrassment, something of shyness, something of submission, and it was profoundly uneasy.'³⁷

From the immemorial inscriptions on the island's monoliths, he studies Malacandra's history, life and mythology. Malacandra is Mars. One scene, which he does not know whether to regard as myth or fact, seems to depict the construction of the handremit under the direction of Oyarsa, pictured as a winged flame. Another is a stylised, but vivid, representation of the solar system. Mercury and Venus, too, are associated with flame-like figures, that of Venus having feminine characteristics. Then Ransom turns to Earth:

The ball was there, but where the flame-like figure should have been, a deep depression of irregular shape had been cut out as if to erase it. Once, then - but his speculations faltered and became silent before a series of unknowns.³⁸

His speculations are suspended by the sudden appearance of a pfifltrigg commissioned to carve his likeness. That the human form should require

'idealisation' to make it acceptable to the Malacandrians is another blow to his pride.

At last, between the lines of Malacandrians, and surrounded by rank over rank of unseen eldila,³⁹ Ransom stands 'on trial' before Oyarsa. With tingling blood and pricking fingers he hears the sweet, unshaken, bloodless voice of the Archangel. Rebuked for his fears and delays, he learns how Oyarsa first sent for him, and set his servants to track the space-ship through Heaven (in which, for him, the worlds are but 'places'). Then Oyarsa reveals the secrets of the 'war in heaven',⁴⁰ of the Bent Years, and how the Bent One, having smitten the moon and sought to spoil Malacandra, was bound in the air of his own world, henceforth a silent planet.

Weston's first expedition alarmed Oyarsa. Now he demands two things of Ransom:

"First I must know why you come here - so much is my duty to my world. And secondly I wish to hear of Thulcandra and of Maleldil's strange wars there with the Bent One; for that, as I have said, is a thing we desire to look into."⁴¹

Ransom explains Devine's lust for gold and Weston's planetary imperialism, but his mind reels at the aeons involved in Oyarsa's celestial narrative. "My people have a law never to speak much of sizes or numbers to you others...."⁴² warns Oyarsa. "Rather tell me what Maleldil has done in Thulcandra."

Ransom's attempt to reply is broken off by the arrival, under a guard of hrossa, of his fellow Earthmen (and by Lewis's literary tact - Ransom's later colloquy with Oyarsa on this subject is also withheld). The narrative, less unremittingly solemn than summary conveys, now veers

towards farce (deliberately employed to undermine human pretensions). Momentarily, through Malacandrian eyes, Ransom views Weston and Devine, brought before Oyarsa for the murder of Hyci, as stumpy, ridiculous figures. And the plucky, but humourless Weston sustains the role. He treats the Malacandrians as savages, takes a sleeping hross for the 'witch-doctor' producing the strange voice, talks big in pidgin Malacandrian, and dangles coloured beads. His adherence to the 'orthodox rules for frightening and then conciliating primitive races' embarrasses Devine and reduces the watching hosts to helpless, thunderous amusement. His 'fantastic tricks before high heaven' make the angels weep - but with tears of laughter. Oyarsa is obliged to order him a ducking to restore his wits.

The 'disembodiment' of Hyci, which follows, is in marked contrast. In the solemn dirge which celebrates Hyci's passing, Ransom first sees into the heart of Malacandrian song - 'A sense of great masses moving at visionary speeds, of giants dancing, of eternal sorrows eternally consoled,....'⁴³

On Weston's return, Ransom interprets in the debate between the scientist and Oyarsa. The exponent of material progress and planetary imperialism confronts the mediator of Heavenly wisdom.

Devine is not involved. Obsessed with the 'sun-blood' (gold) he treads Malacandra as Manmon trod Heaven⁴⁴, a 'broken' creature, says Oyarsa, a mere 'talking animal'.

In contrast, Weston has vision, partial and distorted though it is, and confidently seizes the opportunity to propound his views. Here,

however, in this strange assembly, they have a hollow sound. Our ears have been tuned, through Ransom's conversations with the Malacandrians, to talk that is simple, concrete and personal. Partly, this child-like style represents the simplified language used by, and to, Ransom, but it also reveals the Malacandrians as creatures of unclouded vision and undivided hearts.

Weston's philosophy, on the other hand, issues in words that are cloudy, abstract and de-personalised, except when he expresses the 'march of progress' in jaded metaphor and facile personification ('relentless march' - 'the flag of man' - 'gates of the future' - 'destiny' - 'Life'). Though Ransom strives to interpret fairly, Weston's jargon defeats him.

"Life is greater than any system of morality; her claims are absolute", says Weston:

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

Weston concludes his sketch of man's future expansion with a ringing peroration: "What lies in that future, beyond our present ken, passes imagination to conceive: it is enough for me that there is a Beyond".

Ransom translates - "And he says that though he doesn't know what will happen to the creatures sprung from us, he wants it to happen very much".⁴⁵

After further examination, Oyarsa traces Weston's 'bent' outlook to the unnatural elevation of one law - 'the law of kindred' - to a

place above all others. He discloses that when Malacandra was threatened his own people were tempted to secure their own life at the expense of Earth [like Wells's Martians]. In conquering this temptation they conquered fear. Weston remains defiant, admiring demonic energy more than heavenly resignation.

Oyarse cannot suffer such creatures on his planet, and lacks authority to kill them. So, despite their protests that Mars and Earth are no longer favourably opposed, Weston and Devine are sentenced to attempt a desperate return voyage. On the ninetieth day out their spaceship will 'unbody'. Given freedom of choice, Ransom elects to accompany them.

The return journey provides narrative excitement in suitable contrast to the static 'trial'. Forced to cut across the planetary orbits, they barely escape being roasted alive, and then, nearing Earth, are intercepted by the Moon. Ransom's unconsciousness over the last stage is perhaps a little too convenient. He revives, finds himself deserted, and stumbles out into the rain before the spaceship disintegrates.

Several necessary threads are woven into the conclusion. The prestige of Weston and Devine, undermined on Malacandra, is wisely allowed a partial resurgence. Weston's scientific genius and Devine's indisputable courage and resource are displayed afresh. They survive as formidable antagonists to Ransom.

Earlier, a fine description of Mars as it appears from the receding spaceship is succeeded by a revival of Ransom's joy in 'the ocean of eternal noon', and his assurance 'that the abyss was full of life'.^{4b}

The final chapter, and Ransom's postscript, are part of that 'authentication' usual with the tale of Marvel. The circumstantial setting, the resumption of existence in our matter-of-fact world, but with a changed outlook, and the touches of reserve, secure imaginative consent and stimulate curiosity as to the sequels. Ransom is allowed to dot the i's, and cross the t's of the narrative, to record one or two nostalgic vignettes of the Malecandrian scene, and to foreshadow the future.

For, finally, the Cosmic Drama looms larger ahead - 'this is the beginning of more comings and goings between the heavens and the worlds and between one world and another' Oyersa had confided to Ransom on parting - 'the siege of Thulcandra may be near its end. Great things are on foot'.⁴⁷ It has further been suggested to Ransom, and to the reader, that 'the distinction between history and mythology might be itself meaningless outside the Earth'.⁴⁸ We are invited to regard Ransom's trip to Malecandra as 'rather a prologue to our story than the story itself'.⁴⁹

The way is opened up for Perelandra and That Hideous Strength.

Out of the Silent Planet successfully combines the ingredients necessary for a good adventure story - suspense, surprise, pursuit, delivery - with hints of a deeper spiritual message. Since these hints can be ignored in a superficial reading, it is the most immediately accessible of the romances. An intelligent schoolboy can read it with enjoyment.

Nevertheless, as Sir Hugh Walpole noted in his review, it is 'a kind of poem', and has an imaginative coherence that sustains close

examination. A delightful freshness, an air of innocence, of primal simplicity, give it a flavour unusual in this kind of story. Chad Walsh aptly speaks of its 'naive appeal, rather like a Walt Disney animated cartoon with philosophic overtones'.⁵⁰ When the Green Lady of Perelandra pictures its inhabitants, it is of 'the big furry creatures, and the white giants'⁵¹ that she speaks, rather as if she looked back across space and time to a fairy-tale past.

Recorded in a subtler style than the journeys of Allen Quatermain, and touching deeper issues than the exploits of Richard Hanney, Ransom's adventure on Malacandra is yet to be classed with this minor, but popular type of fiction. It is likely to be read when most contemporary science fiction has been forgotten.

C H A P T E R XII

PERELANDRA

The second tale in the Ransom trilogy, Perelandra (1943), (re-issued by Pan as Voyage to Venus), is longer, and more ambitious than the first. A notable work of art by any standards, it may lay fair claim to pre-eminence in its own genre of the planetary romance. Its account of Venus, writes R.L. Green, has 'a conviction and the compulsion of sheer rightness which makes all other accounts simply impossible',¹ a judgment with which I fully concur. 'Paradise Retained', Ched Walsh felicitously calls it,² though perhaps a more exact description would be 'Paradise Enriched'.³

Either title recalls Milton's Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, and there is, in fact, a close connection. In 1941 Lewis had delivered the Ballard Matthews Lectures at University College North Wales, published later as A Preface to Paradise Lost (1942), and the overflow of his interest in the subject was doubtless one of the creative factors in the composition of Perelandra. So, too, were the speculations regarding the Fall, and related topics, put forward in 1940 in The Problem of Pain.⁴ The centrality of the Fall in Christian thought, and the subjects which radiate from it - theodicy and free-will, temptation and obedience, Heaven and Hell - indicate the ambitious scope of Lewis's conception. Perelandra is his post-Miltonic attempt 'to justify the ways of God to men', an undertaking at least as difficult to fulfil, being less congenial to modern readers, as in Milton's day.

The factors determining Lewis's choice of setting are clear. After Mars, Venus is the obvious - perhaps the only - planet available for the novelist not wishing to contradict scientific evidence. Even here Lewis had more scope in 1943 than he might have now, when many scientists believe that Venus has a toxic envelope of carbon-dioxide. This apart, the shrouding vapour allows the novelist scope for his invention, an opportunity seized by previous writers, though there is no indication that Lewis has borrowed from them.⁵ He does, however, seem to owe something to George MacDonald's Phantastes,⁶ and to David Lindsay's A Voyage to Arcturus.⁷

Fortunately, Venus, besides being the obvious setting, had appropriate aesthetic and theological associations. Its astrological 'character' as the planet of love and fertility, though the erotic aspect required careful handling, could be turned to good account. A warm, young, prolific world is precisely what Lewis required for a recasting of the story of Eden.

Venus obviously made a strong appeal to Lewis's feeling for the distinctive atmosphere, or 'sensation', of a place. Melacandra had been the essence of Northernness: Perelandra should be the quintessence of the South. Melacandra had been remote, cold, archaic: Perelandra, moving far sunward, should be intimate, warm, youthful. The first had been Nordic; the second should be Mediterranean - the one masculine, the other feminine. The contrast pervades every aspect - pictorial, psychological and theological - and culminates in the vision of the Oyarses of Melacandra and Perelandra.⁸

Obviously Perelandra has little affinity with the modern psycho-sociological novel. Unlike the typical novel it is not set in a complex human society, and its treatment of the spiritual is not confined to the immanent but discloses the transcendent. Instead, it has qualities of the epic, and the dramatic poem, of Paradise Lost and Prometheus Unbound;⁹ the romantic appeal of the far and strange, the concentration on a theme of eternal relevance, a great action involving the fate of many, a limited cast of personages, clear-cut narrative sequences, scope for vivid descriptions, scenes of poetic intensity, a cosmic background, eternal overtones. Like them it conveys a 'message' which the authors could, and did, précis in cold prose; but, as with them, this message, in so far as it is artistically realised, affects us in the work itself by a 'baptism of the imagination' (though overt argument also has its place on the lips of the protagonists). The scenes are intended to have an effect, either medicinal or nourishing, on the roots of personality.¹⁰

An analysis of Perelandra's structure may be useful here (despite the inevitable simplification). Certain features, it will be seen, develop from Out of the Silent Planet or are contingent on the form of the planetary voyage. Others parallel Genesis and Paradise Lost, or the temptation scene in Comus, whilst the closing movement, that of a world redeemed from suffering, recalls Prometheus Unbound. Yet all these features are subservient to the central inspiration. In distinguishing five major movements and supplying headings I have attempted to indicate the coherence of plot and theme, and suggest something both of 'the unfolding of thought' and 'the mounting tide of feeling'.¹¹

CRISIS: Precarious Innocence

11	159	(c) The Testing of Ransom: a soliloquy
		(4) <u>Descent</u>
12	171	Conflict and pursuit
13	183	A vision of darkness
14	197	Out of the depths
		(5) <u>Ascent</u>
15	210	Resurrection: the ascent of Paradise Enriched
16	223	Revelation: the manifestation of Mars and Venus
17	235	Consummation: A celebration of the Creation
		A prophetic vision
		The Great Dance

The analysis reveals an approximation to a five-act structure with an Exposition, Development, Climax, Counterstroke and Eucatastrophe,¹² whilst formal resemblances to Milton's masque and Shelley's dramatic poem are also apparent.

The narrative framework is remarkably effective. After the eerie atmosphere of the opening sequence has played upon us and aroused our curiosity we can accept the necessary résumé and exposition from Ransom in chapter two. As to the value of this introduction to Ransom's adventures, it may be noted that a résumé breaking into section two might have proved fatal to its atmosphere, that the narrator's ordeal during his walk to Ransom's cottage foreshadows the book's central theme of temptation, that its circumstantial detail encourages a willing 'suspension of disbelief', and that a gradual approach to such an unusual tale pays

dividends. Lewis follows the advice James once gave to Mrs. Humphrey Ward and provides his reader with '...the antechamber or two and the crooked corridor before he is already in the Presence'.¹³

These necessary preliminaries are here finely employed, and we may apply to Perelandra what Lewis himself says of Rider Haggard's She:

...the story makes an excellent approach; the central theme is suffered, in the first chapters, to woo us across great distances of space and time. What we are presently to see at close quarters is seen at first, as it were, through the wrong end of the telescope. This is a fine exercise in the art of alluring - you may see the same thing at work in the opening of the Utopia, in the second act of Prometheus Unbound, and in the early books of the Odyssey. In the second place it is a quest story, which is an attractive thing. And the object of the quest combines two strong appeals - it is the 'fountain of youth' theme and the princesse lointaine in one.¹⁴

Even this last sentence is peculiarly appropriate to Perelandra and its sequel.

How does Lewis fulfil these expectations when he brings Ransom to Perelandra? Haggard's tales suffer from the poor texture of the writing itself. How far can Lewis sustain close textual criticism? Consider this account of Ransom's first moments in a new world:

He was riding the foamless swell of an ocean, fresh and cool after the fierce temperatures of Heaven, but warm by earthly standards - as warm as a shallow bay with sandy bottom in a sub-tropical climate. As he rushed smoothly up the great convex hillside of the next wave he got a mouthful of the water. It was hardly at all flavoured with salt; it was drinkable - like fresh water and only, by an infinitesimal degree, less insipid. Though he had not been aware of thirst till now, his drink gave him a quite astonishing pleasure. It was almost like meeting Pleasure itself for the first time. He buried his flushed face in the green translucence,

and when he withdrew it, found himself once more on the top of a wave.

There was no land in sight. The sky was pure, flat gold like the background of a medieval picture. It looked very distant - as far off as a cirrus cloud looks from earth. The ocean was gold too, in the offing, flecked with innumerable shadows. The nearer waves, though golden where their summits caught the light, were green on their slopes: first emerald, and then lower down a lustrous bottle green, deepening to blue where they passed beneath the shadow of other waves.

All this he saw in a flash; then he was speeding down once more into the trough. He had somehow turned on his back. He saw the golden roof of that world quivering with a rapid variation of paler lights as a ceiling quivers at the reflected sunlight from the bath-water when you step into your bath on a summer morning. He guessed that this was the reflection of the waves wherein he swam. It is 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.¹⁵

Up again to the crest, and still no sight of land. Something that looked like clouds - or could it be ships? - far away on his left. Then down, down, down - he thought he would never reach the end of it....this time he noticed how dim the light was. Such tepid revelry in water - such glorious bathing, suggested as its natural accompaniment a blazing sun. But here there was no such thing. The water gleamed, the sky burned with gold, but all was rich and dim, and his eyes fed upon it undazzled and unaching. The very names of green and gold, which he used perforce in describing the scene, are too harsh for the tenderness, the muted iridescence, of that warm, maternal, delicately gorgeous world. It was mild to look upon as evening, warm like summer noon, gentle and winning like early dawn. It was altogether pleasurable. He sighed.¹⁶

Four strands of interest may be distinguished in this passage.

First, in such details as the 'pure, flat gold of the sky' and the graduated greens of the waves, there is a sustained appeal to the senses. The occasional similes fix these impressions - 'station' them, to use

Keats's term: the sky is 'as far off as a cirrus cloud looks from earth', and the light plays on it 'as a ceiling quivers....when you step into your bath on a summer morning'. Sensations of taste, movement and touch are added: Ransom quenches his thirst, goes 'speeding down' the waves, and enjoys the 'tepid revelry' of the temperate ocean. These impressions begin to build up that 'sensation' of a 'warm, maternal delicately gorgeous world', which is the essential Perelandra.

Meanwhile the planet's main characteristics and the resultant physical features are being sketched in. Just as Wells works out a plausible Martian from the known characteristics of Mars, so Lewis derives from our meagre knowledge of Venus a setting which agrees with it (sufficiently, at least, for the purposes of fiction) and yet ventures beyond it to add surprise to our satisfaction. These gigantic waves accord well with a planet which, besides having slightly less mass than Earth, is subject to the gravitational attraction of a sun some thirty million miles nearer to it.¹⁷ This salt-free ocean recalls the geologists' account of Earth's primeval seas before rivers had washed down salts from the rocks. The golden canopy of sky is the under side of those vapours which hide the surface of Venus from terrestrial telescopes. The points gain from not being laboured.

In addition, the main themes of the romance are announced. This setting is, primarily, a Perelandrian Eden, and the paradisaical atmosphere is being created by Ransom's growing awareness of the pleasures - novel in both their intensity and innocence - of his situation. 'It was altogether pleasurable'. These pleasures override, but do not obliterate,

moments of fearful thrill as he swoops down into the troughs of ocean. This coexistence of pleasure and apprehension becomes the key-note of Ransom's experiences on Perelandra, those of an imperfect being in a sinless world.

Again, the fact that the sky recalls 'the background of a medieval picture' is the first indication that the figures for such a setting, though suitably primitive, will possess a certain dignity.¹⁸ Lewis's conception of 'degree', of 'hierarchy', is foreshadowed. The sentence, 'The queen of those seas views herself continually in a celestial mirror', is not a mere glancing allusion to the myth of the birth of Venus. It flashes into one's mind the astrological and literary associations of the planet, and even more subtly prepares the imagination for Ransom's approaching encounter with the Lady.

But the dominant impression is of the gigantic, shifting waves on which Ransom floats, and these increasingly become symbols of a whole philosophy of life which is later made explicit in the conversation of the Green Lady.¹⁹

Yet the progress of the narrative is not long suspended. Ransom's glimpse of 'Something that looked like clouds - or could it be ships?....' arouses a curiosity which is sustained by the next paragraph and rewarded by those that follow.

In this next phase of the story, which leads to Ransom's encounter with the Lady, there is time, our appetite whetted for the surprises in store, for a leisurely exploration of Ransom's pleasurable surroundings. The paradisaical sweetness of the setting soaks into the imagination. The

discovery of the floating islands, rainbow-coloured mats of floating weeds riding the giant waves, is quickly followed by a glimpse of a far-off 'single smooth column of ghastrly green standing up, the one thing fixed and vertical in this universe of shifting slopes'. The contrast is more than pictorial. A hint of menace ('ghastrly') sustains the counterpoint of danger. The adventure is shaping itself - inevitably, in view of Ransom's known mission. This contrast of floating island and fixed rock is an anticipatory symbol, we are made to feel, of some central theme.

A vivid storm is followed by the partial subsidence of the waves. Ransom is able to struggle on to one of the floating islands where he is soon learning to walk its shifting slopes. The enchanting scents of the island forests, the novel tastes of its fruits, sustain and enrich a paradisaal atmosphere as lush and yet as bracing as that of Marvell's The Garden. Ransom's constant awareness of a spiritual reality disciplines any tendency to abandoned luxuriance. He refrains from glutting his appetite, 'repetition would be a vulgarity', realising how often earthly pleasures are re-iterated 'in the teeth of desire and in obedience to a spurious rationalism'.²⁰

A spectacular 'sunset' brings this first day to its close. An impenetrable darkness falls. Sleep, appropriately, 'came like a fruit which falls into the hand almost before you have touched the stem'.

On waking, Ransom's feeling of 'realised mythology' is intensified, first by the 'heraldically coloured tree' and then by the diminutive dragon, a non-rational but tame creature. The bubble trees (an exquisite

invention) sharpen his faculties and deepen this 'sensation not of following an adventure but of creating a myth'. Again the 'inner adviser' restrains him from any selective indulgence in the delightful fruits of the island.

Seemingly chance observations now prepare for a skilfully managed encounter. Swan-like flocks in the sky and dolphin-like shoals in the sea are seen to be converging as with a purpose. A figure 'on a dolphin's back' is revealed as first 'human', then feminine. That she should 'mer the meeting of two worlds', first with an expression of disappointment and then with a peal of laughter at Ransom's piebald appearance, is a triumphant turn of the narrative which blends the easier shock of surprise with the more subtle thrill of recognition.

Lewis's Green Lady is a triumph of revitalised mythology, standing among the beasts subject to her dominion like a 'goddess carved apparently out of green stone'. Yet the first indications of a planetary Venus are mastered by deepening undertones of a Perelandrian Eve. Despite the 'full humanity of every feature', the Lady's face has in repose an 'unearthly calm', which Ransom eventually puts down to 'the complete absence of that element of resignation which mixes, in however slight a degree, with all profound stillness in terrestrial faces'. That Ransom should have time to exchange only one remark with her before night parts them is more than a stock trick of suspense. The Lady's naive, but profound question is given time to sink in. Ransom, speaking in Old Solar, declares

"I am a stranger. I come in peace. Is it your will that

"I swim over to your land?"

The Green Lady looked quickly at him with an expression of curiosity.

"What is 'peace'?" she asked.²¹

This encounter with the Green Lady gives rise to a series of novel dialogues of great imaginative and spiritual power. The winding, but progressive course of their three conversations in the next two chapters defies precis, as all good talk must, but its main strands are clearly distinguishable. It is, in fact, both for Ransom and for the Lady, a process of mutual enlightenment punctuated by a series of startling revelations. Its affinities are as much with the dialogues in Comus or Prometheus Unbound as with drawing-room conversation, and its subject-matter is that 'divine philosophy' which for Lewis, as much as for Milton, is 'musical as is Apollo's lute'.

Ransom's first impressions of the Lady's unfallen innocence, her dominion over the creatures, and her unbroken communion with Maleldil, are reinforced. New insights emerge. There is a piquant contrast between the terrestrial and the Perelandrian sense of values. Goodness, or significance, for the Lady, has nothing to do with size or duration;²² alternative experiences are 'goods' whose intrinsic worths never compete; every creature enjoys a unique status and privileges; all are linked in a harmonious hierarchy of joys, based on authority, obedience and interdependence, enriched by vicarious pleasure, deepened by vicarious sacrifice. Like a line of melodic joy this passage adumbrates the fuller harmonies of the book's culminating vision. And there is nothing abstract

about it. The Lady's insights, though divinely authenticated, are always freely perceived, and arise naturally from her material environment and her daily experience among the wave-tossed islands.

Typical of the surprises which enliven the dialogue and further the Paradisal theme is this:

"I have a mother?" said the Green Lady, looking full at him with eyes of untroubled wonder. "What do you mean? I am the mother." ²³

But it is not only through the clarification of Ransom's understanding that the theme of 'Paradise Retained' is advanced. Though the Lady recalls Artemis and Aphrodite, Madonna and Eve, she is spiritually 'young', and for her, too, the conversation with Ransom is a spiritual education. Their intercommunication gives her a growing self-knowledge and a greater awareness of her relationship to her Maker. Wider knowledge of other creatures and worlds (partly from Ransom, partly through an inward illumination) is secondary to this new grasp of her inner world of spirit. Foremost is her emergence from a trust still half instinctive to a conscious obedience, and her perception of the possibility of disobedience.

The next move in the narrative has been prepared. To the primal Eden and the primal Eve there is now added the primal Prohibition.²⁴ Towards the end of his third day on Perelandra Ransom again sees the Fixed Land, and learns from the Lady that she is forbidden to remain there during the night. Anything arbitrary in this restriction is swallowed up for the Lady by her joy in obeying as the beasts delight to fulfil her own behests, and our own imaginations have been prepared to

accept her attitude. A sustained emphasis on the value of accepting and surmounting the waves of experience makes the significance of the prohibition clear; a self-assured security is foreign to a trust in Maleldil.

Borne by the dolphin creatures, the Lady and Ransom now search for her lost companion, the 'King'. From a shoulder of the Fixed Land, whose 'pure lines and stable masses' delight Ransom, they scan the ocean. Earlier, a distant flash and report had led the Lady to exclaim, 'Something has fallen out of Deep Heaven'.²⁵ The stage is being set for the drama of Temptation.

The intruder proves to be the scientist Weston, arrived from Earth in his space-ship and strangely prepared, we are to find, for the role of tempter. A neat resume is given of the events narrated in the earlier romance. Ransom, alarmed by the arrival of his old antagonist, cannot prevent the Lady from racing down to the beach to receive the newcomer as Queen. The resulting encounter with Weston mixes farcical anticlimax with vague menace.

Failing to understand Weston, the Lady departs in search of the King. Ransom counters Weston's reference to 'seduction' with a reminder of the scientist's murderous policy on Malacandra. Their dispute turns to the 'interplanetary problem'²⁶ (the theme announced in the first romance), a subject on which Weston claims to have reached a new insight. No longer the exponent of human imperialism he has, during his convalescence, become a believer in Emergent Evolution and the Life Force. Nature and Man are no longer to be dichotomised. A metabiological vision obsesses him:

The majestic spectacle of this blind, inarticulate purposiveness thrusting its way upward and ever upward in an endless unity of differentiated achievements towards an ever-increasing complexity of organization, towards spontaneity and spirituality, swept away all my old conceptions of a duty to Men as such. Men in himself is nothing. The forward movement of Life - the growing spirituality - is everything.²⁷

When his equation of this 'blind, inarticulate purposiveness' with the Holy Spirit is rejected by Ransom, Weston writhes at this 'adherence to formulae'. The goal of the universal process is clear - 'Pure spirit: the final vortex of self-thinking, self-originating activity'.²⁸

The dispute becomes more than theoretical. Disquieting changes in Weston's manner, talk of 'guidance' and of 'A great, inscrutable Force, pouring up into us from the dark bases of being' alarm Ransom. 'The next stage of emergent evolution, beckoning us forward, is God', Weston expounds; 'the transcended stage behind, ejecting us, is the Devil'.²⁹ He now poses as the chosen instrument of this forward thrust - 'I'm being prepared all the time'.

Horrible hints converge. Weston's uncanny knowledge of Old Solar, his disregard for his space-ship, his scorn of 'conventional' morality, are signs of a soul possessed. More than an emissary of the Bent One, he has become his vehicle. At the climax of his peroration a paroxysm grips him; we have a glimpse of a 'limed soul....struggling to be free', and then his lips close horribly on the bottle Ransom offers him as the Perelandrian night falls.

Late the next day Ransom, mounted on a great fish, returns to the floating island³⁰ and finds Weston already conversing with the Lady.³¹ The

central episode of temptation has begun.

The first temptation, a dialogue in the dark overheard by Ransom, ends in a victory for innocence. Weston's suggestion that Maleldil secretly wishes the Lady to achieve true independence by breaking the prohibition, though subtly presented, has failed. Yet Ransom's awareness of angelic rejoicing is mingled with a mounting fear of the demonic power resident in Weston.

Throughout this metaphysical debate the Lady's philosophy of Life is powerfully expressed. Her profound peace flows from a respect for reality and an acceptance of the Divine will: the fruit that comes to her hand, the adventure brought by the wave, are positively received. Lewis is very near to Charles Williams in this restatement of Dante's great theme. The Lady's philosophy is almost a paraphrase, in Perelandrian terms, of the serene meditations of old Mrs. Anstruthers in Descent into Hell (1937):

Rarity was one form of delight and frequency another. A thing could even be beautiful, because it did not happen, or rather the not happening could be beautiful. So long always as joy was not rashly pinned to the happening; so long as you accepted what joys the universe offered and did not seek to compel the universe to offer you joys of your own definition.³²

Her niece, Pauline, whom the events of the story eventually lead to a similar spiritual insight, expresses it in the question, 'How could I want anything but what is?'³³

In Williams's novel the part of Devil's advocate is played by a Mrs. Semmle; the representative of divine wisdom by the poet, Peter Stanhope. Whilst Mrs. Semmle invites Pauline to the indulgent pleasures

of self-centred illusion, Stanhope directs her to the bracing experience of spiritual reality:

Mrs. Semmile stood up. "I must go," she said. "But I don't see why you don't enjoy yourselves."

"Because, sooner or later, there isn't anything to enjoy in oneself," Stanhope murmured, as she departed.³⁴

Unlike Pauline, the historian Laurence Wentworth succumbs to the allurements of deceit, vanity, lust and selfishness which Mrs. Semmile represents. In his 'descent into Hell', he follows the same path of personal disintegration as Weston in Perelendra.

The horror of the possessed Weston, whom Lewis now thinks of as the 'Un-Man', is terribly intensified during the succeeding day. Following a trail of tortured frogs Ransom again meets Weston, and in his appalling smile suffers an adumbration of the 'Miserific Vision'.³⁵ But in the intervals between the subsequent temptations it is the Un-Man's petty obscenities and monotonous spite which sicken him (to the demonic, intellect and imagination are merely useful instruments):

On the surface, great designs and an antagonism to Heaven which involved the fate of worlds; but deep within, when every veil had been pierced, was there, after all, nothing but a black puerility, an aimless empty spitefulness....³⁶

The purpose of Ransom's mission to Perelendra now becomes clearer. In the subsequent phases of the Un-Man's spiritual attack on the Lady, he has thrust upon him the role of divine advocate. He is 'Maleldil's representative', as Weston is 'the representative of Hell'.³⁷ But this does not exhaust his function in the story. As the narrator of the events on Perelendra he is to be an authentic witness of matters relevant to

Earthly affairs - a fact that assumes importance in That Hideous Strength. Moreover, his role does not remain merely passive or intellectual. Eventually he must offer physical resistance to the possessed Weston, and his subsequent adventures follow a pattern of psychological and spiritual significance.

Ransom now suffers some shrewd hits in his intellectual duel. For a space the Un-Man successfully represents him as one 'young' in experience, 'who rejects the fruit he is given for the sake of the fruit he expected or the fruit he found last time'³⁸. When the Lady asks, 'And will you teach us Death?', the Un-Man's blasphemous reply indicates the terrible trend of his tempting:

"Yes," it said, "it is for this that I came here, that you may have Death in abundance."³⁹

Fortunately, the Lady's inability to conceive how Maleldil, who 'is all a burning joy and a strength'⁴⁰, could jest in his commands, as she herself sometimes jests with the beasts, halts this trend, and Ransom makes the point that true obedience is only made possible by the prohibition. The Lady accepts this: 'We cannot walk out of Maleldil's will: but He has given us a way to walk out of our will'.

The adversary employs deadlier weapons. 'I am older than he....' he asserts. 'I have been with Maleldil in Deep Heaven where he never came and heard the eternal councils. And in the order of creation I am greater than he....' He invites the Lady to step 'through the dark waves of His forbidding, into the real life, Deep Life, with all its joy and splendour and hardness'.

Desperately Ransom outlines the misery that came from Man's Fall, but the Un-Man's riposte is deadly. Is not all earthly civilisation and culture a result of the Fall? More, did it not lead to Maleldil's incarnation? Hard pressed, Ransom at last strikes out an answer. 'Of course good came of it. Is Maleldil a beast that we can stop His path, or a leaf that we can twist His shape?...And there were some to whom no good came nor ever will come....Tell her of your joys, and of what profit you had when you made Maleldil and death acquainted.' The Un-Man's melancholy howl and the Lady's surrender to sleep end this second phase.

The sustained imagery of waves, trees and fruit by means of which the debate, here and elsewhere is carried on, is masterly. It never allows an awareness of the Perelandrian setting to fade from the mind, and maintains a link between spiritual truth and concrete experience which is vital to the book's whole effect.

Through weary days and nights the Un-Man's talk drags on, subjecting Ransom to sleeplessness and strain. Through story after story the Un-Man seeks to poison the Lady's imagination and so confuse her will. The role of martyr for her race and husband, on whose behalf she is nobly to take the Great Risk to win fuller life, is subtly insinuated. Eventually she veers perilously near to self-dramatisation, to the 'fatal touch of invited grandeur'. Her obedience holds, but her imagination entertains poisonous shapes.

One morning Ransom finds the Un-Man and the Lady apparelled in bright plumage. When the Un-Man gives her a mirror, her own beautiful reflection strikes both fear and admiration, but the tempter's purpose

is less to arouse vanity by this glimpse of her beauty than 'to awake the far more perilous image of her great soul'.⁴¹

Chapter eleven is pivotal. The Lady's precarious innocence cannot endure indefinitely. Ransom knows that he must 'do something'. Suddenly, with this realisation, he himself becomes the focus of temptation, is himself on trial. In the dark night he wrestles with the conscience that tells him he must fight the Un-Man: It is blasphemous to picture himself as God's representative, he tells himself; 'Faith,' not works, is required of him; he is too weak for an active role. Yet ultimately he knows that his 'spiritual' objections are specious. (The reader's own possible objections to this turn in the plot are thus voiced and countered. The difficult transition is skilfully effected.) There will be no miraculous intervention other than Ransom's own providential presence on Perelandra. The divine gift of freedom of choice will not be retracted. An insistent duty bears down on him.

Painfully rejecting the role of a second Pilate, or another Peter, Ransom accepts the task of deliverance indicated by his name. A Voice confirms his choice and tells him that sleep will descend on the creatures to facilitate his combat with the Un-Man.

The chapter is closely woven. It seizes a suitable opportunity, at the heart of the plot, to express overtly much of the meaning of the central theme. The significance of human choice, everywhere implied, is here directly stated - 'Either something or nothing must depend on individual choices'.⁴²

The narrative now (chaps .12 and 13) runs strongly. The static temptation scenes give way to a dynamic fight, a pursuit across the ocean, and further conflict, bodily and spiritual, with the adversary,

This movement has several functions. First, as plot, it ends the temptations, removes the tempter from the scene, and allows the Lady time to be reunited to the King. Secondly, it gives scope for a wider description of Perelandra, and in so doing conveys a sense of the diversity of the natural realm. In Ransom's view of a world beneath the waves the theme of 'realised mythology' is sustained, and a vista of realms other than the human opened up. The 'corresponding planes' of the world of the dolphin, the underwater creatures, and the aerial flocks, come into view. There is a sudden expansion of vision.

Above all, it records Ransom's gradual descent into a dark valley of doubt. Weakened by his combat with one who now exhibits the disintegrating personality of Weston, now seems the mere bodily instrument of the Bent One, he is further sapped by the fatigue, monotony, darkness and futility of the pursuit. He begins to doubt the unique significance of the events in which he has been involved and is gripped by a cosmic despair. The 'Empirical Bogey' assails his tired reason - 'the great myth of our century with its gases and galaxies, its light years and evolutions, its nightmare perspectives of simple arithmetic in which everything that can possibly hold significance for the mind becomes the mere by-product of essential disorder'. A fresh encounter with the Un-Man almost completes the process. Weston, in momentary re-possession of himself, paints for Ransom a nightmare picture of the cosmos as an

infinite globe where, sinking through the thin crust of our seventy mortal years, we fall into 'Darkness, worms, heat, pressure, salt, suffocation, stink'.

This picture is almost literally fulfilled when Ransom, trying to help Weston, is treacherously dragged beneath the waves, and entombed in the black interior of Tai Harendrimer. Painfully climbing through darkness, Ransom is trailed by the Un-Man. In a firelit cave, the reappearance of his adversary, accompanied by an appalling giant insect,⁴⁶ at first petrifies him, but finally, in a surge of courage, he hurls the Un-Man into the abyss. This ordeal purges Ransom of doubt and equips him for the next stage of his adventure. He is made dependent on the Divine will.

With Ransom's ascent through the caverns of the purgatorial mountain, the story moves to its climax. With unflagging invention Lewis tells how Ransom glimpses gigantic insect forms moving 'with insufferable majesty',⁴⁷ is swept by a stream out on to a mountain side, and through long, entranced days is restored to strength.⁴⁸ The mountain setting with its crystal cliffs,⁴⁹ its golden sky-roofs, its ripple-trees (canopy to a world of tiny creatures), and the joyful psalm of its singing beast, is wonderfully rendered.

A detailed examination of a brief passage from this section will perhaps serve to show how Lewis's themes are furthered by the style itself:

At this point it becomes increasingly difficult to give Ransom's experiences in any certain order. How long he lay beside the river at the cavern mouth eating and sleeping and waking only to eat and sleep again, he has no idea. He thinks it was only a day or two, but from the state of his body when this period of convalescence ended I should imagine it must have been more like a fortnight or three weeks. It was a time to be remembered only in

dreams as we remember infancy. Indeed it was a second infancy, in which he was breast-fed by the planet Venus herself; unweaned till he moved from that place. Three impressions of this long Sabbath remain. One is the endless sound of rejoicing water. Another is the delicious life that he sucked from the clusters which almost seemed to bow themselves unasked into his upstretched hands. The third is the song. Now high in the air above him, now welling up as if from glens and valleys far below, it floated through his sleep and was the first sound at every waking. It was formless as the song of a bird, yet it was not a bird's voice. As a bird's voice is to a flute, so was this to a cello: low and ripe and tender, full-bellied, rich and golden-brown: passionate too, but not with the passions of men.⁵⁰

The opening phrase, 'at this point', reveals Lewis's tendency to place each event in the total pattern, to strive for 'a certain order'. This shaping process moves with increasing confidence through 'no idea' - 'he thinks' - 'I should imagine' - until with the simile 'as we remember infancy' assurance is reached, and we get the confident stress of the topic sentence, 'Indeed it was a second infancy, in which he was breast-fed by the planet Venus herself: unweaned till he moved from that place'.

The syntax is conventional and tightly constructed, with a high proportion of interlocking subordinate clauses. Sentences and units of sense are predominantly short, and, though carefully related, are too firmly end-stopped to permit the reader any relaxation on the flux of sense impressions. The fairly high percentage of verbs, and the initial rarity of adjectives also precludes a dreamy impressionism which, appropriate enough to the immediate scene, would dissolve the forward and upward pressure of the narrative. The predominantly double, often antithetical structure, is also a mark of intellectual alertness, but monotony of rhythm is avoided by an occasional relaxation, at moments of

heightened sensuousness into a triple movement, such as 'lone/and ripe/and tender, //full-bellied,/rich/and golden brown: //passionate too,/ but not with the passions of men'. Yet the final unit of sense harks back to the antithetical structure, emphasising once more that Ransom's sensations on Perelandra, though intensely pleasurable, are marked even more by a trans-mortal discipline and order.

Order is also established by the frequency of adverbial and adjectival phrases that constantly place each action and object (at this point....in any certain order....beside the river....at the cavern mouth....a day or two....till he moved from that place....from the clusters....into his upstretched hands....high in the air above him.... far below....through his sleep....at every waking). This process of 'stationing' everything continues through the next four paragraphs, after which Lewis significantly refers to his description as 'trying to put the completed picture together'.⁵¹

Lewis's constant awareness of 'hierarchy' is at work in the texture. It is an awareness that leads him, continually, to group his figures in a hierarchical pattern, particularly at moments of climax. One remembers the earth men arraigned before Melacandra and his assembled subjects on Meldilorn, the household at St. Anne's-on-the Hill in conclave with the planetary powers, the heavenly procession, followed by the vision of the chess-board, in The Great Divorce,⁵² and the frequent banquets, conferences and battle arrays in which the multifarious creatures of Narnia are assembled and ranked. But the finest example is the assembly on Perelandra for which the paragraph above is a preparation. In that final

scene on the mountain, Ransom sees beast, man and angel compose one picture:

For now he saw this living Paradise, the Lord and Lady, as the resolution of discords, the bridge that spans what would else be a chasm in creation, the keystone of the whole arch. By entering that mountain valley they had suddenly united the werm multitude of the brutes behind him with the transcorporeal intelligences at his side. They closed the circle, and with their coming all the separate notes of strength or beauty which that assembly had hitherto struck became one music.⁵³

In the specimen paragraph this hierarchical grouping is accompanied by the symbolism of the mountain. For Jung, mountains symbolize the process of 'individuation' - the achievement of the real 'self', or integrated personality - and this interpretation suits the process of re-birth and re-making which Ransom is undergoing. The cavern from which he has just emerged, as from the womb, and the explicit reference to his being 'breast-fed' by the planet, are related to the consistently feminine symbolism of Perelandra, here manifesting herself as the Great Mother. Yet a trans-sexual symbolism reasserts itself in the immediate reference to a 'long Sabbath', which suggests a Ransom resting from his participation in the creation drama of Perelandra, or, with the Christ symbolism inherent in his name, rising from the tomb after his defeat of the dark powers.

The subsequent impressions are disciplined by the firm 'One.... another....the third'. Water is a universal life symbol to which 'rejoicing' gives a Christian tone by recalling the 'living water' of John's gospel (chap.iv). The vine and fruit are kindred symbols which (along with the echo of Marvell in 'bow themselves unasked') recall

Christ's words to his disciples at the Last Supper. Taken together they have a sacramental value. The third impression, the song of rejoicing, subtly combines the creativity of water ('welling up') with the nourishment of fruit ('ripe and tender...golden brown').

There is, in this and the other climactic scenes of Lewis's fiction, a literary counterpart to those visual 'mandalas' - 'the Indian term for the circles drawn in religious rituals'⁵⁴ - which have occupied Jung's attention. Like them they express and induce a harmony of being by picturing a like harmony in the cosmos. Focal points in the narrative web, they capture Lewis's distinctive vision of the Triumph of Joy.

Having carved an epitaph for Weston, Ransom descends from his subsidiary peak to attempt 'the ascent of the great mountain',⁵⁵ later referred to as 'The Hill of Life'. Led on, he attains its summit to find a secret valley guarded by glowing peaks and holding a pool ringed by crimson lilies. The awesome atmosphere deepens. He sees the coffin-like chariot prepared for his return and senses the presence of the eldila.

The inherent symbolism is as rich as the descriptive texture. This is 'the ascent of Paradise',⁵⁶ the objective correlative of Ransom's resurrection and re-birth, an event like the death and re-birth patterns of nature which are, according to Lewis, 'transpositions of the Divine theme into a minor key'.⁵⁷ As ambassador of heaven, Ransom's experience follows the pattern of his exalted namesake.⁵⁸ Like the ocean diver he has plumbed 'the death-like region of ooze and slime and old decay' and now 'back to colour and light...he breaks surface again, holding in his hand the dripping, precious thing that he went down to recover'.⁵⁹ He has

undergone that 'complete unmaking and remaking of man, to be endured at the dark bases of his being' which Lewis finds wonderfully presented in Shelley's account of Asia's descent to Demogorgon.⁶⁰

Emotionally, the passage evokes expectation and longing. 'The gradual ineluctable approach of the unknown, where the unknown is sinister, is not an uncommon theme in literature,' writes Lewis of Prometheus Unbound Act II; 'but where else are we to find this more medicinable theme - these shy approaches, and sudden recessions, and returnings beyond hope, and swellings and strengthenings of a far-off uncertainly prognosticated good?'⁶¹ We find something very like it in this passage where Ransom is nearing, 'after long journey and ritual preparation and slow ceremonial approaches', the presence of the 'great Father, Priest, and Emperor' of Perelandra.⁶²

Ransom now hears the Oyarsas, Malacandra and Perelandra, discussing him. The theme of glad renunciation is sounded in the imminent surrender of authority to the King by Perelandra. This is a coming of age - a new world is being born.

Experimenting to find what manifestation of themselves is appropriate to the King and Queen, the Oyarsas appear to Ransom; first as an intolerable storm of images, next as gigantic wheels,⁶³ and finally as sublime figures of burning splendour, rushing onward in pace with Perelandra's course round Arbol:

The Oyarsa of Mars shone with cold and morning colours, a little metallic - pure, hard, and bracing. The Oyarsa of Venus glowed with a warm splendour, full of the suggestion of teeming vegetable life.⁶⁴

Both blaze with intellectual love. Rhythm and melody, masculine and

feminine, guardian of an archaic world and mother of a young creation, they embody supremely the complementary 'sensations' of their two worlds, revealing the reality of which earthly myth is the distorted echo.

Ransom's questions cease as the valley fills with frolic beasts and birds. Ceremoniously ranked, as a holy light rests on the mountain, they kneel to the approaching King and Queen.

The last chapter is a sustained hymn of affirmation, a Triumph of Joy, which powerfully conveys the mystical aspects of Lewis's Christian philosophy. The exalted mood recalls the final act of Prometheus Unbound.⁶⁵ The centripetal movement, whereby Ransom, having reached the inner circle of the Perelandrian paradise, penetrates in vision the concentric circles of Heaven, corresponds, in miniature, to Dante's Paradiso.

Through Tor and Tinidril, the King and Queen of Perelandra, Lewis presents that 'advent of imperial man' which Ransom had foreseen in chapter twelve.⁶⁶ In the purity and strength of their unfallen natures they embody the perfection Man has lost, and anticipate the restoration of a redeemed humanity. The stamp of perfect manhood in the face of this 'second Adam', an echo of the Son's 'express image', more than compensates Ransom for the Miserific Vision fearfully glimpsed in the face of the Un-Man.

Underlying this episode is the Pauline doctrine of redeemed humanity expressed in the eighth chapter of Romans. Particularly relevant are the verses in which Man's redemption is given a cosmic significance:

For the created universe waits with eager expectation for God's sons to be revealed. It was made the victim of frustration, not by its own choice, but because of him who made it so; yet always there was hope, because the universe itself is to be freed from the shackles of mortality and enter upon the liberty and splendour of the children of God. (New English Bible.)

It is this 'liberty and splendour' which Lewis is portraying in the climax of his story, and in so doing he moves away from the rational emphasis of Western theology towards the mystical intuitions of Eastern Orthodoxy as represented, for example, by the nineteenth century philosopher Soloviev. 'For him,' writes Karl Pflieger, 'the significance of the cosmic process is not a purely negative redemption from sin, but the deification of the world,' and 'Without man this return is impossible and inconceivable.'⁶⁷

Soloviev, whom Pflieger calls 'the prophet of divine humanity', provides a view of Man's destiny which reads like a commentary on

Perelandra:

Man was predestined to be the universal Messiah whose task it is to redeem the world from chaos by uniting it with God and embodying the eternal wisdom in created forms. This mission comprises a threefold human ministry. Man must be the priest of God, King of the lower world and Prophet of the absolute union of both. He is a priest when he sacrifices his own will, his human selfishness; King of the sub-human world when he subjects it to the Divine Law; and prophet of their union when he aims at the absolute unity of existence and progressively realises it by the joint work of grace and free will, thereby gradually transforming nature separated from God into the universal and complete integration in Him which it originally possessed.⁶⁸

Lewis would no doubt wish to qualify some semi-pantheistic phrases in this passage, but otherwise it is an illuminating commentary on his final chapter.

As 'priest of God', Tor has sacrificed his own will. Like Tinidril he has conquered the impulse to 'reject the wave', triumphed where Adam fell, and, in so doing, attained a true vision of good and evil. The tempter's malice has, in Milton's words, 'served but to bring forth Infinite goodness'.⁶⁹ At this point, Ransom's concern over the justice of the King's apparently passive role gives rise to Lewis's clearest statement of a philosophy of Vicarious Experience. The debt this passage owes to Charles Williams's doctrine of 'co-inherence' has already been discussed.⁷⁰

As 'King of the lower world', Tor now exercises authority and dominion, relinquished to him by Perelandra, in naming the creatures and places of his planet.⁷¹ As the central link in the chain of being, the 'Keystone of the whole arch', he unites the natural and spiritual realms.

Finally, as 'Prophet of their union', he surveys the glorious vistas of the future. He and his Queen, as children of Maleldil, will people their world, make wondrous artefacts, and endow the beasts with wisdom.⁷² Eventually, Deep Heaven will open to their eyes, their bodies will be transformed, and, by the power of Maleldil's sons, they will break the Bent One's grip on Thulcandra.⁷³

Ransom identifies these predictions with the 'Last Things' of Christian doctrine, but is, nevertheless, troubled. These new immensities of life, space and time, seem to question the centrality of Maleldil's earthly incarnation.⁷⁴ Who is at the centre?

Ransom is not answered by logical argument but, like Job, confronted with a poetic vision of the awesome richness of creation.⁷⁵ The conversa-

tion becomes a celestial harmony of men and angels 'like the parts of a music into which all five of them had entered as instruments'. In this canticle of creation, the whole imagery and setting of the story - its waves and fruit and music, its islands, seas and mountains - is recapitulated. Finally, it merges into a cosmic chorus of praise lifting Ransom into a comprehensive vision in which he sees the particularities of space and time as parts of a Great Dance.

Dante's vision of the river of fire and the hierarchies of the celestial rose perhaps contribute to this image, which was a part of the Medieval world picture. So do the visions in the novels of Charles Williams.⁷⁶ But this Great Dance is more than a pious reconstruction of an outmoded image. Concepts of modern physics, geometry and astronomy participate in it to link it firmly to the planetary setting and to the theme of hierarchy. It is an integral part of the book's design, satisfies the imagination and stimulates the intellect. It makes a fitting close to Ransom's second adventure, and prepares him for the role he plays in the last of the planetary romances.

CHAPTER XIII

THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH

Despite its terrestrial setting, and the realistic air of its opening chapters, That Hideous Strength is perhaps the most fantastic of the planetary romances. Lewis provides a fair warning of this by giving it the sub-title 'A modern fairy-tale for grown-ups', and explaining in his preface, 'This is a "tall story" about devilry, though it has behind it a serious "point" which I have tried to make in my Abolition of Man'.

The references to 'fairy tale' and 'tall story' aptly indicate the mingling of incongruous characters, the riot of fantastic events, and the diversity of themes which Lewis has allowed himself. There is a reaction from Perelandra's imaginative and thematic concentration. Almost every one of Lewis's enthusiasms is indulged. Quite apart from the ideas propounded in The Abolition of Man there are such elements of his thought as the psychological theory of the 'inner ring', the interest in the 'characters' of the planets, cosmic warfare, anti-vivisectionism, hierarchy, and the conception of 'Logres' derived from Charles Williams's Arthurian poems. It is not surprising that with this wealth of material the book is longer than its predecessors and its structure more complex.

It differs in other ways from Out of the Silent Planet and Perelandra. In fact, as Margaret R. Greenman notes, its 'relationship to the others in the trilogy is not at first too apparent'. She points out

that 'Ransom, the central figure of the earlier tales, now dominates the idea rather than the action' and has become 'more of an influence than a character in the swiftly moving plot'. In addition, there is 'more of the novelist's skill here in the greater concentration on character and in his sensitive and perceptive treatment of ordinary human relationships'. Whilst her praise needs qualification, her diagnosis of this romance as more novelistic is certainly correct.

A definite readjustment is thus required from the reader as he turns from the archaic simplicities of Mars and the primal drama of Venus to the bedevilled complexities of Earth. There is no longer the excitement of a planetary voyage, nor a vivid, first-hand report from Ransom. Instead, the reader is conducted by an omniscient narrator over a widening field of characters whose connection with Ransom's earlier adventures is not at first apparent. Only when Lord Feverstone proves to be Devine and tells Mark Studcock about Weston and the 'inter-planetary problem', does the connection become clear. Chapter seven is reached before Ransom appears, though there are earlier references to him. Not until MacPhee's talk with Jane, in chapter nine, are the planetary powers mentioned.

Gradually, the relation of this story to Ransom's previous adventures becomes clearer, and the diverse elements begin to knit together into a coherent plot, but one's final impression is that diversity has only been achieved with some loss of concentration and power. Lewis's main theme - the threat to man's moral and spiritual

nature inherent in certain trends of contemporary thought - has been obscured rather than intensified by the supernatural, legendary and cosmic trappings. The absence of such machinery in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four gives his strangely similar warning against the anti-human forces of our century a greater impact.

For a full appreciation of the 'serious point' of the story some account is needed of Lewis's essay The Abolition of Man, which affords perhaps the clearest proof of the connection between his non-fiction and his fiction. It is, basically, a defence of the Tao (Moral Law), and an attack on 'scientism'.

The Tao is the moral teaching, based on a belief in objective values, which, Lewis claims, is essentially the same in all ages and civilisations. The Tao, he believes, is abiding, irreplaceable, and only improvable from within. Hence he is opposed to all forms of subjectivism or naturalism, and asserts that there is no system of values to be obtained from factual propositions or an appeal to instincts.

Nowadays there are many who deny the existence of the Tao - who regard 'all ideas of what we ought to do simply as an interesting psychological survival'² - and for whom applied science provides the means of re-making Man, not by conforming him to objective values, but by moulding him to their own wishes. What alarms Lewis is that 'the man-moulders of the new age will be armed with the powers of an omniscient state and an irresistible scientific technique'.³ Since power corrupts, the power of Man over Nature will inevitably become 'the power of some men to make other men what they please'. In terms that reflect

Wells's Selenites and Stapledon's Last and First Men (1931), and recall Huxley's Brave New World and Orwell's 1984, he pictures the logical outcome of this trend:

Stepping outside the Tao they [the man-moulders] have stepped into the void. Nor are their subjects necessarily unhappy men. They are not men at all; they are artefacts. Man's final conquest has proved to be the abolition of Man.⁴

As for the rulers themselves:

....those who stand outside all judgments of value cannot have any ground for preferring one of their own impulses to another except the emotional strength of that impulse....Man's conquest of Nature turns out in the moment of its consummation to be Nature's conquest of Man.⁵

In the novel these trends are worked out through the story of N.I.C.E. - the National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments - with its ruthless scientists and terrible 'Head'.

An interesting sidelight on Lewis's speculations is provided by William H. Whyte's The Organization Man (1957), a critique of certain trends in American society. Whyte's concept of the 'Social ethic', with its stress on 'belongingness', resembles Lewis's theme of the psychological attraction of the 'inner ring'; his 'Organization Man', hardly able to call his soul his own, recalls the employees of N.I.C.E.; whilst the term 'scientism', to which he gives currency, is a convenient label for the views of the 'man-moulders'.

Whyte finds scientism most clearly exemplified in certain pre-suppositions of behaviourist psychology and 'social engineering' which, significantly, are shared by Mark Studdock, Lewis's young sociologist.

Scientism, says Whyte, is 'the promise that with the same techniques that have worked in the physical sciences we can eventually create an exact science of man'. He quotes a fuller definition by Eric Voeglin as follows:

....(1) the assumption that the mathematized science of natural phenomena is a model science to which all the sciences ought to conform; (2) that all realms of being are accessible to the methods of the sciences of phenomena; and (3) that all reality which is not accessible to science of phenomena is either irrelevant or, in the more radical form of the dogma, illusory.⁶

The opposition to the Tao is here clearly seen, whilst the third point shows the relationship of scientism to the deductions which some have drawn from logical positivism.

So much to indicate that Lewis's insights are not merely peculiar or far-fetched, and that even in the novel, where they are given a free rein, they maintain a link with contemporary thought and practice. In the light of Whyte's revelations of American committee technique, for instance, Curry's picture of N.I.C.E.'s forty interlocking committees with their 'pragmatometry' is not so absurd as Devine affects to find it.⁷

The more sensational working out of scientism in the novel, notably in the horrific 'Head', has a literary basis (noted in chapter X) in the fiction of H.G. Wells and Olaf Stapledon. Yet his own planetary romances are totally opposed to the alien vision of Wells's conditioned Selenites, and the 'Great Brains' and manufactured supermen of Olaf Stapledon's Last and First Men. Against the ethos of Stapledon's 'Third Men', man-moulders par excellence in their ruthless artistry, he reaffirms the Tao, a respect for human integrity, and a defence of

'traditional sanctities'.⁸

The structure of That Hideous Strength may be represented (adopting the diagrammatic method of Henry James in his preface to The Awkward Age) by five overlapping circles, each circumscribing a distinct society. Into their concentric rings the reader gradually penetrates as he follows, in alternate steps, the ascent of the 'heroine' and the descent (and return) of the 'hero'. Meanwhile from the plot's initially mysterious centre, one personage, placed midway between the opposing circles of good and evil, emerges to play a decisive part in the action, which is eventually revealed as a psychomachia or spiritual war. It is a more ambitious scheme than that of Perelandra, involving some thirty characters and requiring eighty-four distinct scenes.

The first circle is the society of the provincial university of Edgestow, with the Fellows of Bracton College, and of them the 'Progressive Element' led by Gurry, the sub-warden, as its inner ring.. Interest centres on the young sociologist, Mark Studdock, and his literary-minded wife Jane, whose alarming 'dreams' foreshadow the course of the story.

Mark, when we first meet him, has only just been admitted to the centre of his circle, and it is his pathetic desire to remain 'in with' the Progressive Element and avoid at all costs the role of outsider that sets in motion one side of the plot. Jane, unlike Mark, is temperamentally aloof, and shrinks from personal commitment. Like the early Lewis, 'all she wanted was to be left alone'.⁹ Yet despite her fear of religious or personal claims she is propelled by her frightening,

hereditary gift of 'vision', in a direction opposite to Mark's, towards a group who claim her assistance and loyalty.

The key to Mark's moral weakness (it is convenient to consider his movements separately) is provided by Lewis's address 'The Inner Ring',¹⁰ though the novel itself makes the point clearly:

I believe that in all men's lives....one of the most dominant elements is the desire to be inside the local Ring and the terror of being left outside....The lust for the esoteric, the longing to be inside, takes many forms which are not easily recognizable as Ambition. We hope, no doubt, for tangible profits from every Inner Ring we penetrate: power, money, liberty to break rules, avoidance of routine duties, evasion of discipline. But all these would not satisfy us if we did not get in addition the delicious sense of secret intimacy....this desire is one of the great permanent mainsprings of human action....of all passions the passion for the Inner Ring is most skilful in making a man who is not yet a very bad man do very bad things.¹¹

Mark's story is an illustration of this last remark.

The second circle, into which Mark is drawn by his own weakness and the scheming of Lord Feverstone (Devine), is that of N.I.C.E.

(National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments), an organisation which seeks to purchase Bragon Wood from Braction College.

The N.I.C.E. was the first-fruit of that constructive fusion between the state and the laboratory on which so many thoughtful people base their hopes of a better world. It was to be free from almost all the tiresome restraints - "red tape" was the word its supporters used - which have hitherto hampered research in this country.¹²

As dangled before the dazzled Mark by Feverstone it appears as a charmed circle beside which 'Curry and his gang' pale into insignificance.

Feverstone outlines exciting possibilities - 'If Science is really given a free hand it can now take over the human race and re-condition it'.¹³

He elaborates the idea in Huxleyan terms:

"Man has got to take charge of man. That means, remember, that some men have got to take charge of the rest...."

"What sort of thing have you in mind?"

"Quite simple and obvious things, at first - sterilisation of the unfit, liquidation of backward races,.... selective breeding. Then real education, including prenatal education. By real education I mean one that has no 'take-it-or-leave-it' nonsense. A real education makes the patient what it wants infallibly; whatever he or his parents try to do about it. Of course, it'll have to be mainly psychological at first. But we'll get on to biochemical conditioning in the end and direct manipulation of the brain....A new type of man; and it's people like you who've got to begin to make him." 14

With this bait held before him Mark is drawn into Belbury, the H.Q. of N.I.C.E., and soon by-passing its outer layers, the 'unimportant' officials, Steele, Cosser and Stone, encounters its inner ring - 'Fairy' Hardcastle, the sadistic female chief of police, Straik, the 'Mad Parson', Filostrato, the Italian physiologist, Wither, the alarmingly vague Deputy Director, and Frest, the de-humanised scientist. By the end of chapter seven, Mark, involved in the destruction of the ancient beauty-spot of Cure Hardy, one of the many 'anachronisms' which N.I.C.E. is liquidating, and engaged in 'writing down' N.I.C.E.'s domination and terrorisation of Edgestow, is thoroughly compromised, and being pressed by Wither to bring Jane to Belbury.

Meanwhile, Jane has been drawn into the third circle, a Christian 'company' domiciled at St. Anne's-on-the-Hill under the direction of a mysterious Mr. Fisher-King (Ransom). Even Bracton had its Christian element in old Canon Jewel, but Dr. Dimple, Jane's tutor in Northumberland college, is actually a member of Ransom's circle. He and Mrs.

Dimble persuade Jane to see another member of the 'company', Miss Grace Ironwood, who can throw light on the nature of her 'dreams'. Alarmed by Miss Ironwood's assertion that the 'dreams' are true visions, unamenable to psycho-analysis, she at first recoils from St. Anne's, but her frightening vision of Hingest's murder (the work of N.I.C.E.) undermines her self-confidence, and eventually, through Camille and Arthur Denniston, also members of the company, she is drawn into Ransom's fellowship. Her interview with Ransom initiates a spiritual change, and a terrifying episode in a chaotic Edgestow, where, for a time, she falls into the hands of Fairy Harcastle and is interrogated under torture, puts her as firmly in the arms of the 'company' as Mark is now gripped in the tentacles of N.I.C.E.

An interesting situation is crystallizing by the end of chapter seven, in which the circles of Belbury and St. Anne's-on-the-Hill stand in opposition on the brink of a conflict which is assuming terrestrial, and cosmic significance. Mark, under fierce and subtle pressures, and amid growing hints of approaching horrors, is being sucked into an infernal vortex. Jane, her defensive mechanisms crumbling, is being swept up on the waves of joy which emanate from, and from beyond, Ransom's company. The two lines, skilfully counterpointed, are increasingly linked by the struggle for Jane, whose 'vision' alone provides knowledge and mastery of the awakening Power in Bragdon Wood. The action, in general, is being lifted by successive shocks of revelation from the mundane to the metaphysical.

Two further steps take the narrative to its mid point, and in so doing begin to lift the curtain on the fourth and fifth circles - the cosmic circles of the 'macrobes' (Bent Eldils) and the Oyeresu, or planetary Powers.

First, Filostrato reveals to Mark the existence of a lunar race, forerunners of Man in his conquest of Nature, with whom the inner ring of N.I.C.E. are in league. Mark is now to enter the scientific chamber of horrors where the head of the criminal scientist Alcasan (glimpsed in Jane's first 'dream') is preserved alive by Filostrato's ingenuity, and from whose swollen cranium issue the secret orders of N.I.C.E. Through Jane's visionary power, Mark's interview with the 'Head' is observed by Ransom's company. The horror of his interview, and dark hints from the Fairy regarding his wife, unnerve Mark, who makes an abortive attempt at escape.

Meanwhile Jane, in conversation with the sceptical Ulstermen, MacPhee, learns of Ransom's planetary voyages and is convinced of his communion with the planetary powers. From Camilla she hears how Ransom owes his vitality and youthfulness (and his unhealing wound) to his sojourn on Perelandra. Camilla confides (in conceptions Lewis has drawn from Williams's Arthurian poems), 'he is the Pendragon of Logres. This house, all of us here....are all that's left of Logres: all the rest has become merely Britain'.¹⁵

The outcome of the action now turns on the company preventing the Dark-Eldils from fusing the new power of Belbury with the old Atlantean magic of Merlin (whose sleep beneath Bregon has ended) and thus

achieving their ancient aim of the Materialist-Magician.¹⁶ Ransom summarises the deeper implications of the situation:

Perhaps few or none of the people at Belbury knew what was happening: but once it happened, they would be like straw in fire. What should they find incredible, since they believed no longer in a rational universe? What should they regard as too obscene, since they held that all morality was a mere subjective by-product of the physical and economic situations of men?... From the point of view which is accepted in hell, the whole history of our Earth had led up to this moment. There was now at least a real chance for fallen Man to shake off that limitation of his powers which mercy had imposed upon him as a protection from the full results of his fall. If this succeeded, hell would be at least incarnate.¹⁷

At this point, where the increasingly obtrusive 'machinery' of Merlin and the Dark Eldils has ringed the story's socially realistic core with the lurid figures of a supernatural thriller, Lewis's message is, paradoxically, most seriously stated. The whole force of his indictments of subjectivist ethics and behaviourist psychology in 'The Abolition of Man', and elsewhere, is behind Ransom's summary. The images in which it is conveyed are strange, but the diagnosis itself is shrewd.

From his very dissimilar experience, Orwell was to isolate similar trends, three years later, in his Nineteen Eighty-Four. That impending 'abolition of man', against which Lewis arms us, is the sole object of Orwell's interrogator, O'Brien. In his terrible 're-integration' of Winston Smith, O'Brien denies, like the scientist Frost, that 'reality is something objective, external, existing in its own right'.¹⁸ Like Devine, he believes that 'The real power, the power we have to fight for night and day, is not power over things, but over men,'¹⁹ and states, with greater frankness, that this power lies 'in tearing human minds to pieces

and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing'.¹⁹

Even Lewis had not, in 1945, envisaged 'man-moulders' of such ultimate ruthlessness. 'We control life, Winston, at all its levels,' says O'Brien. 'You are imagining that there is something called human nature which will be outraged by what we do and will turn against us. But we create human nature. Men are infinitely malleable.'²⁰ Orwell, of course, cannot hold out Lewis's remedy. What gives his picture its final and unmitigated bleakness is the suspicion that he cannot offer any remedy. He leaves Winston 'Feebly, without arguments, with nothing to support him except his inarticulate horror of what O'Brien had said'.²⁰ Even Orwell's customary appeal to a basic human 'decency' falters. Winston's resistance to the inhuman ends in a pathetic whimper.

This is a convenient point at which to examine Lewis's skill at characterisation which, it has been pointed out, is unusually relevant to this romance. The contemporary setting, and the viewpoint of the omniscient narrator, both demand a more rounded characterization than did the earlier romances, and this remains true even when the horrors, raptures and metaphysical sensations produce a super-heightened atmosphere. Whereas the Malacandrians were mere types of alien creatures, Tor and Tinidril a kind of archetype, and Ransom a medium for the story rather than a 'character' in his own right, the characters of That Hideous Strength must bear a stricter relation to contemporary people.

Since vice is easier to portray than virtue, it is perhaps not surprising that Lewis scores his palpeble hits in the circle of N.I.S.E. His 'lively vizualising power'²¹ and clear perception of psychological

elements is here matched by vivid, idiomatic dialogue.

Devine, playing a double game with insolent ease, is successfully revived from the first romance. The 'fine, male energy'²² that impresses Mark, the cool detachment of one 'neither an initiate like Wither, nor a dupe like Filostrato',²³ carries him through the calamitous events with something of the ruthless egoism of Charles Williams's Sir Giles Tamulty. Even the final catastrophe, which threatens his own security, merely leaves him with the feeling that 'It had certainly been a most extraordinary show'.²³

Yet the demands of plot (he has the dual function of retrospective narration and of luring Mark into N.I.C.E.) make his conversation less consistently authentic and racy, perhaps, than that of Feiry Hardcastle. Introduced via the formal portrait of the nineteenth century, she springs from the sickening background of secret police and concentration camp which is purely of the twentieth:

Mark found himself writhing from the stoker's or carter's hand-grip of a big woman in a black, short-skirted uniform. Despite a bust that would have done credit to a Victorian barmaid, she was rather thickly built than fat and her iron-grey hair was cropped short. Her face was square, stern, and pale, and her voice deep. A smudge of lip-stick laid on with violent inattention to the real shape of her mouth was her only concession to fashion, and she rolled or chewed a long black cheroot, unlit, between her teeth.²⁴

Paradoxically, as we go on to know her colleagues better, she seems, with all her acrimony, coarseness and crudity of speech, to be an island of normality.

Filostrato, the scornful, Italianate aristocrat, concerned with the biological experiments of N.I.C.E., is adequate to his role, but

Straik, the 'Mad Parson', is more unusual and intense. The 'bitter sincerity'²⁵ of his fierce conversation is a strange compound of Biblical idiom and scientific millennialism. "Don't you see" he says to Mark, with an insane blasphemy that is almost sublime, "that we are offering you the unspeakable glory of being present at the creation of God Almighty!"²⁶ He provides a gruesome parody of one of the ideas of Emergent Evolution.

The symbolic undertones of the names²⁷ - Feverstone, Steele, Hardcastle, Straik and Filostrato - are particularly patent in Wither and Frost, the 'initiates' of the macrobes.

John Wither, the Deputy Director, and Ransom's anti-type, has a rambling courtesy, nerve-racking vagueness, and 'elastic' policy which mask the chaos and desolation of diabolical possession. He is like some living (or galvanised) model of Screwtape's artistry. His conversation lurches from alarming misunderstandings to weird irrelevancies, veers into veiled threats or viler parodies of fellowship, staggers back to official clichés and then wanders off into inattention. Creeping about corridors with his creaking boots and dreary hum, he produces the maximum degree of uncertainty in his subordinates. His interview with Mark over the murder of Hingest (designed to draw in Jane) is a masterpiece of psychological reduction.²⁸

Frost, too, though outwardly more of a stock figure, the 'wicked scientist', is a strongly conceived embodiment of Lewis's thesis regarding 'the abolition of Man'.

In the contrasted company of Logres at St. Anne's-on-the-Hill

several characters remain rather shadowy, partly because the plot affords them little opportunity for action and partly because it requires them as Lewis's mouthpieces on such subjects as Merlin, Logres, matrimony, Ransom and the planetary powers. As a picture of Christian fellowship the Dimbles, the Dennistons and Grace Ironwood hardly take on sufficient life. MacPhee is more solid, perhaps because he seems to reflect Lewis's memories of his old tutor, 'Kirk'. "Mrs. Studdock," he remonstrates, in the manner of that old-fashioned rationalist, "I have no opinions - on any subject in the world. I state the facts and exhibit the implications."²⁹

The person nearest to being an active hero is Hingest, the old, aristocratic scientist, whose gallant resistance to N.I.C.E. leads to his being murdered.

Here, in contrast to Margaret R. Grennan's appraisal, quoted earlier, of Lewis's 'sensitive and perceptive treatment of ordinary human relationships' may be set the assessment of the Times Literary Supplement. After noting the novel's affinity, in theme and occult circumstance, with the novels and poems of Charles Williams, the reviewer remarks:

In imaginative quality it suffers from the comparison it provokes, particularly in Mr. Lewis's characters, who tend to be caricatures, or at best personifications of certain mental or moral attitudes he is concerned to present....The horrors are most ingeniously contrived, but the humours of the good people, including Mr. Baltitude, the tame bear, are a little laboured, and in trying to combine in Ransom an avatar, a moralist and a family pet, Mr. Lewis dwarfs his spiritual stature. Intellectually he grasps impressively the metaphysics of his theme and gives it contemporary relevance. But it is in real creative imagination that he fails as a

modern myth-maker. What he has produced is a thriller with a moral, which is certainly powerful but apt to be too obtrusive and even at times a little smug.³⁰

This is too severe, but it pinpoints certain weaknesses. It is true that Ransom, as one who has 'drunk the milk of paradise', fits rather uneasily into this cosy domestic scene. Perhaps too much sympathetic transfer from the impression created in Perelandra is demanded. The necessity for economy of presentation arising from the complex pattern explains something, but there is a real deficiency. Ransom's pronouncements, on marital relations for example, are too abrupt and one-sided. The doctrine of 'the headship of the man', like the concept of royalty, often intoxicates Lewis's imagination. It is a valuable and orthodox insight, but he is given to brandishing it like a banner whilst complementary truths are neglected. Thus Ransom's first interview with Jane, in which he pronounces on her relationship to Mark, has more weight laid upon it than it can carry, and is marred by a note of patronage.

It is precisely here that Charles Williams, with his lifelong interest in 'romantic theology', excels. Jane's spiritual progress has its impressive moments, but it is neither so well documented, nor so luminous with psychological insight and spiritual charity, as that of Lester in All Hallow's Eve. Mark, too, is something of a cypher, though this matters less. As a raw young man he convincingly exhibits the lure of the 'inner ring'.

More successful, as pure 'character', is the sly, animal cunning of the tramp, and the strong blend of similar earthy qualities, with those of the Celt, magician and warrior in Merlin himself. The

elaborate tribute to Williams implied in Merlin, and the whole 'matter of Logres', remains, perhaps, an odd piece in the jigsaw of the romance, though it is interlocked with remarkable ingenuity.

To return to the plot itself, this ingenious interweaving of incongruous strands is perhaps the most striking feature of the conflict which fills chapters 10 - 17.

The theme of the 'abolition of man' is carried forward through Mark's 're-education'. Faced with a veiled charge of murdering Hingest, he escapes, fails to find Jane, is shaken by Dimple's scathing analysis of his conduct, and is re-arrested. After playing on his fears, Wither and Frost switch their attack to an offer of 'initiation'. Frost reveals that the real masters of N.I.C.E. are the macrobes, who use the 'Head' as a mere mouthpiece, and that by submission to a course in 'objectivity' Mark, like Wither, Straik and himself, can communicate with them. Here is 'the true inner circle of all, the circle whose centre was outside the human race - the ultimate secret, the supreme power, the last initiation'.³¹ Left to himself Mark feels the terrible undertow of the occult, the lust that 'disenchants the universe' and attracts by its very horror. His resistance to it marks a first step back to integrity. Frost's subsequent tuition, designed to destroy the 'whole system of instinctive preferences, whatever ethical, aesthetic, or logical disguise they wear',³² shows Mark the logical outcome of his own opinions, and begins his detachment from them. His training continues, but eventually this new concept of the 'Normal' triumphs, he declines the pointless blasphemies laid upon him and cries out "It's all

bloody nonsense, and I'm damned if I do any such thing".³³

His rejection of the diabolic is paralleled by Jane's acceptance of the divine - first by submission to Ransom's authority and then by a genuine conversion. Her story becomes, increasingly, part of the struggle between Belbury and St. Anne's for possession of Merlin, whose whereabouts her vision reveals. A comedy of errors develops when Belbury capture a tramp in Merlin's robes and are mocked by the earthy cunning of the vulgar humanity they despise. Meanwhile the real Merlin arrives on horseback at St. Anne's, where his meeting with Ransom, alone immune to his hypnotic power, and his challenge of Ransom's authority with riddling questions, blends farce, melodrama and sublimity. Ransom's mastery of the speech of Numinor and his knowledge of the planetary powers subdue Merlin's mockery. His replies to riddles regarding the inhabitants of Sulve (the moon) and Arthur's fate (translated to Perelandra) amaze the wizard. The answer to Merlin's final riddle provides a climax:

"Well answered," said the Stranger. "In my college it was thought that only two men in the world knew this. But as for my third question, no man knew the answer but myself. Who shall be Pendragon in the time when Saturn descends from his sphere? In what world did he learn war?"

"In the sphere of Venus I learned war," said Ransom. "In this age Lurga shall descend. I am the Pendragon."³⁴

In the subsequent conferences between Merlin and Ransom many themes are clarified and the final explosive charges of the plot are laid.

Merlin comes from an age when good and evil were less sharply opposed, when magic could still be innocent. (In Dumble's reference to

'primal unities', Lewis draws on the ideas of his friend Owen Barfield.) This situation has passed. Human history is neither pure progress nor mere decline. In a conversation that recalls the parable of the wheat and the tares, Diable expounds the view that "Good is always getting better and bad is always getting worse: the possibilities of even apparent neutrality are always diminishing"³⁵. Now the harvest field of Edgestow awaits the sickle. 'The powers above' are ready to 'put on their instruments'. Merlin, a neutral vehicle, "good enough to be so used and not too good"³⁶, is to be indwelt by the planetary powers, and made an agent of destruction.

Jane's unhappy marriage bond, and in particular her wilful barrenness, now emerges as part of the main theme. It was God's purpose, says Merlin, "that she and her lord should between them have begotten a child by whom the enemies should have been put out of Logres for a thousand years"³⁷. Whether Hilton-Young is right or not in calling this theme 'messianic',³⁸ Jane's previous attitude is clearly viewed as an offence against Hymen, a denial of the 'traditional sanctities' preserved by Logres.

Another such offence, a perversion of Men's dominion over the beasts, has lain in the immense programme of vivisection carried out by N.I.C.E. This theme is revived by their capture of Mr. Bultitude, the bear, one of the tame 'menagerie' which makes Ransom's household a fulfilment, in little, of Isaiah's idyllic vision (Isaiah xi, 6-9). These two discords in the realm of being participate, and are resolved, in the apocalyptic climax which now impends. Nemesis awaits the 'Hideous

Strength' of N.I.C.E. By opening the terrestrial frontier to the dark
eldils they have unwittingly made the way clear for the planetary 'gods',
whose descent initiates the complex climax of the last three chapters.

Against the overcrowded intellectual background of the preceding
chapters, filled as they are with legend, myth, history and theology,
the human characters have tended to lose their solidity. Now, as the
descent of the planetary powers takes the conduct of the conflict out of
their hands, this tends to matter less.

In this episode Lewis's gift for re-creating mythology is given
full scope. So far, the reader's expectation of a further planetary
voyage has been disappointed. Now, the miniature portraits of the
'characters' of Mercury, Saturn and Jupiter - and again of Venus and
Mars - afford some compensation. There is a tremendous exhilaration in
these descriptions. Each planet produces a response from Ransom's
company, and from the reader, in which the isolation and intensification
of some aspect of human experience has a liberating, cathartic effect.
Again, as in Perelandra, there is a parallel with Dante's progress
through the heavenly spheres.

Mercury (Viritrilbia), 'lord of Meaning', fills Ransom and Merlin
with a keen delight:

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 counter-
point of the mind, the mastery of doubled and trebled
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.³⁹

The images of speed and temperature drawn from the actual planet, and the concept of meaning derived from Mercury as the messenger of the gods, are skilfully combined. Mercury's presence is also vividly reflected in the witty, imaginative speech of Ransom's company.

Warmth and fragrance, and a kaleidoseope of ardent emotions, indicate the approach of Venus (Perelandra). Mars (Malacandra) conveys images of battle and heroism which draw on the experience of the recipient.

The powers of the outer, giant planets are 'mightier energies.... which have never from the beginning been subdued to the sweet humiliations of organic life'. Saturn (Lurga) brings the oppressive weight of unnumbered years. Jupiter (Glund-Oyarsa) combines all the energies of his predecessors:

Kingship and power and festal pomp and courtesy shot from him as sparks fly from an anvil. The ringing 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.⁴⁰

These are, unashamedly, 'purple passages', descriptions detachable from their context in a way to be deplored in the realistic novel. But when, in a romance, they are as intimately related as here to the sentiments, themes and plot they are justifiable. In any case, Lewis, like Chesterton, has never shared the modern distaste for the royal purple.

The search by N.I.C.E. for a Celtic expert to interpret their supposed Merlin now leads to the real Merlin's introduction to Belbury.

A farcical comedy ensues in which the ill-timed arrival of Jules, the pompous figure-head of N.I.C.E., embarrasses Wither and Frost in their increasingly desperate attempts to further their diabolical policy. Merlin's release of Bultitude and Mark are mere interludes amid the doom blows with which the Powers now batter N.I.C.E.

The Banquet scene, in which Viritribia, through Merlin, induces Babel, and then chaos, at Belbury, is one of uproarious farce and savage glee. The gibberish that first afflicts Jules spreads to Wither and the guests. Into the confusion surge the tormented beasts released by Merlin, and a nightmare melee results. Judgment is meted out. Jules is shot by the Fairy, who herself falls prey to a tiger, but the inner ring, flying, meet a grimmer fate. Wither and Straik offer Filostrato - victim of his own devilish machine - as an expiatory sacrifice to their dark masters - but "Another," said the voice, "give me another head"⁴¹. Wither rises from his murder of Straik only to walk into the embrace of the maddened bear. Frost, reduced by his self-inflicted course in 'objectivity' to a bundle of diabolically inspired impulses, destroys himself.

Devine (a spectator of the Banquet) makes a wild escape, but the stars in their courses fight against him. The might of Mars and the power of Saturn complete their work. Driving desperately towards Edgestow which, unknown to him, has been evacuated, he is engulfed in cataclysmic earth-tremors.

In the final chapter Perelandra (with all her 'four loves' of affection, friendship, eros and charity) triumphs. Ransom is 'trans-

lated' to Venus, Logres reaffirmed, and the strange journey ends with the 'lovers' meeting' of Jane and Mark.

A number of subsidiary interests, and even moves in the plot, have been omitted from this far from exhaustive discussion of That Hideous Strength. It would seem that Lewis, realising that this romance could have no sequel, was determined to introduce all the intellectual interests that had gathered around his subject. His debts to his literary friends - Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien and Owen Barfield - are numerous and patent. They provide a sort of free publicity for All Hallows Eve, Taliessin through Logres, The Lord of the Rings and Poetic Distiction.

From the magician, Simon, in All Hallows Eve, who has the power to reduplicate himself and so extend his earthly power, Lewis has probably derived his conception of the 'wraiths', or multiple appearances, of Wither. Ransom's interview with Merlin contains, in his references to Numinor and the 'true West', (as directly acknowledged in the preface) a deferential allusion to Tolkien's epic of Middle Earth. Barfield's theory of 'primal unities' had been familiar to Lewis from his earlier friendship with its author. Briefly, it states that man's increasing consciousness has led to a bi-furcation of originally unified apprehensions. In Old Testament times, for example, 'Israel' could convey either, or both, the individual of that name or the chosen race. Object and symbol, person and name, event and ritual, had a unity since lost. Dr. Dimble draws largely on this thesis when discussing Merlin, magic, the course of history and the nature of spirits. As the theory of an

increasing polarity of good and evil, whereby the area of moral and spiritual neutrality continually contracts, it determines the whole action.

Interesting as these ideas are to the student of Lewis, they are not all fully integrated into the story, and not all readily comprehensible to the general reader. It is symptomatic of the book's excessive detail that Lewis has, however reluctantly, been able to abridge the story quite drastically for its appearance as a paperback. This pruning of the almost Spenserian ramifications of plot and theme probably makes the story more generally acceptable. But Lewis admits that he prefers the leisurely pace of the original -

I would not wish even War and Peace or The Faerie Queene any shorter - but some critics may well think this abridgement is also an improvement.⁴²

The ambitious structure of the original is most successful in plot and description. The basic structure, with its Dantesque divisions of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, is firmly handled. So are the alternations of mood secured by the contrapuntal plots, those transitions from the anguished to the ardent, or the comic to the gruesome, which a thematic analysis obscures.

Sentiment and characterization are less consistently adequate. The exhibition of Christian belief and conduct through Jane, Mark and Ransom often fails to secure sufficient balance and depth. Certain idiosyncrasies in the presentation of the marital and servant-master relationships, a somewhat off-hand acceptance of the role of violent destruction, are too evident. The fantastic setting is often an

embarrassment to the expression of the moral and religious message.
This is particularly marked in the treatment of Jane's conversion.

C H A P T E R X I V

THE CHILDREN'S FANTASY

'The Chronicles of Narnia', which opened with The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe in 1950, reward adult attention as fully as the children's classics of Hans Anderson and George MacDonald, Kenneth Grahame and J.R.R. Tolkien, and for the same reasons; the author enjoyed writing them and they express his serious interests.

Children enjoy such stories because they sense, and share, the author's own enjoyment. He pleases them because he pleases himself. As Arthur Ransome, the doyen of living writers for children, puts it:

Lewis Carroll was not 'writing down' further than to Lewis Carroll, and though Kenneth Grahame could count on a delighted listener in his small son, the first person to enjoy the exquisite fun of Mr. Toad and his friends was Kenneth Grahame himself.¹

He recalls R.L. Stevenson's remark that in writing for boys 'you just indulge the pleasure of your heart', and this is surely true of Ransome himself, whose Swallows and Amazons, and its popular sequels, sprang from his love of boyish adventure and outdoor pursuits.

That Narnia was both a pleasure to create and a vehicle for his beliefs is shown by Lewis's address 'On three ways of writing for children':

The third way, which is the only one I could ever use myself, consists in writing a children's story because a children's story is the best art-form for something you have to say:....everything in the whole story should arise from the whole cast of the author's mind. We must write for children out of those elements in our own imagination which we share with children:

differing from our child readers not by any less, or less serious, interest in the things we handle, but by the fact that we have other interests which children would not share with us. The matter of our story should be a part of the habitual furniture of our minds...Nothing seems to me more fatal for this art, than an idea that whatever we share with children is, in the derogatory sense, 'childish', and that whatever is childish is somehow comic. We must meet children as equals in that area of our nature where we are their equals...The child as reader is neither to be patronized nor idolized: we talk to him as man to man.²

stories which meet the child on his own ground, and yet reflect 'the whole cast of the author's mind', have a double appeal. In fact, Lewis himself is 'almost inclined to set it up as a canon that a children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story', and thinks this 'most obviously true of that particular type of children's story which is dearest to my own taste, the fantasy or fairy tale'.³

The best of the children's fantasies entertain the adult in two ways: their childish interests appeal to the child-like elements that abide in him, and profounder overtones, which figure unconsciously in the child's enjoyment, provide a conscious delight. Into Alice in Wonderland the mathematically-minded author introduces intellectual puzzles which intrigue the adult without spoiling the child's interest in the flow of curious incidents. In The Wind in the Willows Toad's amusing, exciting adventures afford universal delight, whilst the superb descriptive and evocative passages disclose rich depths to the mature reader. Yet the two are beautifully related, and no episode, read aloud, lacks interest for children. In his record of nursery fantasy, the author of Winnie the Pooh charms the parent by his subtle

confidences and his delicate artistry.

As fantasies appealing at two levels the tales of Narnia are in this classic mainstream of English stories for children. They provide narrative and descriptive interest at the child's level along with a moral and spiritual vision, securing, in the main, effective transitions from one level to the other, or, still more effectively, creating images in which they coexist.

As a boy, Lewis, like most successful writers for children, was an avid reader of children's stories and had a precocious taste for adult fiction. In Surprised by Joy he frequently refers to these books which, we may suppose, influenced him when he later came to write of Narnia.

The role of Squirrel Nutkin in his development, already described, was unique, but he 'loved all the Beatrix Potter books',⁴ he says. Another favourite between the ages of six and eight was Edith Nesbit's trilogy Five Children and It, The Phoenix and the Carpet and The Amulet. 'The last did most for me,' he writes. 'It first opened my eyes to antiquity, the "dark backward and abysm of Time".⁵ I can still re-read it with delight.' When composing the first of the Narnia stories in the late 'forties, he told Ched Walsh that it was a children's story 'in the tradition of Edith Nesbit'.⁶ He enjoyed many other books.

Gulliver in an unexpurgated and lavishly illustrated edition was one of my favourites, and I pored endlessly over an almost complete set of old Punches which stood in my father's study.⁵

He particularly admired Tenniel's cartoons.

At school not all his reading was so valuable, and he regrets the

time he wasted on 'twaddling school-stories in The Captain'.⁷ Yet it was there that an important new taste developed:

Curiously enough it is at this time, [nearly thirteen] ...that I chiefly remember delighting in fairy tales. I fell under the spell of Dwarfs - the old bright-hooded, snowy-bearded dwarfs we had in those days before Arthur Reckham sublimed, or Walt Disney vulgarised, the earthmen. I visualised them so intensely that I came to the very frontiers of hallucination; once, walking in the garden, I was for a second not quite sure that a little man had not run past me into the shrubbery.⁸

The taste for fantasy was still with him when, some three years later, he made that momentous discovery of George MacDonald's Phantastes described in Chapter I.

Surprised by Joy also reveals that Lewis, like the Brontës with their Gondal and Angria, was the author of copious juvenilia, which centred on an imaginary country called Animal Land whose terrain and history he gradually elaborated. Like the Brontës he worked in collaboration, in his case with his brother:

Though three years my senior, he never seemed to be an elder brother; we were allies, not to say confederates, from the first. Yet we were very different. Our earliest pictures (and I can remember no time when we were not incessantly drawing) reveal it. His were of ships and trains and battles; mine, when not imitated from his, were of what we both called "dressed animals" - the anthropomorphized beasts of nursery literature. His earliest story - as my elder he preceded me in the transition from drawing to writing - was called The Young Rajah. He had already made India "his country"; Animal-Land was mine.⁹

When his brother went to school leaving behind Lewis, now seven, in the rambling 'New House' - 'almost a major character in my story,'¹⁰ he writes - he was precluded from sport and mechanical hobbies by his manual clumsiness, and so took to writing and illustrating his own stories.

They were an attempt to combine my two chief literary pleasures - "dressed animals" and "knights-in-armour". As a result, I wrote about chivalrous mice and rabbits who rode out in complete mail to kill not giants but cats. But already the mood of the systematizer was strong in me....¹¹

The need then arose to link this medieval realm with the modern Animal-Land he wrote about when his brother was on holiday:

This led me from romancing to historiography; I set about writing a full history of Animal-Land...From history it was only a step to geography. There was soon a map of Animal-Land - several maps, all tolerably consistent...Soon there was a whole world and a map of that world...And those parts of that world which we regarded as our own - Animal-Land and India - were increasingly peopled with consistent characters.¹²

All this, he tells us, was 'invention', not 'fantasy':

For readers of my children's books, the best way of putting this would be to say that Animal-Land had nothing whatever in common with Narnia except the anthropomorphic beasts. Animal-Land, by its whole quality, excluded the least hint of wonder.¹³

Nevertheless, this exercise in inventing history and geography must have been good training for the future chronicler of Narnia.

At this point it may be interesting to consider the relation of 'The Chronicles of Narnia' to the history of children's literature in England. A complete sketch of this field cannot be given here, but attention may be drawn to some books and trends particularly relevant to both the fantastic and didactic aspects of Narnia.

F. J. Harvey Darton, whose Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life¹⁴ is still the standard work for the period to 1900, views the history of children's books as a struggle between the forces of didacticism and entertainment in which they 'were always the

scene of a battle between instruction and amusement, between restraint and freedom, between hesitant morality and spontaneous happiness'.¹⁵ Thus, in the seventeenth century, there were, on the one hand, the chapbooks with their condensed versions of ancient legends, medieval tales and scraps of folklore, avidly read by children as well as adults, and, on the other, such grimly earnest works as the puritan James Janeway's A Token for Children; being an Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths of several young Children. In Bunyan, whose Pilgrim's Progress is one of the 'adopted' children's books, the two streams merged - his youthful delight in the adventures of Sir Bevis of Southampton providing a narrative vehicle for his religious message. Lewis's marriage of knightly romance and theology is not new.

About 1700 'cheerfulness creeps in'. Perrault's fairy tales were translated in 1729, and in 1744 the first enterprising publisher for children, John Newbery, produced a work which quaintly harnessed didacticism and amusement: A Little Pretty Pocket-Book intended for The Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy, and Pretty Miss Polly, etc. was followed, in 1760-65, by Mother Goose's Melody or Sonnets for the Cradle and The History of Little Goody Two Shoes.

Paradoxically, Rousseau, apostle of spontaneity, was the formative influence in a fresh outbreak of didacticism, this time intellectual and moral, in the later eighteenth century. The classic English example is The History of Sandford and Merton by Thomas Day (1748-1789), in which the spoiled Tommy Merton is relentlessly instructed and disciplined

through four volumes.

In the earlier nineteenth century the tales of the brothers Grimm (translated 1823) and Hans Andersen (translated 1846) appeared alongside a resurgence of puritan fervour in the books of Mrs. Sherwood. But with Edward Lear's Book of Nonsense (1846) and Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland (1865) laughter and lunacy triumphed. Kingsley's The Water Babies (1863) is of special interest as being close, in kind, to the Narnia stories, combining, as it does, fantasy, morality and theology. Yet it has probably contributed little to Lewis's Narnia. Neither the rambling structure of Tom's adventures under the sea, nor the frequent digressions, with their boisterous humour and facetious verbosity, are in Lewis's manner.

The unique influence on the Narnia stories of Lewis Carroll's contemporary and friend, George MacDonald, will be examined at the end of this chapter. After MacDonald, the pattern of the children's fantasy is too rich to discuss in detail. The 'nineties brought Rudyard Kipling's 'Jungle Books' with their exotic setting and distinctive ethos. Then, after 1900, came the whimsical humour of Edith Nesbit's trilogy describing the strange adventures of five children with their Psammead, Phoenix, magic carpet and amulet. This was followed by the sweeter sentiment of J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan (1911), and the individual treatment of the animal world in Beatrix Potter's stories, and Kenneth Grahame's The Wind in the Willows (1908). A rather barren period after 1910 was ended by A.A. Milne's nursery classics Winnie the Pooh (1926) and The House at Pooh Corner (1928). Notable recent fantasies have

included J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit (1938), and Mary Norton's 'Borrowers' series (1952-1961). Of these, Edith Nesbit, Kenneth Grahame and J.R.R. Tolkien have had most influence on Lewis.

It is against this background of children's literature that Lewis's own solution of the age-old conflict of didacticism and amusement will be examined in the chapters that follow. Here a closer look must be taken at the kinds of children's fiction with which Lewis's 'Chronicles' have obvious affinities.

Along with the fantasies discussed above must be grouped the fairy tale. Lewis has written that 'Within the species "children's story" the sub-species which happened to suit me is fantasy or (in a loose sense of that word) the fairy tale',¹⁶ and elsewhere writes:

If we open such books as Grimm's Fairy Tales or Ovid's Metamorphoses or the Italian epics we find ourselves in a world of miracles so diverse that they can hardly be classified. Beasts turn into men and men into beasts or trees, trees talk, ships become goddesses, and a magic ring can cause tables richly spread with food to appear in solitary places. Some people cannot stand this kind of story, others find it fun.¹⁷

We may take it that Lewis himself, who has written on Ovid and the Italian epic in The Allegory of Love, and has praised Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings so highly, finds it great fun.

Narnia has added a colourful panel to this tapestry of folklore and romance, yet a panel with distinctive features. Certain primitive elements of the folk tales - their arbitrary tabus, their quaint particularity in numbers, their use of repetitive patterns - are transformed. Narnia is a world marked by superior order and reason, imaginative coherence and moral responsibility. Analogues to its narrative patterns

in the jungle of European folk-lore would, therefore, be of little value, and I do not propose to produce them.

Nevertheless, Narnia rejoices in other freedoms that the 'fairy-tale' affords: freedom to range space and time, to employ non-human or superhuman figures, to produce imaginative and emotional effects of great unity and intensity, and to invest objects, common or exotic, with romantic glamour, an aura of magic, or numinous awe. Lewis would no doubt concur with Chesterton, an acknowledged influence on his thought, that 'stories of magic alone can express my sense that life is not only a pleasure but a kind of eccentric privilege'.¹⁸

As to the 'literary' fairy-tale, any influence Lewis may have undergone from Hans Andersen, John Ruskin's The King of the Golden River, or the work of Kingsley, Thackeray, Andrew Lang or others, is slight beside his debt to J.R.R. Tolkien (discussed in Chapter VIII) and George MacDonald.

Sometimes the fantasy is linked with family life, as in J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan. In Lewis's case, this connection derives from Edith Nesbit (and ultimately from George MacDonald). Particularly relevant is Lewis's childhood favourite The Amulet,¹⁹ in which Cyril, Robert, Anthea and Jane, whom earlier the Psemead and the Phoenix had wafted to distant lands, become time-travellers by the amulet's magic power. There, the children, with that sense of fun which keeps these books alive and still makes them a model of their kind, remain the centre of interest. Lewis's children are rarely so vital as these and our main interest tends to lie elsewhere. Of course, his scheme does not allow

the same scope for the domestic scene, but the relationships between his children are often less effective than in Edith Nesbit's stories.

Lewis's most successful pictures of domesticity are found in some of the animal scenes in Narnia itself; in the description of the Beaver household in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, for instance, which is reminiscent of Badger's den in The Wind in the Willows.

The school stories have had little influence on Narnia. Lewis asserts that they are often deceptive 'fantasies' in the bad sense. The only similar material in the 'Chronicles' lies in the satirical account of Eustace's education (Voyage), and in the opening and closing scenes of The Silver Chair. This satire, rooted though it is in Lewis's outlook, is not very entertaining (some may question its accuracy), and probably puzzles most children.

Another backcloth to Narnia is provided by the animal story, of which there are several kinds. Lewis's animals are neither the fable's pegs for a moral nor the objectively reported creatures of the naturalist turned author. Neither are they quite the anthropomorphized beasts, the 'dressed animals', of his boyish Animal-Land or his favourite Beatrix Potter. Rather they are midway between these and what May Hill Arbuthnot calls 'Animals as animals but talking'. 'In these tales,' she observes, 'the animals are scientifically true to their species, but they are given the human attributes of thought and speech'. She instances Kipling's Mowgli stories and Andersen's 'Ugly Duckling'.²⁰ Lewis's talking beasts resemble these in remaining completely animal in appearance (though modified in size) but differ by participating in 'human' affairs and

sharing in public interests. Sometimes, as in the Beaver episode mentioned above, they are thoroughly humanised and set in a domestic interior. Yet the attitudes and conversation of his talking unicorns, elephants and bears are always in character, and his horses, Bree and Hwin for example, have suitably 'horsy' natures. In general, Lewis strikes his own balance of animal to human proportions and keeps to it. There are none of those subtle shifts of focus and presentation which are so oddly but triumphantly effected in The Wind in the Willows.

Lewis's personal interest in animals can be seen from The Problem of Pain (chap,9), his pamphlet on Vivisection, and episodes in That Hideous Strength. His admiration for horses recalls that of George MacDonald.²¹

Finally, Lewis's strongest affinity is undoubtedly with George MacDonald, as reviewers of the children's books have been quick to perceive, following the clue afforded by Lewis's tributes in Surprised by Joy, George MacDonald, The Great Divorce and elsewhere. A writer in The Times Literary Supplement sees Lewis as 'the self appointed heir' to the tradition of 'the preaching adventure, the children's allegorical romance', and after stressing his debt to MacDonald goes on:

It is not difficult to see what Mr. Lewis has learnt as a myth-maker from his great predecessor. He has set out to leave, as MacDonald so notably does, a series of sensations; [my italics] in this, as any reader can test for himself, he has fairly succeeded....Like MacDonald, he relishes a battle, with trumpets and banners; he shares his veneration for the idea of royalty (in Mr. Lewis it becomes sometimes heady and ecstatic), and his predilection for the military virtues (obedience, trust, unerring courage). Mr. Lewis's distaste (which resembles Chesterton's) for the ascetic virtues is his own.²²

Apart from the exaggeration in the last sentence - the attitudes of MacDonald and Lewis to pleasure and self-denial are closely related - this is well said. In going on to speak of the 'conception of fear in love and spiritual life' which Lewis shares with MacDonald, the writer wisely stresses the wider aspects of Lewis's debt. Such concepts as 'inexorable love' and the value of faithfulness in periods of spiritual 'dryness', which have become the 'habitual furniture' of Lewis's mind, are the vital things he inherits from MacDonald. These topics will be discussed in later chapters. At this point some evidence is needed to establish the fact that Lewis's debt to MacDonald is not confined to themes but appears in the very texture of his stories.

Phantastes, in particular, is woven into the fabric of his imagination. It reveals, from the moment when Anodos awakes to find his room transformed into a province of Fairyland, a world which anticipates Narnia at many points. The mysterious forest of its early chapters, where 'The trees seemed all to have an expression of conscious mystery',²³ has its counterpart in the 'Wood between the Worlds' of The Magician's Nephew. Like Uncle Andrew, Anodos cannot, at first, understand the language of the creatures, but the fairy food enables him 'to feel in some degree what the birds meant in their songs',²⁴ and to understand the squirrels' conversation.

The influence extends to scene, concept and character. The song of Anodos, which gradually reveals the invisible Lady,²⁵ anticipates Aslan's song, which calls Narnia into being. MacDonald's Underland, with its sky of rock and its 'sad sepulchral illumination',²⁶ re-appears

in The Silver Chair, and, like Anodos, Rilian leaves it by a fearful, narrowing gallery of rock. When a husband is told not to ridicule his wife's belief in Fairyland, but to 'treat her belief with something of respect', since, as he admits, 'She is a most sensible woman in everything else',²⁷ we are reminded of the Professor's comments on Lucy's story of a world beyond the wardrobe. The White Lady who ensnares Anodos is the prototype of the Green Enchantress who bewitches Rilian, and has the same false sweetness of manner. In contrast, the Lady who weeps as she contemplates the painful road yet to be trodden by Anodos is a symbol of that same Divine pity which Digory sees in the tears of Aslan.²⁸

The 'Princess'²⁹ books reinforce these impressions. Again there is a world of Underland, inhabited by 'cobs' or dwarfs; again the theme of belief in the 'things not seen'³⁰ through trust in the proved faithfulness of human friend or superhuman mentor; again the fiery ordeal which purifies and strengthens. The image of the House, with its symbolism of goblin-threatened cellars and elusive staircases which so impressed Chesterton,³¹ reinforces Lewis's memories of the 'New House' and echoes in the empty passages of Professor Kirke's mansion, the attics of The Magician's Nephew, and the hushed corridor of the Voyage. The danger of 'travelling beastward'³² which is revealed to Curdie leads to the dragon episode in Eustace's re-education.

At the Back of the North Wind³³ adds to the 'Lady' of Phantastes, and Irene's 'grandmother' in the 'Princess' books, a mythological figure whose awfulness, beauty, energy and power anticipate Aslan. North Wind, like Aslan, is sometimes gentle but never 'tame', and, like him, trans-

ports her chosen child to realms where events are sometimes exhilarating and sometimes chastening, sometimes marked by 'sweet influence' and sometimes by 'severer ministrations'.³⁴

Further debts to MacDonald will be noted in the following chapters. In brief, it may be confidently stated that the structure, religious symbolism and moral tone of Narnia owe more to him than to any other author. Lewis is the heir to his 'preaching adventure, the children's allegorical romance'.³⁵

C H A P T E R X V

THE WORLD OF NARNIA

In his address 'On three ways of writing for Children' Lewis tells how he composes his children's stories:

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. Keep quiet and watch and they will begin joining themselves up. If you were very lucky (I have never been as lucky as all that) a whole set might join themselves so consistently that there you had a complete story; without doing anything yourself. But more often (in my experience always) there are gaps. Then at last you have to do some deliberate inventing, have to contrive reasons why these characters should be in these various places doing these various things. I have no idea whether this is the usual way of writing stories, still less whether it is the best. It is the only one I know: images always come first.¹

This is very much what we might have expected in view of the importance of 'sensations' or 'intuitions' in Lewis's imagination. It also corresponds to the reader's impression - in which scene and image, rather than plot and character, persist most vividly - and confirms the view of The Times Literary Supplement that Lewis, like MacDonald, has sought to produce 'a series of sensations'.²

The distinctive quality, the 'flavour', of a story's imagery, and of the complex image which it composes, is certainly what appeals to Lewis in the stories of other writers. It is the 'northernness' in Morris, the 'extra-terrestrial' note in Wells, that touch his imaginative nerve. Everything he says about 'sensations' in his essay 'On Stories'

is relevant to Narnia, as, for instance, this comment on Fenimore Cooper's 'leatherstocking' tales:

The 'Redskinnery' was what really mattered...For I wanted not the momentary suspense but that whole world to which it belonged - the snow and the snow-shoes, beavers and canoes, war-paths and wigwams, and Hiawatha names.³

This predilection explains why he welcomed the Shakespeare critics who, from 1930 onwards, shifted the emphasis from character to imagery. For the first time he found critics of The Merchant of Venice and Hamlet speaking a language which was relevant to his own impressions of the plays.⁴

At about the same time, too, he seems to have related 'sensation' to his new, Christian outlook and first appreciated Nature itself as a creature - 'a created thing, with its own particular tang or flavour.... this astonishing cataract of bears, babies, and bananas; this immoderate deluge of atoms, orchids, oranges, cancers, canaries, fleas, gases, tornadoes and toads'.⁵

The composition of Miracles, in which this passage occurs, seems to have crystallised this view of Nature and, doubtless, encouraged him in the attempt to depict other 'Natures' in the Narnia stories.

The reader's own appreciation of Narnia as a series of vivid 'pictures' is inevitably influenced by the copious illustrations in black and white, ranging from full page drawing to miniature inset, which decorate its pages. Lewis's choice of Pauline Baynes⁶ as illustrator was felicitous for, as with Carroll and Tenniel or Milne and Shepherd, there is a real affinity between author and artist and, one supposes, a

close collaboration. Lewis, with his 'sharp visualising power' and childhood experience as his own illustrator, would hardly leave illustrations to chance.

Pauline Baynes has also illustrated Tolkien's Farmer Giles, and her decorative patterns, stylised yet fluent rhythms, sharp lines and clear spaces are very appropriate to a hierarchical, ceremonious and chivalrous world. The suggestion of tapestry or chased metal is apt, the general avoidance of depth enhancing the impression of Narnia's 'otherworld-ness'. Almost everywhere her pictures capture the mood - eery or sinister, gay or martial. Her talking animals, basically realistic, unite instinctive grace with subtly rational expression; her landscapes are always dramatic, often intriguing the eye with hints of latent personality.

Lewis's emphasis on the pictorial origin of his children's stories might lead one to expect the 'Chronicles of Narnia' to be a rather loosely-knit series of scenes, lacking the clear moral and theological themes of his other books. This is far from being true. The seven stories form a coherent 'history' of Narnia set in a consistent framework, and are almost as much a vehicle of Lewis's beliefs as Screwtape or Perelandra. The general account of their content and structure that follows is designed to substantiate the first of these assertions and lay the basis for a demonstration of the second.

A brief account of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe will serve to introduce the main features of the Narnia stories - the children who visit it, Narnia itself, its diverse creatures and the lion, Aslan,

who presides over them.

Through a wardrobe in her uncle, Professor Kirke's, country mansion Lucy Pevensy enters the 'otherworld' of Narnia and, by a strange lamp-post, meets Mr. Tumnus, a friendly faun. After enjoying his hospitality, she is shocked when he suddenly confesses that the White Witch, who holds Narnia in perpetual winter, had set him to capture human children. When Lucy returns, such a short time has elapsed that Peter, Edmund and Susan disbelieve her story. Later, Edmund, who teases her most, also enters Narnia where he succumbs to the Witch's bribery, cajolment and magic, and promises to return with his companions. Meeting Lucy by the lamp-post, he conceals this encounter and, on their return, still denies Narnia's existence. Only her uncle credits Lucy's story.

Later, when all four children enter Narnia, Edmund betrays his prior knowledge and is despised by Peter and Susan. Finding the faun's house wrecked, they determine to rescue him from the clutches of Jadis, the Witch Queen. A robin leads them to a family of Talking Beavers where they learn from their kindly host of a mysterious Aslan, who is 'on the move'. Aslan is the good Lion, the rightful Lord of Narnia, and their only effective ally against the Witch, who fears a prophecy that four children will end her reign. After planning to meet Aslan at the Stone Table they suddenly note Edmund's absence and realise that, lured by promises and spurred by injured pride, he has gone to betray them.

The central episodes tell how the children, aided by Narnian creatures loyal to Aslan, beat off the witch's army and rescue a repentant Edmund.

In the closing chapters the spiritual significance of Aslan becomes clear in a series of events which parallel the New Testament doctrines. Demanding an audience with Aslan, the Witch appeals to the Deep Magic established by the 'Emperor', which allows her a life for any traitor. In a secret conference Aslan secures Edmund's safety by offering himself to the Witch's hordes. The Witch has him shorn and mocked and, finally, sacrificed on the Stone Table.

After the Witch has rushed off to crush Peter's army, Susan and Lucy mourn over Aslan and loosen his bonds. At dawn their grief turns suddenly to joy. The stone is shattered, and Aslan (according to a prophecy older than Time) is restored to life. He races to the Witch's palace and reanimates her petrified victims, who then relieve Peter's army and rout the foe, whilst Aslan kills the Witch.

Enthroned by Aslan at Cair Paravel, Narnia's capital, the Pevensys reign as monarchs, fighting evil and fostering good, but at last, children once more, emerge from the wardrobe in the same earthly hour they entered it.

The general structure of the seven chronicles is partly determined by the spatial and temporal relationship of the Narnian universe to our own, and the transitions between the two. The wildest fantasy must provide some plausible account of these comings and goings if the reader is to afford a 'willing suspension of disbelief'. It is a problem like that which faces the science-fiction writer who deals with journeys to remote stars, and is open to the same artistic dangers of 'repetitive patterns' and 'monotonous uniformity'.⁷ Lewis takes pains to ensure variety.

'The time of your strange land is different from ours' says Tirian in The Last Battle⁸ (1956), and this fact is clearly indicated throughout. In general, ages of Narnian times elapse in the course of one earthly lifetime, but there is no constant ratio. In Prince Caspian (1951), the Pevensys return to find Cair Paravel in ruins and a strange dynasty enthroned. Back on earth again a year passes before Lucy and Edmund, with their cousin Eustace, re-enter Narnia to find Caspian three years older (The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, 1952). When, a term later, Eustace enters Narnia with his school friend, Jill, he is shocked to find Caspian an aged king (The Silver Chair, 1953). They return to earth from their quest of Prince Rilian within earthly seconds of their exit. Again, seconds only are needed for the primal venture into Narnia of Digory and Polly, recorded in The Magician's Nephew (1955):

"Great Scott!", thought Digory, "I believe the whole adventure's taken no time at all."⁹

In The Horse and his Boy (1954), all the action takes place in Narnia, whilst in The Last Battle the relation of Time to Time gives way to the relation of Time to Eternity.

No particular source need be sought for this peculiarity of the time of 'Otherworld' for it is a basic feature of folklore.

Narnia, in fact, is not in the same space-time epoch as our Universe at all, as The Magician's Nephew makes quite clear. Narnia is 'a really other world - another Nature'¹⁰ not to be entered, like Malacandra, by space-travel, but only by magic. In this story the magic rings effect the transition from earth to Narnia via 'The Wood Between

the Worlds' (an image of eternity). Only the will or permission of Aslan can effect a direct transference.

Entry through the magic wardrobe (later shown to derive from a tree sprung of Narnian seed) is not used again. In Prince Caspian the children are jolted into Narnia from a train on their way to school (a device used later, with a startling difference, in The Last Battle) and return through Aslan's magic door.

Jill and Eustace, fleeing from bullies, enter through a door in the wall of their school grounds. In The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader' the transition is more ingeniously contrived. Watching a picture of a Narnian ship in Eustace's bedroom, the children are alarmed to see it grow and move. A wave breaks from the picture; they find themselves tottering on the frame; and then they are swept into the eastern seas of Narnia.

In these transitions Lewis is following the practice of George MacDonald in Phantastes and Lilith, and, perhaps, recalling Edith Nesbit's amulet and H.G. Wells's use of the 'fourth dimension'.

This account of the framework of the Chronicles was a necessary preliminary to an appreciation of their structure. In the following survey the stories are arranged in their 'chronological' order in Narnia's history, the better to clarify their 'historical' connections, but the order of publication is more important in evaluating their artistic merit. As M.S. Crouch rightly observes, 'the books should be read in the order of publication'.¹¹ A complete account of the plots would be tedious. What follows is a selection, in which the aesthetic, narra-

tive and symbolic aspects are touched on in turn.

In The Magician's Nephew (1955), Lewis goes back to 'The Founding of Narnia' and provides a key to much in the previous stories, accounting not only for the lamp-post, the wardrobe and Professor Kirke (Digory), but also for the entry of evil into Narnia. The tale has a markedly theological structure, being full of parallels to the creation and temptation stories in the early chapters of Genesis.¹²

Uncle Andrew, the 'magician', sends Polly and Digory, by means of magic rings, into 'otherworld'. Via the 'Wood between the Worlds' they reach Chern and wake from enchanted sleep its last Queen, Jadis, before its final cataclysm. She returns with them to London and causes a riot, only ended when the children, using the rings, drag her, Andrew, a cobby and his horse into otherworld. Here they witness Aslan create Narnia, whilst Jadis escapes to foster evil. Digory, sent on the quest of the magic apple, finds that Jadis has eaten it, winning a fatal immortality. He resists the temptation to do likewise or to withhold the apple from Aslan. Planted, the apple produces the guardian tree of Narnia. Aslan gives Digory an apple which cures his mother. Andrew reforms. Narnia flourishes under the dynasty of the transformed cabman.

The London setting is about 1900, whilst the Narnian period is some centuries prior to The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

In The Horse and his Boy (1954), an adventure 'in Narnia and Calormen and the lands between...when Peter was High King in Narnia',¹³ the 'romantic' plot is only in parts symbolic, but Aslan's interventions have a deeper significance that will be examined in Chapter XVI.

The strong 'Arabian Nights' flavour is combined with a 'late Shakespearean'¹⁴ plot in which mystery, disguise and mistaken identity mingle with kidnaping, pursuits and thwarted malice, betrothals and marriage.

Like the other tales of Narnia, this book has a distinctive colouring, a particular 'Sensation'. The Magician's Nephew, with its drawing-room bric-a-brac, the sweet pathos of Digory's invalid mother, the cockney humour of the cobby, and the fin de siècle air of Uncle Andrew, is a study in 'Victoriana'.

The Horse and his Boy, although it has touches of 'Medievalism' (like The Silver Chair), is chiefly characterised by its 'Orientalism'.

Calormen, a kind of Narnian Middle East, is the setting for characters and episodes reminiscent of The Arabian Nights. From fisherman's hovel to potentate's palace, from fountained garden to blinding desert, from silken luxury to harsh militarism, it is a world of Asian extremes, whilst the names - Shashta and Arsheesh, Tiaroa and Rabadash - are a roll-call of Eastern romance.

'Arabian' dialogue (which in chapters VII and VIII recalls Vathek) has the authentic ring, and contrasts nicely with the 'olde courtesie' of the Narnian royalty. It is varied, too, ranging from the 'grand Calormene manner' of Aravis's narrative to the drawling, affected chatter of the spoilt Lasearaleen.

Contrast enhances the effects throughout. Especially piquant is that between the Calormenes themselves - 'a wise, wealthy, courteous, cruel and ancient people'¹⁵ - and the gay, fair, free and magnanimous

Narnians. This racial contrast recalls Moor and Viking, or Saladin and Crusader, and persists at a higher level: the Calormenes worship Tash, not Aslan (whom the Tisroc maligns as 'a demon of hideous aspect and irresistible maleficence'¹⁶). Here, and elsewhere, there is a hint of the clash of Cross and Crescent.

Prince Caspian (1951), is another episode in the battle of Good and Evil, a 'war of liberation'¹⁷ involving journeying, siege and conflict.

The Pevensys, back in a later Narnia, learn from Trumkin, the dwarf, how a Prince Caspian has fled from his uncle, the Telmarine usurper Miraz, rallied the outlawed creatures of Old Narnia and, besieged at Aslan's How, has sounded Susan's horn to summon their aid. Convincing the sceptical dwarf of their prowess, the children set out to assist Caspian. Discrediting the 'signs' which Lucy receives from Aslan, they run into many dangers, but eventually wage a successful war against Miraz.

This is perhaps the most conventional of the 'Chronicles', but is notable for the introduction of the valourous talking mouse, Reepicheep.

In The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (1952), many adventures befall Edmund, Lucy and their cousin Eustace on a quest with King Caspian for the seven 'lost Lords' exiled in the reign of Miraz. They escape from slavery, recapture the Lone Islands, and survive a storm, a sea-serpent and a deadly pool. In a rather longer episode Eustace, the spoilt child of 'advanced' parents, is transformed into a dragon, and learns humility and charity before regaining human form.

Two quests are combined in this voyage: that of Caspian for the

seven exiled Lords, and that of Reepicheep for the Utter East. There are numerous theological implications, as in the reference to the albatross that 'looked like a cross',¹⁸ and in the episode of Reepicheep's 'translation' to Aslan's country (cf. Gen.v, 22-24, Heb.xi, 5), and these converge in the final encounter with an Aslan who is both Lion and Lamb (cf. John xxi).

The final episodes of this story, imaginatively one of the finest of the tales of Narnia, are examined in Chapter XVIII.

In The Silver Chair (1953), Aslan takes Eustace and Jill from their boarding school, via his 'country', into Narnia, giving Jill 'signs' to look for in the quest laid upon them. Failing to meet the aged Caspian before his final voyage to seek Aslan, they learn of Prince Rilian's enchantment by the Green Lady. Accompanied by Puddleglum, the marshwiggle, they seek Rilian in the wild north, but, miffing the signs at the Hill of the Strange Trenches, and following false counsel, fall into the hands of ogreish giants. Escaping, they enter Underland, are captured, meet Rilian, and deliver him from the spell. They resist the Green Lady's enchantments, slay her, release the Earthmen by whom she hoped to conquer Narnia, and emerge through underground workings. The Narnians acclaim them. Caspian returns only to die but, borne to Aslan's Mountain, Jill and Eustace see him resurrected before they are returned to school.

The Enchantress and her spells are an allegory of contemporary attacks on metaphysics and the Supernatural which will be examined in Chapter XVI.

The Silver Chair has a strong flavour of Malory and medieval romance ('Gothic' is the apt label of The Times Literary Supplement). Scene, sentiment and style all contribute to this 'Medievalism'.

Jill's first sight of Cair Paravel establishes it:

....a smooth, green lawn, a ship so brightly coloured that it looked like an enormous piece of jewellery, towers and battlements, banners fluttering in the air, a crowd, gay clothes, armour, gold, swords, a sound of music.⁹

The aged Caspian with his beard 'white as wool', the dwarf regent Trumpkin, the Green Enchantress and the love-dazed Rilien sustain the impression. It colours the description of the feast with its pavender, venison and peacock, and its blind bard, and the stylised account of Rilien's adventure, where a serpent is called a 'worm', and medicine becomes 'physic'. In the mouth of the Enchantress the exaggerated courtliness of speech, the over-sweet medievalism, serves a useful function in suggesting a falsity of character, a falsity which also taints Rilien so long as he is under her spell. (The juxtaposition of this style with the slangy dialogue of Jill and Eustace is a less pleasing effect.)

In The Last Battle (which won the Carnegie Medal for 1956) aesthetic, symbolic and moral elements successfully cohere to provide an essential and illuminating conclusion to Narnia.

The story relates the final phase of the 'Holy War', and is a parable of 'the last days' which escapes the realistic limitations imposed on That Hideous Strength by an earthly setting. The Narnian eschatology includes a 'false Aslan', or Anti-Christ, a final cataclysm

(chap XIV), a Last Judgment (chap. XIV), and a final consummation (chap XVI) in which Aslan 'rolls up curtain after curtain of his cosmos'.²⁰

The main source of Lewis's vision is the New Testament, especially, perhaps, these verses:

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands; They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. (Hebrews 1, 10-12)

At first narrowly focused, the story expands, recapitulating all the Narnian themes, until, in a sustained climax combining Christian and Platonic concepts, Narnia and England are gathered up into the Image of Eternity.

This 'historical' survey has masked the skilful order in which the books appeared. Lewis cannily holds back some of his cards to maintain surprise and suspense - 'he releases information about his strange magical land,' says Crouch, 'as cautiously as the War Office releases news'.²¹ He instances how the lamp-post of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (1950) is not explained until The Magician's Nephew (1955).

Our knowledge of Narnian geography expands just as gradually through the successive stories. In the first, Narnia alone appears. Then, in Prince Caspian, its borders emerge - the sea, the Western Waste and Archenland. Next, the Great Eastern Ocean and 'Aslan's country' are revealed, whilst in The Silver Chair we traverse the Wild Waste lands of the North, and the realm of Underland. The fifth story takes us beyond the southern desert to Calormen; the sixth discloses the mysterious west. Finally, in The Last Battle, the whole cosmos is furled and

unfurled like a banner.

What a chronological analysis does indicate is the consistency and unity of the Chronicles. There is much to support Crouch's belief that 'the author had the whole story in his mind when he wrote The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'²². So, for example, it is appropriate, and presumably deliberate, that in this religious romance there are seven stories, appearing in seven years and involving seven children.

Yet there is variety as well as unity in the narrative patterns which embody the Battle of Good and Evil. Evil assumes many forms: the Good which comprehends it endures in the rich and complex image of Aslan.

To complete this survey of the world of Narnia, and provide a basis for subsequent discussion, some account of its diverse characters is required.

Lewis's taste for fantastic stories where 'Beasts turn into men and men into beasts'²³ has already been noted. He enjoys the freedom to create strange creatures that MacDonald employed in Fantastes and Lilith, where trees are sentient, animals talk, a statue comes to life, and nothing is quite what it seems. Yet the dreamy flux of MacDonald's narrative, and its sometimes puzzling metamorphoses, is not suited to Lewis's purpose. However quaintly he combines human, animal and mythical qualities, his creatures have clear and constant natures. Plot and theme present quite enough novelties for his young readers, and clear-cut characterisation suits his moral and religious purposes.

In general, Lewis's talking beavers, owls, mice and horses, his fauns, dwarfs, centaurs, dryads and giants are quickly seen to be allied

either to good or evil and evoke an appropriate response. Giants, for instance, awake the deep-seated and qualitatively distinct kind of fear which, Lewis maintains in his essay 'On Stories', is inherent in certain mountains. 'I have seen landscapes (notably in the Mourne Mountains),' he writes, 'which, under a particular light, made me feel that at any moment a giant might raise his head over the next ridge.'²⁴ He employs this experience very skilfully in Jill's first encounter with the giants of Ettinsmoor in The Silver Chair.²⁵

Giants are not the only alarming creatures in Narnia. (Not all the giants are alarming.) The White Witch commands such horrors as Ghouls and Boggles, Ogres and Minotaurs. Understandably, these are played down. Describing the host around the Stone Table, Lewis refers to 'other creatures whom I won't describe because if I did the grown-ups would probably not let you read this book - Cruels and Hags and Incubuses, Wraiths, Horrors, Efreetts, Sprites, Orknes, Wooses, and Ettins'.²⁶

The loyal creatures whom the Witch has petrified and Aslan releases are more vividly depicted:

...the courtyard was now a blaze of colours; glossy chestnut sides of centaurs, indigo horns of unicorns, dazzling plumage of birds, reddy-brown of foxes, dogs and satyrs, yellow stockings and crimson hoods of dwarfs; and the birch-girls in silver, and the beech-girls in fresh, transparent green, and the larch-girls in green so bright that it was almost yellow.²⁷

Other societies of vivid creatures inhabit Narnia - the Calormenes of the South, the Ogres of the North, the Sea People of the East, and Golg and his fellows, the folk who live deep beneath Underland in Bism, where living gems grow by the rivers of fire. Few of these creatures

are merely decorative, and most of them are closely involved in the plot. In Prince Caspian it is a dwarf, Trumpkin, who finds the children and takes them to Aslan's How, a badger, Trufflehunter, who rallies Old Narnia, and a talking mouse, Reepicheep, who is the hero of the decisive battle.

The title of one of Kipling's collections of stories, A Diversity of Creatures, is very appropriate to Narnia. The Narnians, says Crouch, with a note of apology, are 'a motley lot'.²⁸ Lewis has ransacked the ages to assemble a cast which ranges from talking animals, through mythical fauns, legendary dragons, racial types, human children and supernatural beings to such strange variants as Marshwiggle and Dufflepud. Yet despite their diversity they are well acclimatised to Narnia, coexist harmoniously, and rarely lack aesthetic or moral value. For, as Lewis says, 'giants, dragons, paradises, gods and the like are themselves the expression of certain basic elements in man's spiritual experience'.²⁹

'Spiritual experience' is obviously part of the material Lewis seeks to incorporate in Narnia through his diverse creatures and super-human beings. Above all Aslan, the 'good lion', can only be fully interpreted in terms of the 'symbolic theology' which controls the deeper meaning of these tales of Narnia.

CHAPTER XVI

SYMBOLIC THEOLOGY

Reviewing the 'Chronicles of Narnia', and speaking of the significance of its images, The Times Literary Supplement coined the useful term 'symbolic theology'. No formal definition was given, but the use of the term may be readily understood from familiar examples in the New Testament. So, for example, the 'Lamb of God' (John i,29) symbolises sacrificial and atoning love, 'living water' (John iv,10) eternal life, the 'rushing, mighty wind' (Acts ii,2) the mysterious power of the Holy Spirit. Besides symbolic objects there are also symbolic actions, of which the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine, pointing as they do to the cross and the resurrection, are the most central and profound. A theological symbol, then, may be either a meaningful object or an acted parable.

As a technique of literary criticism, 'symbolic theology' is appropriate wherever literature invites, or demands, an explication in theological terms. Such an explication will have the same kind of relationship to the imaginative experience as a credal statement has to a revelatory event or dialogue. That is, it will be an intellectual and generalised expression of something concrete and particular. As derived from Lewis's tales of Narnia it will not necessarily correspond with the conscious reflections of the reader, especially of the child. But if the critic's interpretation is sound (and the writer's art adequate) it will have a real relationship to it. Another analogy from

scripture may make this clear. A child may only imperfectly grasp and respond to the interpretation of the parable of the sower (Mark iv, 13-20), but from the parable itself he may receive images and derive attitudes from which an understanding and response may later grow.

Lewis's theologising would not be acceptable to the young reader, but by using imaginative symbols as his vehicle in the Narnia stories he conveys his message in a suitable form. The didactic element, of course, is not so calculated and repellent as this makes it sound. The creative process was more spontaneous than this.

The symbolic theology of Narnia centres on Aslan, the 'good lion', one of the strangest and richest figures in children's literature, and not the least of Lewis's creative triumphs.

His pedigree is impressive, including Charles Williams's archetypal pattern in The Place of the Lion (1931), George MacDonald's august North Wind² and Aesop's King of the Beasts. He is, supremely, a symbol or type of Christ, particularly as presented in the Apocalypse as 'the Lion of the tribe of Juda'.³ It will not do, therefore, merely to classify him as the greatest of Narnia's creatures: he is not, technically, a 'creature' at all.

The clues to this theological basis are neither rare nor esoteric, though the present neglect of scripture may lead few to find them. 'Surely Mr. Lewis should, all along, have had the courage of his convictions, and given Aslan the shape as well as the nature and functions of an archangel' complained one reviewer of The Magician's Nephew.⁴ Miss Dorothy Sayers' retort to this complaint is too neat and comprehensive

for me to attempt to better:

....the Lion Aslan....has most emphatically not the 'nature and functions' of an archangel, and for that reason has not been given the form of one. In these tales of Absolutely Elsewhere, Aslan is shown as creating the worlds (The Magician's Nephew), slain and risen again for the redemption of sin (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe), incarnate as a Talking Beast among Talking Beasts (passim), and obedient to the laws he has made for his own creation (The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, page 146). His august Archetype - higher than the angels and 'made a little lower' than they - is thus readily identified as the 'Lion of the Tribe of Judah'. Apart from a certain disturbance of the natural hierarchies occasioned by the presence in the story of actual human beings, Professor Lewis's theology and pneumatology are as accurate and logical here as in his other writings.

To introduce the historical 'form' of the Incarnation into a work of pure fantasy would, for various reasons, be unsuitable.⁵

Many details substantiate this identification with Christ. Aslan is both 'a true Beast' and yet 'the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the sea', and therefore 'the King above all High Kings in Narnia'. He is the obedient Son, who will not work 'against the Emperor's Magic'. He is the eternal Son, 'the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever' (Heb. xiii, 8): 'I call all times soon', he tells Lucy. Aslan is Narnia's creator, redeemer and judge. In the beginning Narnia is created ex nihilo 'out of the Lion's head'; it owes its spiritual freedom to 'the good Lion by whose blood all Narnia was saved'; in the 'last days' it knows him as its Judge.⁶

The account of the tales of Narnia in the previous chapter disclosed Aslan's decisive role in each story. He is most deeply involved in the plot of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, where there is a close and daring parallel to the Easter narrative of the New Testament.

In fact, the parallels of 'substitution', submission, mockery, humiliation, slaughter and resurrection are too close, and those elements least bound by the Scriptures - the hushed atmosphere of the bargain with the Witch and, later, Aslan's triumphant romp with the children - are less constrained imaginatively.

Aslan, as a symbol of Christ, is saved from the danger of being merely didactic, a cold ideogram, by his energy. He is informed with qualities which Lewis has elsewhere noted as the essence of the leonine - 'energy and splendour and exulting power'.⁷ Akin to Eliot's 'Christ the tiger', he is poles apart from Swinburne's 'pale Galileen'. His attributes are not the remote abstractions of the 'God of the philosophers' but the energy and purpose of Jehovah, the 'living God'. It is emphasised that he is not 'a tame Lion'.⁸

Aslan's vitality is such that, even when the conceptual basis of his character is not perceived, he stirs the imagination whenever he appears. This effect cannot be entirely accounted for by the sensuous elements in his appeal - the majestic mane, the 'beautiful sea of fur',⁹ the thrilling roar and the glowing eyes. Its real potency lies in its evocation of the 'numinous' - the non-rational, or supra-rational element of all religion.

The term 'numinous' was coined by Professor Rudolph Otto in his influential work Das Heilige.¹⁰ Theologians have welcomed it, and Lewis's own discussion of the numinous in The Problem of Pain is avowedly based on Otto.¹¹ The numinous, as Otto emphasises, is a primary datum and cannot, therefore, be strictly defined, or even conveyed, by means of

concepts. It can only be evoked or awakened in the mind by symbols. Blake's poem 'The Tyger', or Wordsworth's description of the mountain above Ullswater (Prelude Bk.1), will suffice to indicate its nature.

Otto's account of the several elements, or 'moments', in the mysterium tremendum of numinous experience provides valuable insights into Aslan's effectiveness. The elements of 'dread' (or the daunting'), of 'majesty', of 'energy' (or 'urgency'), and of 'fascination' are particularly relevant.¹²

They are seen, for example, in the first mention of Aslan in the Chronicles, the moment when Mr. Beaver reveals that 'Aslan is on the move - perhaps has already landed', and in the 'enormous meaning' which the children sense in this news:

At the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in its inside. Edmund felt a sensation of mysterious horror. Peter felt suddenly brave and adventurous. Susan felt as if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music had just floated by her. And Lucy got the feeling you have when you wake up in the morning and realise that it is the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer.¹³

The complementary elements of 'dread' and 'fascination' are strong here. Edmund, in guilty conspiracy with the Witch, feels the dark shadow of what, to the innocent, is the bright cloud of holiness.

Dread and fascination are elsewhere mingled, as in Aslan's appearances to Lucy on the forest path (Prince Caspian), for Lewis, like MacDonald, allows a role, though a lowly one, to fear in religious awakening.¹⁴ Often 'fear' is an inadequate but necessary ideogram, or analogy, for what is a unique response - the 'fear of the Lord', the reverential awe, of the Old Testament.

We find this response again in Jill's first encounter with Aslan. Her first reaction is plain terror, but when the Lion speaks, inviting her to drink of the stream (the biblical symbolism is clear) her response changes:

....the voice was not like a man's. It was deeper, wilder, and stronger; a sort of heavy, golden voice. It did not make her any less frightened than she had been before, but it made her frightened in rather a different way.¹⁵

Lewis comments directly on this kind of experience quite early on in the Chronicles:

People who have not been in Narnia sometimes think that a thing cannot be good and terrible at the same time. If the children had ever thought so, they were cured of it now. For when they tried to look at Aslan's face they just caught a glimpse of the golden mane and the great, royal, solemn, overwhelming eyes; and then they found they couldn't look at him and went all trembly.¹⁶

The 'majesty' evident here is constantly present in Aslan. He is 'Huge, shaggy, and bright' and 'so bright and real and strong'.¹⁷

Equally powerful is the element of energy and urgency. Whether calling forth creatures from the earth, racing with Lucy and Susan, roaring in wrath at the Witch, tearing the dragon skins from Eustace, blowing Jill across the seas, or inspiring terror in Bree, Aslan is a torrent of energy.

The union of these 'numinous' aspects of Aslan with his moral role and Christ-symbolism is skilfully achieved. Like the Hebrew Jehovah he combines those elements of the 'holy' and the 'righteous' which elsewhere existed separately in the a-moral pagan and the purely rational philosopher. Aslan is 'good and terrible at the same time'.

One is reminded of certain conversations in Charles Williams's

Descent into Hell. The poet, Peter Stanhope, has made a reference to 'dreadful' goodness:

"I don't see how goodness can be dreadful," Miss Fox said, with a shade of resentment in her voice. "If things are good they're not terrifying, are they?"

"And if things are terrifying," Pauline put in, her eyes half closed and her head turned away as if she asked a casual question rather of the world than of him, "can they be good?"

He looked down on her. "Yes, surely," he said, with more energy. "Are our tremors to measure the Omnipotence?"¹⁸

In a later conversation with Pauline, Stanhope suddenly reverts to the topic, as if anxious to correct any misinterpretation of his previous assertion:

"The substantive, of course, governs the adjective; not the other way round."

"The substantive,?" Pauline asked blankly.

"Good. It contains terror, not terror good...."¹⁹

Aslan's union of the 'good and terrible' is well illustrated in chapter XIV of The Horse and his Boy, which is entitled 'The Unwelcome Fellow Traveller'.

Shashta, lost and lonely in the mountain mists, suddenly senses a mighty presence betrayed by its tremendous breathings. "Who are you?" he asks in terror. "One who has waited long for you to speak," answers a Voice. Shashta shudders with dread of the uncanny, but he is reassured. "Tell me your sorrows," says the Voice, and when Shashta has recounted his misfortunes remarks, "I do not call you unfortunate." The Voice reveals himself as the Lion, the one Lion, who has governed every crisis in Shashta's adventure. Uneasily, Shashta seeks to evade

scrutiny by a question about Aravis, but the Lion says, "I tell no one any story but his own" (cf. John xxi,21,22). "Who are you?" asks Shashta again. "Myself," replies Aslan three times, in tones that range from thunderous roar to thrilling whisper (cf. John viii,58).

Shashta's cruder fears disappear - 'a new and different sort of trembling came over him. Yet he felt glad too....' The mists disperse, the golden light intensifies. Facing beside Shashta's horse to keep it from the precipice is the mighty figure of Aslan. 'It was from the Lion that the light came'. As Shashta falls down before him he dissolves into a great cloud of glory, but there lingers a 'strange and solemn perfume'.

In at least one adventure Aslan's identity with Christ is made clear to the children themselves. The Lion, who is also the Lamb, reveals to Edmund and Lucy that they will come no more to Narnia, but must learn to meet him in their own world:

"Are - are you there too, Sir,?" said Edmund.

"I am," said Aslan. "But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."²⁰

The spiritual purpose informing the Lion is revealed: Aslan is a praeparatio evangelica, a baptism of the imagination in preparation for the baptism of mind and will.

The Times reviewer who coined the term 'symbolic theology'²¹ takes a less sympathetic view of its employment in the Chronicles than that taken here. He complains of Lewis that 'Too often we find him bewitching himself with his own spells - above all with the spell of symbolic theology'. Lewis, who considers metaphor and symbolism indispensable

for communicating spiritual truths, would be unshaken by this criticism, and a passage in 'The Weight of Glory' reads like an anticipation of it. After speaking of the 'desire for our own far-off country' (one of his recurrent themes) and the many 'good images' which it assumes, he asks:

Do you think I am trying to weave a spell? Perhaps I am; but remember your fairy tales. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us for nearly a hundred years.²²

One tendency of 'the evil enchantment of worldliness' - to persuade us that we have only this world and no other - is the subject of an episode in The Silver Chair which is typical of Lewis's symbolic theology and worth detailed examination.

The adventures of Jill, Eustace and Puddleglum in the Deep Realm (chapters X-XIII) embody a defence of the Supra-Natural against two of its enemies - the Freudian psychology which regards it as delusion, and the positivism which finds it meaningless. Underland becomes a symbol of the world known through our senses, Narnia of the world known through intuition and revelation, and the Green Enchantress a symbol of whatever seeks to make sojourners in the first forget the existence of the second.

The reader, of course, knows that 'Overworld' exists, and it may be objected that in the case of our attitude to the Supra-Natural this is precisely the point at issue. This, however, is always the method of symbolic theology: to create a model of the religious world-view and let it appeal to the reader's imagination and experience, trusting in its innate superiority to other world-pictures.

Chapter X shows Jill, Eustace and the marshwiggle, Puddleglum, being conditioned to the Deep Realm. The cold light, pallid faces, silence and claustrophobia, the insipid food and the gloomy reiteration of the Warden of the Marches begin to 'o'er crow their spirit' - "Many sink down, and few return to the sunlit lands". The sullen waters of the sunless ocean are like a second Lethe.

Then, when they find their Prince, he knows neither of Rilian, nor Narnia, nor Aslan, and throws doubt on the validity of that very 'Sign' which has led them to him. According to his own story, the Queen of Underland has rescued him from some vile enchantment (whose nature he does not remember) and is preparing a kingdom for him in Overland. Even now, he says, his insanity returns nightly, so that, before its onset, he has to be bound in the silver chair. Did any one accede to his desperate pless to be released he would change into a deadly serpent.

Only a certain falsity of manner and insensitivity of conscience suggest the fact that he is actually under the spell of the Enchantress. Outward circumstances favour his story. Yet, in the teeth of whirling emotions, the Narnians are loyal to their last 'Sign', for when the Prince, bound to the Silver Chair in his 'fit' of sanity, calls on Aslan in begging for release, simple obedience prevails over the subtlest sophistry:

"Do you mean you think everything will come right if we do untie him?" said Scrubb.

"I don't know about that," said Puddleglum. "You see, Aslan didn't tell Pole what would happen. He only told her what to do. That fellow will be the death of us once he's up, I shouldn't wonder. But that doesn't let us off following the sign."²³

Their loyalty is vindicated; Rilian is disenchanted, and remembers his past. But their joy is cut short by the entry of the Queen of Underland. Systematically the Enchantress goes to work on their minds and senses. With drowsy fragrance, strumming melody and cooing voice she insinuates her denial of Nernie, of 'Overworld', relegating it to dreams. "There never was any world but mine," she suggests.

Puddleglum's desperate recollection of the sun is dissolved by a bland 'linguistic analysis' - "What is this sun that you all speak of? Do you mean anything by the word?...Can you tell me what it's like?"²⁴ Rilian ventures an analogy - the sun is like the lamp which hangs from the roof - but she twists it to her purpose. "Your sun is a dream; and there is nothing in that dream that was not copied from the lamp," the witch explains. "The lamp is the real thing; the sun is but a tale, a children's story."

This is very like the attacks on the supernatural status of religious phenomena which Lewis examines in 'Transposition', and his answer aids an understanding of this, and other episodes in his fiction.

The sceptic argues, for example, that since many instances of 'speaking in tongues' are demonstrably hysterical, hysteria probably accounts for them all. Again, since erotic language normally reflects sexual experience, the erotic language of the mystic probably has the same source. To suppose otherwise is to multiply unnecessary hypotheses. The problem, says Lewis,

...is that of the obvious continuity between things which are admittedly natural and things which, it is claimed, are spiritual; the reappearance in what professes to be

our supernatural life of all the same old elements which make up our natural life....²⁵

Scepticism, he continues, sometimes extends to attacks on 'idealistic' interpretations of other phenomena. Since 'love' and 'lust' both seek the same physical fulfilment, and 'justice' and 'revenge' both inflict death, the duplication of terms is alleged to be superfluous.

Yet, retorts Lewis, when introspection reveals that the same neural response (e.g. a flutter in the diaphragm) may be produced by either aesthetic rapture or bad news, we do not conclude that 'joy and anguish are the same thing'. The resources of the emotions are richer than the resources of the senses, but 'the senses compensate for this by using the same sensation to express more than one emotion - even, as we have seen, to express opposite emotions'.²⁶

Generalising, he concludes that 'If the richer system is to be represented in the poorer at all, this can only be by giving each element in the poorer system more than one meaning'.²⁶ He instances the two-dimensional representation of solid forms where converging lines sometimes (not always) need to be interpreted by reference to the higher medium. Yet we can imagine a two-dimensional 'flatlander' retorting to our account of the solid world [as the Enchantress, in effect, replies to the Narnians]:

"Is it not obvious that your vaunted other world, so far from being the archetype, is a dream which borrows all its elements from this one?"²⁷

This is what anyone approaching a 'transposition' from 'below' is bound to assert. But approached from 'above', as we all approach two-dimensional drawings, or the senses' record of emotion, the case is different.

Therefore, Christians claim that devotion is 'not simply erotic' and the 'apparent desire for Heaven...not simply a desire for longevity or jewelry or social splendours'.²⁸

From below, the sceptic sees 'all the facts but not the meaning'. He is like a dog who looks at the pointing finger rather than at what it points to.

And in a period when factual realism is dominant we shall find people deliberately inducing upon themselves this dog-like mind. A man who has experienced love from within will deliberately go about to inspect it analytically from outside and regard the results of this analysis as truer than his experience. The extreme limit of this self-blinding is seen in those who, like the rest of us, have consciousness, yet go about to study the human organism as if they did not know it was conscious. As long as this deliberate refusal to understand things from above, even where such understanding is possible, continues, it is idle to talk of any final victory over materialism....There will always be evidence, and every month fresh evidence, to show that religion is only psychological, justice only self-protection, politics only economics, love only lust, and thought itself only cerebral biochemistry.²⁹

This sceptical, materialist procedure, this philosophy of 'only', is very like the technique which the Green Enchantress uses on the Narnians. With it she seeks to undermine all their affirmations of a higher order of reality.

Jill, at last, painfully recollects Aslan. "'What a pretty name!'" exclaims the Witch. "'What does it mean?'". Scrubb's desperate analogy of a 'huge cat' fares the way of Rilian's 'lamp': "'...you can put nothing into your make-believe without copying it from the real world, this world of mine, which is the only world'".

They are almost defeated, but Puddleglum's heroism in stamping his

foot into the Witch's fire stabs his mind awake, breaks the spell, and shatters the sweet facade of the Witch's fury. Puddleglum's impassioned defence of Overworld ends the debate:

"We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow....we're leaving your court at once and setting out in the dark to spend our lives looking for Overland."³⁰

It is a crucial choice similar to that by which Mark Studdock suddenly rebels against his psychological conditioning by the materialist, Frost.

The episode ends with the Witch's reversion to her serpent form and her violent death. The inhabitants of Underland, no longer automata, can be set free.

The Witch's enchantment of Rilien, so that he is blind to the existence of Narnia and Aslan, utilises flaws of character which his ordeals purge. This theme of an evil deception leading to spiritual blindness (which recalls Lewis's references to 'self-blinding' in 'Transposition') and to a time of testing is not confined to The Silver Chair. Its fuller treatment in The Last Battle shows Lewis's symbolic theology at work on a larger scale, controlling the initial situation, the pattern of events and the characterisation. The final instalment of the Chronicles is, in fact, an apocalyptic work, in which all the features of Christian eschatology are paralleled.

The first four chapters tell how Shift, a talking ape (the parody of true humanity is significant) bullies his friend Puzzle, the donkey, into wearing a lion skin and masquerading as Aslan. He then gathers the Narnians at Stable Hill, deceives them by displaying Puzzle by fire-

light, and proceeds to exploit them, first as the ally and then the tool of neighbouring Calormen.

Tirian, the last King of Narnia, and Jewel, the unicorn, are goaded into a violent attack on the agents of Calormen, but then, appalled at their own temerity, surrender. Shift tries to identify Aslan with Tash, the cruel god of Calormen, troubling the simple-minded but leading others, like Ginger the cat, to atheism. Tirian, tied to a stake, is not deceived by Puzzle's masquerade, and summons the 'seven friends of Narnia' to his aid.

This first movement echoes New Testament prophecies of the 'end time'. The opening phrase, 'In the last days of Narnia', is a portent of doom, recalling the apostolic warning 'that in the last days perilous times shall come'.³¹ Shift, as 'The Ape in his Glory' (chap.III), is like the 'Beast' and the 'false prophet' of Revelation,³² and comes, like the 'lawless one' of Thessalonians, 'with all power and signs and lying wonders',³³ so that he would 'seduce, if it were possible, even the elect'.³⁴ Puzzle is an unwitting Antichrist, bludgeoned into his role by Shift's cunning lies, emotional blackmail, and assurances that his masquerade will benefit Narnia.

The worst iniquity of the 'end time' lies in its perversion of truth. We have been frequently reminded that Aslan is not 'a tame lion'³⁵ but one whose wrath can be awakened by unrighteousness, and this concept enables the Ape and Rishda (the Calormene captain) to further their ends by attributing Aslan's harshness to his anger at Narnia's sinful dis-

belief. By thus playing on the consciences of the Narnians, they produce a contrition which undermines resistance to the false Aslan.

Upon Tirian, and later upon the fellowship that gathers round him, presses a grievous burden. Unfortified by outward sign or inward assurance, they must exhibit a heroic obedience. The moral is plain - 'he that endures unto the end shall be saved'.³⁶

Tirian is now joined (chap.V) by Jill and Eustace, who have entered Narnia not by means of the magic rings but following a train smash (a clue to the story's ending). Together they eventually rescue Jewel, capture Puzzle, and seem set to unmask the Ape's plot. Yet, when they rescue a company of Dwarfs being deported to Calormen and triumphantly produce Puzzle and his lion skin, they receive a terrible shock. The false Aslan has sapped belief in the real one. "No more Aslan," snarls the Black Dwarf, Griffle, "no more Kings, no more silly stories about other worlds." Perverted religion is producing atheists. Only the dwarf Poggin, like a second Abdiel,³⁷ comes over to Tirian.

Evil grows to a head. Kishda and Ginger, who now control the Ape, have convinced the Narnians that Aslan has carried off Tirian; Tash, the cruel god of Calormen, is seen making for Stable Hill. The warning of Jewel, the Unicorn, that "all worlds draw to an end; except Aslan's own country"³⁸ is fulfilled. Farsight, the Eagle, brings news that Calormen has slaughtered the King's messengers and captured and sacked Cair Paravel. The centre 'falls apart' - Narnia is utterly defeated.

The 'Holy War' enters its last phase (chaps,IX-XII) as Tirian's company await 'the adventure that Aslan would send them'. In the shadow of the stable they overhear Shift make their last weapon a liability by

warning the Narnians of a donkey blasphemously disguised as Aslan.

Rishda and Ginger pretend that Tashlan (their synthetic 'God') is in the stable, but deter the eager beasts from interviewing him by lurid tales of his wrath. The selfish and cynical dwarfs scoff at this, but refuse to be 'taken in'.

Ginger, seeking to 'prove' Tashlan's presence, is terribly successful, and shoots out of the stable mad with fear, reduced to a dumb brute. Emeth, a devout Calormene, shows a courageous sincerity by demanding to see his god. A dead Calormene is hurled from the stable, but Tirian perceives that it is not Emeth. Rishda realises with horror that Tash is really present.

When Tirian at last strikes, the ensuing battle is like a minor Armageddon. Rishda seeks to propitiate Tash by sacrificing Shift;³⁹ Tirian has a brief triumph; but Calormene reinforcements crush the loyalists, fling Eustace into the stable, and drive the Dwarfs in after him. Rishda, dragged into the stable by Tirian, is claimed by Tash, but Tirian himself is saved by a powerful Voice which banishes the monster.

The irony arising from Tash's presence in the Stable has led to the theme of Judgment, seen in the fates of Ginger, Shift, the Dwarfs and Rishda. Evil devours her children. The doctrine of the Last Things is also found in the dwarfs' disbelief. 'There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming?' warns the Second Epistle of Peter (iii, 3,4) and its subsequent picture of world-ending and heavenly judgment, closing with a glimpse of 'a new heaven and a new earth',⁴⁰ is the pattern for the climax of Lewis's narrative.

These last four chapters, full of powerful and vivid symbolism, will be examined in Chapter XVIII, where more attention will be paid to the aesthetic merits of the narrative. These have been obscured in the necessary concentration on Lewis's underlying pattern and purpose.

To this point, The Last Battle is a sombre, but exciting narrative, though one doubts whether children will find the same enjoyment here as in the earlier tales. Lewis probably asks too much of the younger readers. Even with some clue to the drift of the story, the sudden reversals of fortune, and the ambiguity of the characters must be puzzling at a first reading. The quiet, ominous beginning, though necessary to the mood and purpose, is not immediately inviting. Later, Tash is too horrific for all but the tough-minded, and the mounting tension and uncertainty is rather harrowing, though some relief is provided by the heroic mood of Tirian's company.

Elsewhere, in the earlier tales, Lewis's symbolic theology is generally less demanding and less insistent. In The Horse and his Boy there is a pleasing variety, and apparent inconsequence of incident, whilst a full appreciation of Aslan's providential interventions is not necessary to an unbroken enjoyment of the story. In long passages of Prince Caspian, The Silver Chair and The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader', symbolic undertones are only a distant murmur.

This is not to say that Lewis's imagination works any more freely or intensely in such passages. Most of the finest episodes (one remembers, for instance, Aslan's creation of Narnia in The Magician's Nephew) are effective because of, not despite, the theological symbolism.

C H A P T E R X V I I

THE ETHICS OF ELFLAND¹

If Shelley was right in supposing that 'The great instrument of moral good is the imagination',² there is probably no literary form, other than poetry itself, which plays such an important role in the formation of character as the fairy story. Read at an impressionable age, it provides (and is perhaps the only form which at that age can provide) the experiences that Shelley attributed to poetry - the vivid images, identification with people unlike ourselves, and the discipline of pain and pleasure. These, said Shelley, 'enlarge the circumference of the imagination' and strengthen 'the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature'.²

J.R.R. Tolkien, in an essay edited by Lewis,³ found the prime value of fairy stories in their provision of Fantasy, Recovery, Escape and Consolation - elements which he sought to re-interpret, and defend against contemporary attacks. G.K. Chesterton claimed that fairy stories preserve Wonder and arouse a special kind of Joy, but he went even further than Tolkien in showing how they may help to form one's personal philosophy.

Since Lewis's response to fairy tales (a convenient, rather than adequate, term for works like Phantastes) resembled that of Tolkien and Chesterton, and was later reinforced by his reading of their stories and essays, their views provide a useful introduction to the moral values of Narnia.

This is particularly true of Orthodoxy, the book in which Chesterton endeavours, like Lewis, to convey his personal philosophy in 'a set of mental pictures'.⁴ Its fourth chapter, which has the arresting title of 'The Ethics of Elfland', deals, says Chesterton, 'with what ethic and philosophy come from being fed on fairy tales'.⁵

Apart from the specific 'lessons' of such stories as 'Jack the Giant Killer' and 'The Sleeping Beauty', which he interprets with typical wit and imagination, fairy tales give us 'a certain way of looking at life'.⁵ Whereas abstract conceptions like 'law' and 'tendency' deaden our inborn wonder at the world around us by assuming 'an inner synthesis which we do not possess', fairy tales 'touch the nerve of the ancient instinct of astonishment'.⁶ In continually supplying a 'pleasant surprise', they are like Life itself.

Secondly, Chesterton derives from fairy tales a doctrine of 'Conditional Joy':

....according to elfin ethics all virtue is in an "if". The note of the fairy utterance always is, "You may live in a palace of gold and sapphire, if you do not say the word 'cow'"; or "You may live happily with the King's daughter, if you do not show her an onion". The vision always hangs upon a veto....⁷the true citizen of fairy-land is obeying something that he does not understand at all. In the fairy tale an incomprehensible happiness rests upon an incomprehensible condition. A box is opened, and all evils fly out. A word is forgotten, and cities perish. A lamp is lit, and love flies away. A flower is plucked, and human lives are forfeited. An apple is eaten, and the hope of God is gone.⁸

This doctrine of 'conditional joy', which Chesterton drew from fairy tales (and, as his examples suggest, from myth), became a part of his mental make-up, and was fully confirmed by later experience. He

felt that 'the joy of man, either in elfland or on earth....depended on not doing something which you could at any moment do and which, very often, it was not obvious why you should not do'.⁸ His imagination was prepared, as he notes later, to receive the Christian doctrine of the Fall.

Conditional joy is a theme which Lewis had already treated in Perelandra. In the 'Chronicles of Narnia', the episodes of the 'golden bell' and the 'apple of life' in The Magician's Nephew are its most direct presentations, but it is implicit in every story. The children can find a happy outcome to their adventures only by following Aslan and obeying his signs, even when they cannot understand the reason for his directions and prohibitions.

Lewis shares the two convictions which Chesterton derived from fairy tales:

...first, that this world is a wild and startling place, which might have been quite different, but which is quite delightful; second, that before this wildness and delight one may well be modest and submit to the queerest limitations of so queer a kindness.⁹

There is much more of this 'nursery theology' in Orthodoxy, a book in which Chesterton scatters a shower of sparkling ideas, but this is perhaps enough to show that his imagination was as much 'baptized' by fairy tales as Lewis's was by Phantastes. Fantasies like The Man Who Was Thursday are the proof of it.

Chesterton could have derived his convictions of Wonder and Conditional Joy just as easily from MacDonald as from the traditional fairy tales. The examination of symbolic theology in the last chapter

may have given the impression that in Narnia itself such intuitions are more explicitly, even didactically presented, but for the most part this is not so. Lewis's imagination, it is true, is less wild and profuse than Chesterton's, and less radiant and visionary than MacDonald's (though MacDonald sometimes preaches), but it is, nevertheless, the source rather than the product of morality and theology. In his own experience, as in Chesterton's, a 'shallow rationalism' found its first antidote in 'a many islanded sea of poetry and myth'¹⁰ and the unearthly longing he calls Joy.

To turn from the theology of Narnia to its ethics, with this in mind, is to see in a new light Harvey Darton's account of the course of children's literature as 'a battle between instruction and amusement'.¹¹ Perhaps the combatants are not implacably opposed. The distinctive and lasting value of Lewis's Narnia may prove to be its marriage of didacticism and entertainment, of morality and art, a union made possible by deeply held beliefs in tune with a positive attitude to pleasure, a stress on Joy, and a delight in myth and fantasy.

As one might expect, Lewis himself has discussed the relation of morality to entertainment in fairy stories, and the following extract from his address 'On Three Ways of Writing for Children' clearly reveals his attitude to the question of moral instruction in books for children:

To return to my original theme: I rejected any approach which begins with the question 'What do modern children like?' I might be asked 'Do you equally reject the approach which begins with the question "What do modern children need?" - in other words, with the moral or didactic approach'. I think the answer is yes. Not because I don't like stories to have a moral; certainly not because I think children dislike a moral. Rather because I feel sure that the

question 'What do modern children need?' will not lead you to a good moral. If we ask that question we are assuming too superior an attitude. It would be better to ask 'What moral do I need?' for I think we can be sure that what does not concern us deeply will not interest our readers, whatever their age. But it is better not to ask the question at all. Let the pictures tell you their own moral. For the moral inherent in them will arise from whatever spiritual roots you have succeeded in striking during the whole course of your life. But if they don't show you any moral, don't put one in. For the moral you put in is likely to be a platitude, or even a falsehood, skimmed from the surface of your consciousness. It is impertinent to offer children that. For we have been told on high authority that in the moral sphere they are probably at least as wise as we are.

Occasionally Lewis fails to live up to this ideal. The satire on 'modern' education in the opening chapters of The Voyage of the Dawn Treader¹ and The Silver Chair is marred by its intrusive sarcasm and its restricted application. This, and other, unspecified flaws, however, hardly warrant the charge of frequent 'arrogance' and 'complacency' made by the Times review.¹² It is true that when, from time to time, the substratum of Christian dogma and ethics becomes more apparent, it is liable to antagonize adult readers and sometimes puzzle children, but the inserted comment is rare. Usually 'the pictures tell you their own moral'.

At its best the moral element in the Narnia stories works, as fairy stories worked with Chesterton, at a deep level. What Lewis says of MacDonald's 'mythopoeic art' may be applied to it:

It arouses in us sensations we have never had before, never anticipated having, as though we had broken out of our normal mode of consciousness and 'possessed joys not promised to our birth'. It gets under our skin, hits us at a deeper level than our thoughts or even our passions, troubles oldest certainties till all questions are reopened, and in general shocks us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives.¹³

Lewis's tales of Narnia appeal at this 'deeper level' because they spring from the interests that deeply concern him. They fully bear out his conviction that fairy tales are of more than merely juvenile interest. Lewis believes that the adult who gains new interests need not lose old ones; he need not despise fairy tales in order to appreciate Jane Austen or Tolstoy:

The whole association of fairy tale and fantasy with childhood is local and accidental. Tolkien's essay on 'Fairy Tales', which is perhaps the most important contribution to the subject that anyone has yet made, points out that, in most places and times the fairy tale has not been specially made for, nor exclusively enjoyed by, children.¹⁴

The reasons for this wide appeal are obscure, but Lewis is attracted by Tolkien's theory that 'the appeal of the fairy story lies in the fact that man there most fully exercises his function as a "sub-creator"', and by Jung's view that 'fairy tale liberates the Archetypes [sic] which dwell in the collective unconscious'.¹⁴

Lewis has little sympathy with the view that fairy stories give children 'a false impression of the world they live in'. He thinks it more applicable to the school story:

I never expected the real world to be like the fairy tales. I think that I did expect school to be like the school stories.¹⁴

He makes much the same reply to the charge of escapism. Both fairy tale and school story 'arouse, and imaginatively satisfy, wishes', but only the second distorts our everyday experience. It arouses longings 'to be the immensely popular and successful schoolboy or school-girl' to which we escape 'from the disappointments and humiliations of the real world: it sends us back to the real world undivinely discon-

tented. For it is all flattery to the ego'. The longing for fairyland avoids this danger by taking the child out of himself:

It stirs and troubles him (to his lifelong enrichment) with the dim sense of something beyond his reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth. He does not despise real woods because he has read of enchanted woods: the reading makes all real woods a little enchanted. This is a special kind of longing.¹⁵

A third charge, that fairy tales frighten children, is weightier. He agrees that we wish to avoid the pathological phobias which sometimes afflict a child. The difficulty is that they are individual fears and we just cannot foresee what may arouse them. But he cannot agree that we must conceal from the child 'the knowledge that he is born into a world of death, violence, wounds, adventure, heroism and cowardice, good and evil'. (In this his views coincide with Chesterton's.)

Since it is so likely that they will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage. Otherwise you are making their destiny not brighter but darker. Nor do most of us find that violence and bloodshed in a story produce any haunting dread in the minds of children. As far as that goes, I side impenitently with the human race against the modern reformer. Let there be wicked kings and beheadings, battles and dungeons, giants and dragons, and let villains be soundly killed at the end of the book. Nothing will persuade me that this causes an ordinary child any kind or degree of fear beyond what it wants, and needs, to feel. For, of course, it wants to be a little frightened.¹⁵

He believes that 'by confining your child to blameless stories of child life in which nothing at all alarming ever happens, you would fail to banish the terrors, and would succeed in banishing all that can ennoble them or make them endureable'.¹⁵

In keeping with these beliefs, Lewis's stories are full of delights and dangers which reflect a distinctive view of life and conduct.

Life is a process of 'soul-making' in which the twin agents are 'fear' (ranging from stark terror to reverential awe) and 'joy' (ranging from the elemental pleasures to heavenly bliss). The children in Narnia, like Wordsworth among the Lakeland hills, are

Fostered alike by beauty and by fear....
By the impressive discipline of fear,
By pleasure and repeated happiness.¹⁶

Strange journeys, wondrous scenes and decisive encounters thrill, overawe, daunt, uplift and transform them. They are not fed on a dry diet of moral platitudes nor compared, unfavourably, with monsters of moral rectitude - the frequent fate of errant children in the older didactic fiction - but caught up in the events that re-make them.

Once more we find those darts of 'Joy', those workings of 'inexorable love', which are part of the 'habitual furniture' of Lewis's mind. He pays the child the compliment of sharing with him his deepest intuitions, believing with Wordsworth in The Prelude that

whether we be young or old
Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there.¹⁷

In this MacDonald had shown him the way.

MacDonald, too, as Lewis notes, allows 'a low and primitive, yet often indispensable function....to Fear in the spiritual life'.¹⁸ His title page to Alec Forbes of Howglen bears this quotation from Wordsworth's 'Second Evening Voluntary':

a faith sincere
Drawn from the wisdom that begins with fear.

'Begins' is the vital word. Everywhere in MacDonald and Lewis fear passes over into awe, and awe into joy - a joy found only in the 'perfect love' that 'casteth out fear' (1 John iv,18).

The presence of danger and delight gives rise to the distinctive moral emphases of Narnia, which may now be seen in relation to Lewis's total vision.

Courage is a key virtue in the ethics of Narnia. The traditional Christian term for it is 'Fortitude', of which Lewis writes that 'you cannot practise any of the other virtues long without bringing this one into play'.¹⁹ It is demanded of all the children in Narnia. Good intentions are insufficient. Courage is needed if conflict and fatigue, darkness and isolation, ease and luxury are not to undermine them.

A certain toughness of fibre, an avowed admiration of discipline, thus characterises Narnia; the 'martial virtues', as the Times reviewer²⁰ calls them, are highly regarded. The young child has not, without training, the qualities of character needed to master the sterner (or more seductive) situations that will confront him, and since reality will not adapt itself to his weakness, his weakness must be tempered to confront reality.

Along with courage goes obedience. This is not an unthinking submission to authority, but an enduring loyalty to what the mind and heart, making their fullest response, have recognized as goodness and truth.

These, of course, are not the only virtues which are commended.

Besides the emphasis on courage and obedience which, it is implied, draw their strength from Faith and Hope, there is the more usual emphasis on unselfishness and kindness, which are the appropriate childhood expressions of Charity. But the Times is right in stressing the 'martial' aspect of the Narnian ethic. It is St. Paul's advice to Timothy, the 'soldier' of Christ, which comes most readily to mind. Children are to 'endure hardness', avoid worldly entanglements, and 'strive for masteries' over self.^{2/}

Some account of the Narnian children will make this clearer than any further generalisations about the moral emphases of Narnia.

Lucy, the most attractive and vivacious of the Pevensys, is distinguished by a soul readily responsive to the heavenly vision. Her lesson, in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, is to patiently endure the disbelief of her brothers and sister, a lesson continued in Prince Caspian, where her excited account of Aslan's appearance is regarded as an idle tale. The moral courage she acquires is revealed in The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader' when she undertakes the task of breaking the spell on the Dufflepuds, and braves, alone, the silent corridor of the Magician's mansion. When she finds the magic book, she resists the temptation to use magic to make herself beautiful but stoops to eavesdropping on her earthly friends and is suitably abashed by what she hears. At every point Aslan guides and trains her, whilst the reader, who sympathises with her and sees the story through her eyes, shares, vicariously, her spiritual education.

Edmund is less sensitive. His vanity, greed and injured pride at first expose him to the blandishments of the Witch. Later, harsh treatment chastens him and innocent suffering awakens his sympathies. A spiritual recovery begins, Aslan's sacrifice redeems him, and he wins his spurs on the field of battle. Unfortunately, his rather passive, minor role in Prince Caspian and The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader' fails to give his character much substance.

The re-education of Eustace Clarence Scrubb, the Pevensys' cousin, centres in the dragon episode.²² A spoilt child is humbled by loneliness and hardship, and begins to appreciate his debt to others. Here a heroic moral code stressing courage, comradeship, obedience and honour (exemplified, and almost caricatured, by Reepicheep the Mouse) is sharply opposed to a 'modern' code that stresses self-expression and freedom from restraint. Incidental satire on educational theories limits rather than enhances the theme of the spoilt child.

These two characters suggest how sternly Lewis thinks children must resist that tendency to 'travel beastward' which MacDonald depicted in the Curdie stories.²³ Edmund must resist his 'swinish' appetite; Eustace must fight the dragon within.

In The Silver Chair Eustace and Jill learn to trust and obey Aslan's 'signs' (symbols of the Christian revelation). Failure to 'watch and pray' leads them both into peril, but ultimately obedience triumphs. Their hard-won maturity is displayed, tested and proved in The Last Battle.

Digory, in The Magician's Nephew, is a sturdy character, whose courage in following Polly into Otherworld, and devotion to his mother,

are attractively presented. So is the curiosity which involves him in a drama where his own desires and, more subtly, his concern for others, threaten his integrity.

Susan and Peter Pevensy are comparatively 'flat' characters, little more than vehicles for the child reader's own participation in the story. Where he provides a group of children, like Edith Nesbit in her Five Children and It and its sequels, Lewis fails to endow more than one or two of them with life. For one thing, there are too many competing interests in his imagined world. Where he provides only two, as Eustace and his school friend Jill (The Silver Chair and The Last Battle), or Polly and Digory (The Magician's Nephew), he derives more interest from their relationship.

A foil to the children's sturdy sense of values is provided, in The Magician's Nephew, by Uncle Andrew, the magician, with his jaunty, fin de siècle dandyism and his dabbling in the occult. He first scares the children by appearing 'like a pantomime demon', and then as a self-styled adept and sage with a 'high and lonely destiny'. The pride, vanity and cruelty of his art blind him to morality, and he sends Polly and Digory into perils which he dare not face himself. Confronted with Jadis, the formidable Queen of Charn, he dwindles into a 'little peddling magician',²⁴ and then, detained in Narnia, is chastened by a purgatorial process of rough, but poetic justice administered by its Talking Beasts.

Moral values are also embodied in the Narnian characters. The Dufflepuds and Coriakin, the Wizard, are engaged in a process of

spiritual education. The Duffers, as Lucy calls them, are to attain self-hood; Coriakin is to expiate some sin of pride through the exercise of patience and charity.²⁵ Rilian reveals a weakness of romantic chivalry. He succumbs to False Beauty, and suffers a distortion of his intellectual and moral judgment, from which he must be delivered.²⁶ Caspian is tempted to fight Evil with its own weapons and to desert duty for personal glory.²⁷ In The Horse and his Boy, Bree, Shasta and Aravis all undergo the disciplinary process. Aravis loses her arrogance, Shashta acquires nobility and Bree throws off his servile breeding. In The Last Battle Tirian masters his impetuosity and stands fast in the evil day.

Reepicheep and Puddleglum deserve more attention, (and illustrate Lewis's claim that such invented creatures are 'an admirable hieroglyphic which conveys psychology, types of character, more briefly than novelistic presentation and to readers whom novelistic presentation could not yet reach'.²⁸)

Reepicheep, the talking mouse, is chivalry incarnate. From his glorious début on the battlefield of Beruna, through all his heroism in the quest for the Utter East, to his apotheosis in The Last Battle he embodies loyalty, courage and glory, with a mind 'full of forlorn hopes, death or glory charges, and last stands'. Nothing daunts him, neither nasty boy, slave driver, sea serpent nor magic table. Confronted by supernatural darkness, he declares that to retreat would be 'no little impeachment of all our honours'. Hearing of invisible foes, he merely enquires, "'do they become visible when you drive a sword into them?'. Eustace is a perfect foil to him, and their eventual friendship is a rare reconciliation of opposites.

In creating this epitome of the martial virtues Lewis has certainly 'indulged the pleasure of his heart'.²⁹ Some may find the indulgence too uncritical and echo Drinian's "'Drat that mouse!'", without the same underlying affection. Most will regard him with the same mingled affection and irritation that we feel for Hotspur or Alan Breck.³⁰

Puddleglum, the Marshwiggles, is Lewis's nearest approach to a Dickensian character: Mark Tapley might be his cousin. The piquant contrast of invariably gloomy speech with implicitly optimistic conduct is the sole basis of his behaviour, but it provides considerable entertainment. His first remarks to Jill and Eustace are typical:

"Good morning, Guests," he said. "Though when I say good I don't mean it won't probably turn to rain or it might be snow, or fog, or thunder. You didn't get any sleep, I dare say."

He remains as gloomy to the end, for it is not the nature of such a character to change. Lost in the darkness of Underland he remarks, "'there's one good thing about being trapped down here: it'll save funeral expenses"'. .

Yet he makes an admirable guide, philosopher and friend for Jill and Eustace. His gloomy satisfaction at their squabbles checks their bad temper; his dogged scepticism guards them from enchantments; his courage and grit win their admiration. "'He may be a wet blanket"' says Jill, "'but he has plenty of pluck - and cheek."'³¹

It adds to the humour that such a creature should be regarded by his fellow Marshwiggles as incurably 'flighty'.

The final and most powerful moral appeal of this world of motley creatures comes from their fellowship, which is the more valuable in

that it arises from the reconciliation of opposites. A parallel to the solidarity of the family and the sense of membership in Christianity is provided. In fact, Lewis's own address on 'Membership' provides the best appreciation of this quality:

A dim perception of the richness inherent in this kind of unity is one reason why we enjoy a book like The Wind in the Willows; a trio such as Rat, Mole, and Badger symbolizes the extreme differentiation of persons in harmonious union which we know intuitively to be our true refuge both from solitude and from the collective.³²

This sense of fellowship between diverse creatures does not arise, of course, from their mere juxtaposition, or even interaction, in the same plot; a bond of unity has to be forged by shared experience, of which heroic enterprise is the most effective. Hence it is in the 'company' or 'fellowship' vowed to a desperate mission that it usually arises. Perhaps this is why it emerges strongly in the 'Chronicles' only among the company who quest for the Seven Lords, the trio who search for Eilian, and the fellowship who fight 'the Last Battle'. There are partial exceptions - the children's hard-won friendship with Trumpkin, the companionship of Bree and Shashta, for instance - but only with Reepicheep and Puddleglum do the children share a deep fellowship.

Elsewhere the diverse creatures of Narnia are often merely a colourful frieze before which the protagonists play their part. Nor, in fact, are all the protagonists sufficiently solid for a strong sense of fellowship to emerge from their relationships. Caspian and Tirian are flat figures, and, of the children, Lucy alone is a fully rounded character, though Eustace has individuality and Polly, Digory and Jill are adequately presented.

Lewis's emphasis on the discipline of pain and pleasure, the necessity for courage and obedience, and the value of fellowship, comes from the ethical concept that underlies all his work. In the 'ethics of Elfland' (as in the ethics of the New Testament) moral growth is rarely pictured as a smooth unfolding of potentialities. It is pictured, rather, as an inner transformation, or re-making, which brings the soul into conformity with an already existent spiritual pattern. The Beast does not merely become less beastly; he is changed back into a Prince. The cub is relatively formless, and has to be 'licked into shape'.

For some, this last image may recall, possibly with distaste, the rough training of Mowgli or Kim, and the comparison with Kipling is not without value. But there are fundamental differences. Kipling's is a powerful, but limited vision, clear about means but hazy as to ends. For ultimate values it substitutes the code of a caste, for a comprehensive fellowship admission to an élite. Consequently, in Kipling's stories the 'tough' theory of education is subject to subtle excesses and distortions. No one has diagnosed this danger of Kipling's ethic more shrewdly than Lewis himself, who shows how its sternness sometimes becomes sadistic, its submission masochistic.³³ The Times reviewer of the 'Chronicles of Narnia',³⁴ in stating that Lewis 'enjoys the role of Aslan, as he enjoys receiving Aslan's admonitions', suggests that he has succumbed to the same psychological diseases. A stress on authority and obedience is always liable to such distortion, but the reviewer produces no evidence to demonstrate its occurrence here.

Lewis, in fact, has a balanced and sane view of pleasure and pain. Ascetism is never presented as a good in itself in Narnia, though it is often necessary. On the other hand, the dangers of indulgence are not underrated. There is a genuine 'temperance'.

Lewis's firm conviction that pleasure is an ally rather than an enemy of righteousness saves him from many pitfalls of moralistic fiction. The really 'solid' pleasures in Narnia - feasting and dancing, the beauty of Nature and the arts, are all the heritage of the righteous. As Yeats's 'fiddler of Dooney' observes, 'the good are always merry Save by an evil chance'. Lewis's skill lies in presenting virtue as more real and exciting than sin. Everywhere in Lewis's fiction, notes Weyland Hilton-Young, 'right is many-coloured, brilliant, clear and gay'.³⁵ To the righteous child, as Lewis learned from MacDonald, morality is no grim governess, not even a solemn lawgiver, but a 'sweet air blowing from the "land of righteousness"'.³⁶

C H A P T E R XVIII

THE GRAND DESIGN

It would be a mistake to stress the symbolism and ethics of Narnia at the expense of its aesthetic qualities. Everywhere its colourful descriptions and changing scenes may be enjoyed purely for themselves. One's initial, and final impression is of a series of brilliant pictures, an impression which confirms Lewis's statement that in the composition of his stories 'images always come first'.¹

This 'imagist' origin is reflected in the texture of the narrative. There is that constant appeal to the senses which was noted in the detailed examination of Ransom's arrival on Perelandra. Concrete detail, vivid simile and musical names provide the kind of pleasure found in Spenser's Fairie Queene and Shelley's Witch of Atlas. Born in a different age, Lewis would probably have expressed himself through the romantic epic. As it is, of course, the style is not only less complex than poetry but less complex than in Lewis's adult romances. Yet its images are equally memorable.

One recalls the beavers' frozen dam 'with flowers and wreaths and festoons of the purest sugar', the petrified statue to which life returned like 'a tiny streak of flame creeping along the edge of the newspaper', the 'withered sun' of Charn, and the hushed corridor where Lucy 'stood still and couldn't hear the squeak of a mouse, or the buzzing of a fly, or the swaying of a curtain, or anything - except the beating of her own heart'.²

Memorable sounds linger like the memorable pictures: the noise of running waters as Spring returns to long-frozen Narnia, the cry of the gulls at Cair Paravel, the horribly sweet crescendo of the bell in Charn, Aslan whispering 'I am myself',³ and the 'cold, tingling, silvery voices'⁴ of the stars that sang for joy when Narnia was created.

Yet such isolated details are not chiefly what one remembers. Lewis says of the pictures he 'sees' in the early stage of composition that some 'have a common flavour, almost a common smell',⁵ and this relationship is reflected, and heightened, in the finished story. Images and pictures tend to crystallise around some focal point of imagination. Such a focal point may appear in the story as a character - Aslan or Reepicheep - but, generally, images cluster around a place - Underland, Calormen and the Western Waste are examples. Lewis has a taste for exotic settings, a feeling for the distinctive character of a place, as strong as Milton's.

Beneath such image-clusters, one generally feels the presence, as in poetic drama, of some deeper concept or intuition. It may be one derived from the common stock of Western European culture, either from its mythology or its history. So, for example, the earthly paradise, Atlantis, chivalry, Islam, the Dark Ages, and wars of liberation have all contributed to Narnia. On the other hand, it may be some 'permanent aspect of human experience' such as Lewis speaks of in connection with the romances of H.G. Wells.⁶ The world of dreams, the numinous, and the pattern of death and rebirth are 'permanent aspects' that figure in Narnia.

Images such as these are rather solemn, as archetypal images tend to be, but the mood of the 'happy land of Narnia'⁷ is often gay. It is true that the quests, voyages and battles have predominantly serious settings and moods, but adventures are, by definition, exceptional, and may be expected to bring the grotesque and sinister, or the majestic and ethereal in their train. What balances their serious effect is the central core of daily pleasures and settled happiness from which they arise, and to which they return. Narnia, in its times of peace and plenty, is a world of cosy interiors and smiling landscapes, of singing, feasting and dancing. The social pleasures, especially those which appeal to children, such as eating, drinking, dressing-up and making jokes, are warmly depicted.

Not all the memorable descriptions, then, are exotic. A note of homeliness, the domestic aspect of good fellowship, enters strongly into the tales of Narnia. Its appearance in the Christian household of That Hideous Strength had been only partially effective; perhaps Lewis had learned how to manage it more successfully from Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings.

'Homeliness', something of an acquired taste for Lewis, was a 'key word' in the vocabulary of his youthful friend Arthur, as described in Surprised by Joy. From him he learned to look for more in landscape than the romantic counterparts of Wagner's music:

Often he recalled my eyes from the horizon just to look through a hole in a hedge, to see nothing more than a farmyard in its mid-morning solitude, and perhaps a grey cat squeezing its way under a barn door, or a bent old woman with a wrinkled, motherly face coming back with an empty bucket from the pigstye.⁸

In Narnia, Lewis's eye is often on the horizon, but it is refreshed by frequent glances at the nearer prospect. There is a fine contrast between the snowy landscapes of Narnia (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe) and the cosy parlours of Mr. Tumnus, the faun, and Mr. and Mrs. Beaver. As Kenneth Grahame leads Mole from the sinister perils of the Wild Wood to Badger's warm hall, so Lewis leads Shashta from his harsh adventures in the Calormene desert to the normality, security and fellowship of the dwarfs' cottage:

The roof was very low, and everything was made of wood and there was a cuckoo-clock and a red-and-white checked table-cloth and a bowl of wild flowers and little white curtains on the thick-paned windows.⁹

It is an epitome of the domestic charm of the fairy story.

The kind, and quality, of the humour in the 'Chronicles' varies. Unlike Edith Nesbit, Lewis contributes little through his children's conversation, which is undistinguished at its best and an embarrassment when it obtrudes into some intensely imagined scene. The stilted speech which the children adopt as Kings and Queens is no more successful, and underlines the problem Lewis set himself by making schoolchildren into monarchs. As Marcus Crouch has recently observed, 'it was always difficult to accept the translation of the schoolboy Peter into the High King Peter of Narnia'.¹⁰ Fortunately, the appearances of the children in their royal guise are confined to short episodes in four of the stories.

Another artistic flaw, mentioned above, comes from the author's satirical comments on 'modern' education in the opening and closing pages of The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader' and The Silver Chair. The whimsical comments on the late Victorian setting of The Magician's Nephew are more

entertaining.

These deficiencies are largely compensated for by the idiosyncracies of the Narnian characters, who provide the staple humour of the Chronicles. Reepicheep and Puddleglum, the most fully realised and successful of these creations, have already been described. Tumnus the faun, Trumpkin the dwarf, Rumblebuffin the giant, and Glimfeather the owl, are some of the other humorous creatures who provide comic relief from the tense adventures. The most entertaining comedy is found in the cross-talk between the Narnians and the 'Dufflepuds' in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader. Such an episode fulfils the promise given by Aslan at the creation of Narnia that 'jokes as well as justice come in with speech'.¹¹

Humour is the final thread in the pattern of the 'Chronicles of Narnia'. (For interlinked romances of this kind the image of a medieval tapestry is inescapable.) Analysable humour does not, however, account for their predominantly gay texture, which, despite all the 'battles and dungeons, giants and dragons'¹² of which Lewis speaks, is shot through with a sparkling joy. Ultimately this comes from the fact that, though Lewis has planned the Chronicles as episodes in a 'Holy War', the total design is, in Dante's sense, a divine comedy.

The trend of the separate stories, and their culmination in the final chapters of The Last Battle, establish this comprehensive design. 'And they all lived happily ever after' is the typical conclusion to the fairy story, for which a 'happy ending' is almost obligatory. 'Happy ending', however, is a term as inadequate for the finest of the fairy stories (what might be called the symbolic romance) as 'sad ending' is for genuine tragedy. To bring out the correspondence and contrast with

a tragedy's 'catastrophe' we need to adopt Tolkien's suggestion of 'eucatastrophe'.¹³ Both terms refer to the clash of events which lead to a dramatic, but prepared for, reversal of fortune, but in the first case the outcome is tragic, in the second triumphant. All generalisations about art tend to simplify and distort, and Lewis finds generalisations about tragedy particularly suspect. Nevertheless, some broad contrast between the distinctive impressions of tragedy and the symbolic romance is useful, and the following definition may serve to indicate the effect Lewis has sought: the catastrophe of a tragedy brings death and waste attended by pity, admiration and a sense of grandeur; the eucatastrophe of a symbolic romance brings rebirth and consummation attended by joy, love and a sense of glory. Hamlet and The Winter's Tale may stand as examples of each.

The Eucatastrophe of the symbolic romance is a complex, not a simple movement. In Lewis's endings certain distinctive phases, or moments, may usually be distinguished. The preparatory phase, common in the fairy tale, has been defined in the proverb that 'the darkest hour is before the dawn'. As in Perelandra, which is particularly close to the 'Chronicles' in this respect, there is some vision of darkness, descent to the depths, or disciplinary ordeal. In whatever form evil is manifested, it establishes a sense of isolation, or alienation, to which the characters variously respond, sometimes by heroic defiance, sometimes by a self-despairing commitment to divine grace. Then comes the reversal of fortune. Evil overreaches itself, and a counter current of good, which has been lost sight of for a time, over-rules it.

Some kind of triumphant revelation follows, often quite complex in its unfolding. The essential change of feeling is from destructive fear to creative hope, from isolation to fellowship, from alienation to communion. As in the fairy story, this usually turns on recovery and re-union, but, in addition, there is some vision, or actual 'translation', which lifts the characters onto a higher plane. There follows a profusion of celestial imagery, and by means of this 'Way of the Affirmation of Images', to adopt Charles Williams' terminology, an attempt is made to indicate what Lewis calls 'the real universe, the divine, magical, terrifying and ecstatic reality in which we all live'.¹⁴

It remains to show how Lewis works out such a Eucatastrophe, and how, in so doing, he interweaves picture and sentiment, symbol and moral, into his 'grand design'. A selective examination of chapters XII-XVI of The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader' is followed by a more thorough treatment of chapters XIII-XVI of The Last Battle.

The plot of The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader' was outlined in chapter IV. Structurally, it is a quest story involving a voyage of exploration reminiscent, in spirit, of the search for the North East Passage. The image of exploration is doubly important. The adventures arising from Caspian's quest for the seven lost Lords of Narnia have varying degrees of moral and spiritual significance, as indicated by changes of tone. Reepicheep's quest for the 'Utter East' has the more constant meaning of a quest for divine reality. Reepicheep hopes to reach 'Aslan's country', encouraged by the following verse spoken over his cradle by a dryad:

Where sky and water meet,
 Where the waves grow sweet,
 Doubt not, keepiekeep,
 To find all you seek,
 There is the utter East.¹⁵

The journey towards the East, land of the rising sun and cradle of religion, has a clearly spiritual significance.

Caspian's company have their blackest hour in the episode of the 'Dark Island', where Rhoop, the fourth of the seven Lords, is rescued from a mysterious enchantment. In this pall of darkness each individual's peculiar, nightmare fear becomes a palpable presence. (An odd parallel can be found in Nineteen Eighty-Four where Winston Smith's phobia about rats is used to complete his demoralisation.) Lucy's prayer to Aslan brings deliverance in a form suitable to the sea voyage. The albatross that first 'looked like a cross',¹⁶ and whispered in Aslan's voice, "Courage, dear heart" to Lucy, leads them into the light, and the dark shadow disappears. In his three previous appearances Aslan has chastened, rebuked and encouraged; here he delivers the Narnians from their innermost fears. Tolkien uses the same device of a supernatural darkness in The Return of the King; the primary source probably lies in 'the darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour' (Markxv,33).

The mariners now encounter gentler breezes and calmer seas. New constellations arouse 'joy and fear'; the 'numinous' atmosphere is firmly established and skilfully sustained. In a rich sunset they float to a fragrant island end, in the charmed air, come upon strange ruins. There, at a table richly spread, they find the last three Lords lost in enchanted sleep. "The whole place smells of magic - and danger".

Their night vigil, the beautiful maiden and her story, the awe surrounding Aslan's table and the stone knife of sacrifice, intensify this mood.

The sensuous appeals are enriched by subtle literary parallels, one of which perhaps gives us the germ of Lewis's whole story. In Dorothy Sayers's translation of Dante's Inferno, we read how Ulysses sought for 'the uninhabited world behind the sun';¹⁷ the maiden relates how one of the sleeping Lords had said, "What should we do but seek adventure after adventure? We have not long to live in any event. Let us spend what is left in seeking the unpeopled world behind the sunrise."¹ [my italics] Other echoes remind one of Circe's enchanted banquet, the 'Siege Perilous' of Arthurian legend, and the fairy tale motifs of the enchanted sleep and the unknown princess. An unusual, though slight, element of love interest is introduced here. Caspian has referred to the earthly story of the Prince who kissed the Princess and broke the enchantment:

"But here," said the girl, "it is different. Here he cannot kiss the Princess till he has dissolved the enchantment."

The moral interest centres in the theme of 'trust'. Invited to eat the banquet, the Narnians have to rely on their estimate of the girl's nature. Circe also had a banquet; the stone knife of sacrifice was lost in possession of the White Witch. Reepicheep and Lucy, the moral touchstones of the story, have no doubt of the girl's integrity.

This island is 'the beginning of the end', and here the story's dénouement is prepared. From the princess's father, the sage Ramandu,

Caspian learns that he must voyage to the Utter East and there leave one of his crew. Only so can the Lords be roused from their sleep. The Lord Rhoop elects to sleep at the table until Caspian's return, and so forget his past nightmare existence.

There is a strange but powerful symbolism in the daily clearing of the banquet by the flock of white birds from the sun. One of them places a 'fire-berry' on Ramandu's lips, rather as the angel touched Isaiah's lips with a live coal in the vision in the Temple (Isaiah vi). The explanation given is that, like the magician who cares for the Dufflepuds, Ramandu is a former star expiating some failure in his ordained role. It is a neat touch to allow the rational Eustace to express a mild scepticism at this story:

"In our world," said Eustace, "a star is 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...."¹⁸

(Lewis may have had in mind the sentient stars of Olaf Stapledon's Star Maker, though one need look no further than the book of Job (xxxviii,7) for the morning stars that 'sang together'.)

On the resumed voyage everything 'suffers a sea change'. Sleep and food are forgotten as, in the increasing light of a gigantic sun, Caspian and his company sail over a crystal sea. Lucy's glimpses of the Sea People beneath its shallowing waters arouse wonder at worlds unknown, a note of cosmic richness (echoed in Caspian's surprised delight at the roundness of our own world). Reepicheep's plunge into the sea leads to the discovery that the water is sweet and strong, 'drinkable light' which

fortifies and transforms.

The seemingly endless ocean, the giant sun and the glimpses of the Sea People are reminiscent of Perelandra. So is the mood of sanctified pleasure. One recalls Screwtape's complaint that 'Out at sea, out in His sea, there is pleasure, and more pleasure'.¹⁹ There are other 'intimations of immortality' in the transforming power of the sweet water. In his sermon 'The Weight of Glory' Lewis had remarked:

What would it be to taste at the fountain-head that stream of which even these lower reaches prove so intoxicating? Yet that, I believe, is what lies before us. The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy.²⁰

In chapter XVI, 'The Very End of the World', the mariners continue eastward into 'the stillness of that last sea'. The silver horizon becomes a dazzling sea of lilies shot with gold, through which they plough a dark green furrow. (Perhaps Lewis's picture of the silver current comes from the 'pure river of water of life, clear as crystal' in the Apocalypse.²¹) A fresh, wild, lonely fragrance pervades the air. Gently the Dawn Treader grounds on the shallow bottom. Caspian suddenly longs to go further, alone, but is rebuked by his companions, and by Aslan, who reveals to him that the children must proceed with Reepicheep in the boat.

Reepicheep and the children reach the wave at the end of the world and see and scent, beyond the sun, the mountains of Aslan's country. Reepicheep, 'translated' to Heaven, as Ransom is 'translated' to Perelandra in That Hideous Strength, passes beyond the wave.

With its clear indications of an underlying religious purpose, the

children's final encounter with Aslan marks the mid point of the Chronicles. The denouement of The Last Battle is half anticipated. On a verdant shore the children see a lamb of dazzling whiteness (like the Lamb that was the light of Heaven²²). The fire on the grass, and the meal of roasted fish, recall the disciples' last meeting with their Lord on the shore of Galilee.²³ Reverting to the form of the Lion, Aslan tells Lucy and Edmund that they will not return to Narnia, nor to his own country except by entering it from their own world. (Again, this anticipates The Last Battle.) On Earth they must come to know him by another name:

"This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."²⁴

He mildly rebukes Lucy (as Christ rebuked Peter in John xxi,22) for enquiring about Eustace's future. Then, through the door in the sky, the children return to their own world.

Lewis shows considerable literary tact in his management of the religious purpose. The course of the narrative and the reality of the characterisation is never broken by an obtruded moral or a forced interpretation. You can, if you wish, leave the allegory alone. The notes of love and joy in the relationships of the characters, the sense of glory pervading the settings, are allowed to produce the mood of reconciliation characteristic of the symbolic romance.

In The Last Battle, the course of the action, until the middle of chapter XII, has been more unremittingly sombre than in The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'. The theme of deceptive appearances, and the storm and

stress of the battle outside the stable, appear to be leading to tragedy. (See chapter XVI for an account of the story to this point.) The surprising reversal of fortune that follows, with its startling entry of new characters, and its successive revelations and transformations, is all the more effective. There is a satisfaction in seeing the loose ends of the previous stories tied up, and the full cast of characters (with the exception of Susan) re-assembled.

After the 'struggle at the gate of death'²⁵ the members of Tirian's fellowship 'die into life'. The mood recalls MacDonald's story The Golden Key:

'You have tasted of death now,' said the Old Man.
'Is it good?'

'It is good,' said Mossy. 'It is better than life.'

'No,' said the Old Man. 'It is only more life.'²⁶

Whether or not the door symbolizes Christ,²⁷ the stable undoubtedly stands for the after-life. Tirian, reclothed and re-invigorated, finds himself in the company of 'the seven friends of Narnia' bathed in the light of a paradisaical landscape in which stands a door strangely isolated. Yet, through its chinks, one can still see the figures around the fire. Tirian perceives that 'the Stable seen from within and the Stable seen from without are two different places':

"Yes," said the Lord Digory. "Its inside is no bigger than its outside."

"Yes," said Queen Lucy. "In our world too, a Stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world."

Lucy then recounts the recent events as seen from inside the Stable,

Emeth has wandered away dazed; but the dwarfs, wrappd in their disbelief, and convinced that they are in a 'black hole' (an echo of The Pilgrim's Regress), sit close by. The chapter heading, 'How the Dwarfs Refused to be Taken In', recalls the 'Hard-Bitten Ghost' of The Great Divorce and, oddly enough, Chesterton's remarks on Mr. Pickwick.²⁸ Even Aslan (who has appeared in glory, and commended Tirian for his faithfulness) cannot pierce their darkness or shatter their mental prison.

In chapter XIV, 'Night Falls on Narnia', Father Time is roused from his slumbers in Underland, where we last saw him in chapter X of The Silver Chair. Then the vision of Mark xiii is paralleled:

...the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall...And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds....

All this is appropriately and vividly realised. The giant, like some Cyclopean shepherd, calls home the stars. Narnia's diverse creatures stream up to Aslan, standing in the magnified doorway which has become his judgment seat, some to slink away on the left into his dark shadow, others to enter with joy (cf. Matthew xxv, 31-46). Among the latter are the loyal animals of Tirian's fellowship.

Narnia crumbles in a final cataclysm. Monsters devour its herbage; the waters rise; the sun is put out. 'Universal darkness covers all' and Peter shuts the door. But the natural tears are wiped away, and they all follow Aslan 'Farther up, and farther in'.

Here they meet Emeth, the devout and enquiring soul, who has encountered Aslan, the hitherto unknown object of his desire. 'Child',

Aslan has said, 'all the service thou hast done to Tash, I account a service done to me'. Puzzle, too, has confessed his folly and been forgiven. Together they penetrate more deeply into the 'new country', which gradually reveals itself to their astonished eyes as the real, archetypal Narnia. ('It's all in Plato,' says Digory.) As Jewel exclaims, they have 'come home at last'.

In chapter XVI, 'Farewell to Shadowlands', the inward and upward movement continues. Memories of The Golden Key with its country of shadows and, beyond it, 'the country whence the shadows fall',²⁹ underlie the narrative. Facing westward as on eagles' wings, they reach Cauldron Pool, where the picture of redeemed Narnia climbing the waterfall, with, as Jill puts it, 'all kinds of reflected lights flashing at you from the water and all manner of coloured stones flashing through it, till it seemed as if you were climbing up light itself' recalls MacDonald's picture of the youth and maiden climbing the rainbow.

'Farther up and farther in' cry the children and the Narnians as they pass into the paradisaal garden of the west, and again MacDonald is echoed. 'I was in the land of thought,' says the narrator of Lilith - 'farther in, higher up than the seven dimensions, the ten senses; I think I was where I am - in the heart of God'.³⁰

The re-assembling of Narnia continues. Reepicheep welcomes them to the garden, and within they find Puddleglum and Caspian, Cor and Trumpkin, whilst beneath the phoenix tree sit King Frank and Queen Helen.

Lucy, chatting with Tumnus, perceives that, 'This garden is like the Stable. It is far bigger inside than it was outside', there is

'world within world, Narnia within Narnia'. Gifted with celestial sight she sees spread before her the inner Narnia and, beyond it, the Mountains of Aslan, now disclosed as a world-encompassing range from which 'all the real countries', England among them, jut out as spurs.

As they advance towards the mountains, Aslan comes to greet them, 'leaping down from cliff to cliff like a living cataract of power and beauty'. As He speaks His countenance is changed:

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

Qualifications about the success of the earlier parts of the story have been made in chapter XVI, but these final chapters provide, nevertheless, a magnificent close to the 'Chronicles of Narnia'. The geography, history and characters of the whole cycle are skilfully re-introduced or recalled, and composed into a series of satisfying pictures. Aslan's role is finally made quite explicit, and the religious purpose fully worked out, but the points are not laboured. The apocalyptic events, and the Platonic 'machinery' of the archetypal Narnia, surely the strangest ingredients yet employed in a children's story, are clearly articulated and firmly related to each other. Yet the story can be read with enjoyment, despite some puzzling transitions, by readers of varying age and experience. The award of the Carnegie Medal to The Last Battle recognized its individual worth, as well as Lewis's total achievement in 'The Chronicles of Narnia'.

This achievement can be seen in relation to three things - Lewis's

own fiction, children's books since the War, and the symbolic fantasy.

Narnia is as important a part of Lewis's achievement as the theological and planetary romances. There is no 'writing down', no suggestion that Lewis's imagination is not fully engaged. The themes that figure in the adult fiction figure also in Narnia. The same literary terms - romance, symbolism, 'sensation', eucatastrophe - are required for both. In both there is the same use of myth, the same attack on Naturalistic philosophies, the same debt to MacDonald. The same theological concepts of the Fall, the cosmic war, Heaven and Hell, hierarchy and eschatology are needed to interpret them. If there is less wit in Narnia, there is perhaps more humour. The style of Narnia is necessarily simpler, but it shows Lewis's 'sharp visualising power' to advantage. At every point the children's books can sustain a serious comparison with the adult fiction.

Lewis joins the select rank of writers who have successfully transposed their serious, adult interests into books for children. Lewis Carroll, Kenneth Grahame and Arthur Ransome owe their success to the same ability. Since the War there have been several new writers, Lewis among them, who are likely to win a secure place with these. Their work is too individual to classify in rigid categories, but three main groups may be distinguished. First, there has been a revolution in the writing of historical fiction, brought about by writers combining scrupulous research with a strong feeling for the atmosphere of time and place, and substituting a personal viewpoint for the stereotyped sentiments of the past. Of these, Rosemary Sutcliffe is the most notable, but Cynthia Harnett, Geoffrey Trease, Henry Treece and Ronald Welch have also written

effectively. Secondly, a number of writers have drawn directly on their own experience to write realistic stories with authentic backgrounds and individual sentiments. Among these Elfrida Vipont, Richard Armstrong, William Mayne and Phillips Pearce are most notable. Finally, two notable writers of fantasy have appeared. One is Mary Norton, first with her stories of the amusing witch, Miss Price, and then with her grave, exact stories about the 'Borrowers', the little people who live behind the skirting-board and under the floor. In four beautifully written stories³¹ she has traced their moving struggle to survive in a hostile, grown-up world. The other writer is Lewis himself. Along with Mary Norton, and the best three or four of the others, he is likely to maintain a prominent place, in the foreseeable future, among those writers for children whose books are reprinted, read and re-read by successive generations.

Finally, Lewis may be viewed in relation to the fairy-story, or symbolic romance. Here he has a unique position. Since Tolkien wrote The Hobbit in 1937, there has been no talented writer working in this field except Lewis. It would be too easy to sneer at the fairy stories of Miss Enid Blyton. They fulfil a need at the infant stage, and provide easy reading matter for many, less-able juniors. The stories of Toyland are workmanlike productions with a sound, if often insipid, moral basis. But it would have been a pity if a form which has produced such imaginative creations as Kingsley's Water Babies, MacDonald's North Wind, and Tolkien's Bilbo, the Hobbit, had petered out in little Noddy. Miss Mary Norton is not strictly comparable with Lewis. Apart from her initial promise, her stories are sober and realistic studies, owing little to

symbolism and fancy. In the symbolic romance for children Lewis has had no recent competitor.

Unless, that is, one includes two writers whose books, though not written primarily for children, make a great appeal to the older and more intelligent among them. They are J.R.R. Tolkien and T.H. White. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings has already been discussed,³² and, in general, its superiority to 'The Chronicles of Narnia' is clear. T.H. White's The Sword in the Stone is not so easily compared. In moral integrity, variety of invention and colourful setting it has the same powerful appeal. In place of poetic symbolism it offers passages of hilarious humour and moments of intense pathos. Tolkien and White appeal especially to the ages between thirteen and maturity, which is precisely the age group to which Lewis's stories are likely (with some exceptions) to make the least appeal. The combination of young schoolchildren with 'fairies' is too much for boys in the thirteen-seventeen age group. The 'Chronicles' of Narnia are likely to make their strongest appeal to children between seven and twelve, and to adults. To sympathetic readers, of whatever age, they have something unique to offer.

CHAPTER XIX

LEWIS AND CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM

It is obvious that Lewis's fiction, and his closely related literary criticism, are not in the main stream of contemporary literature and often, in fact, run counter to it. In his role of a 'spokesman of Old Western Culture',¹ Lewis is a reactionary on several fronts. Although he sides with the literary critics to oppose 'scientism' and the increasing threat of a materialist technocracy, he has also expressed strong fears about the trends and pretensions of literary criticism itself. In his essay 'Lilies that Fester',² he views with alarm the trend towards a 'Cherientocracy' - a coalition, for their mutual benefit, of the Managerial Class and 'the unofficial, self-appointed aristocracy of the Cultured'.³ Moreover, he does not share many of the emphases and assumptions of contemporary criticism, particularly those derived from the 'realist' novel, and has recently coined the expression 'Vigilant criticism'⁴ for what he regards as the over rigorous and dogmatic technique of the school of F.R. Leavis.

Since a better understanding of Lewis's fiction depends partly on the use of appropriate critical instruments, some account of the differences between Lewis and the Vigilants is required. There is no suggestion here that, if Lewis's fiction were to be evaluated by criteria nearer his own, it would assume a major importance in modern literature. The limitations, to be discussed in Chapter XXI, would be unaffected. It is suggested, however, that contemporary criticism is in danger of so

limiting its criteria and canon that the romance, as written by Lewis, and other writers discussed earlier, may be either neglected or unduly scorned.

In contrasting Lewis's practice and theory with contemporary criticism there are two difficulties. First, the issues involved are important, comprehensive and subtle, so that, in a brief account, one can only map them out. Secondly, whereas the primary intention here is to illuminate Lewis's fiction, in an adequate discussion of these issues his fiction would have a marginal place.

The differences between Lewis and Leavis himself may be broadly indicated by suggesting that whereas Lewis is Christian, 'romantic' (in a sense to be defined) and eclectic, Leavis is agnostic, anti-romantic (again, in a particular sense) and rigorous. These terms need careful definition and, naturally, some qualification.

The constant references to Lewis's beliefs in the preceding chapters have been required to elucidate and define his fiction, not to equate its literary merit with its orthodoxy. Indeed, the distinction between literature and belief is one which Lewis himself, without compromising his commitment to Christianity, is anxious to preserve. Naturally, he has responded to Christian writers in a special way, but he has enjoyed and been influenced by writers of varying outlook. He states his attitude to the 'problem of belief' quite clearly in An Experiment in Criticism:

In good reading there ought to be no 'problem of belief'. I read Lucretius and Dante at a time when (by and large) I agreed with Lucretius. I have read them since I came (by

and large) to agree with Dante. I cannot find that this has much altered my experience, or at all altered my evaluation, of either.⁵

This makes the severance between aesthetics and belief too absolute - in his latest book Lewis is offering a corrective and, as often happens in controversy, overplays his hand - but at least it shows that he has no wish to tie artistic standards to a particular creed or code. Leavis's strictures in Revaluations against an explicit 'Christian discrimination' would be perfectly acceptable to him.

This liberal attitude is generally borne out by his literary criticism. His enjoyment of William Morris, and H.G. Wells, is not dependant on their religious convictions, or lack of them. Shelley was, technically, an atheist, and Dryden, technically, a Christian. Lewis much prefers Shelley. Again, when Lewis's appreciation of a writer obviously derives strength from shared beliefs, as with Spenser and Milton, this can be taken into account. A declared bias is preferable to an affectation of impartiality.

The agnostic critic is quite as capable as any other, of course, of making a just estimate of the artistic merit of Lewis's fiction - provided he does not insist on tacitly marking it down wherever it fails to square with criteria drawn exclusively from the practice of liberal-agnostic novelists. Not all contemporary critics are agnostic, of course. Empson has recently complained of a resurgence of Christianity in literary circles.⁶

Lewis's particular kind of 'romanticism' is, perhaps, more decisively out of fashion. The term has several connotations, which

Lewis, in his preface to The Pilgrim's Regress, has carefully examined. In distinguishing these 'romanticisms' he indicates his own preferences very usefully.

He has always detested the Romanticism which indulges abnormal, and anti-natural moods - the macabre, torture and death, (though he seems to have felt its fascination immediately prior to his discovery of Phantastes). He is equally antipathetic to the Egoism and Subjectivism of Rousseau's Confessions and Byron's Don Juan. Elsewhere, he provides a theological justification for this dislike by saying that

To the Christian his own temperament and experience, as mere fact, and as merely his, are of no value or importance whatsoever:....they are the medium through which, or the position from which, something universally profitable appeared to him.⁷

In these two dislikes, Lewis is not particularly at variance with contemporary taste or fashion.

For a third romanticism, the 'Romanesque', which he defines as 'the art dealing with "Titanic" characters, emotions strained beyond the common pitch, and high-flown sentiments or codes of honour'⁸ he has an acquired taste. He mentions Sidney and Rostand, and one may add his liking for E.R. Eddison's The Worm Ouroboros, with its 'strange blend of renaissance luxury and northern hardness'.⁹ Reepicheep is a creation in this vein, but the 'Romanesque' is not a central factor in Lewis's fiction and may be passed over.

A fourth Romanticism, the revolt against civilisation in favour of the primitive, (pseudo-Ossian, D.H. Lawrence, Whitman and Wagner are mentioned), is too complex, says Lewis, to permit of generalisation.

Some of these writers have appealed to him, others have not; revolt takes many different forms. What sharply distinguishes Lewis from Leavis, here, is Lewis's implied depreciation of D.H. Lawrence, confirmed by slighting references elsewhere. Many of Lewis's admirers will share Anne Ridler's regret that he has spoken, without qualification, of 'going down' to Lawrence's world.¹⁰

A 'solemn and enthusiastic'¹¹ sensibility to natural objects, as in The Prelude, is obviously part of Lewis's own experience, and is reflected in his fiction. In the 'twenties he was annoyed by the American 'Humanists', who depreciated Wordsworth, but he has his own reservations about nature mysticism, and does not over value this kind of Romanticism.

It is, in fact, Lewis's lifelong love for the 'marvellous' which makes him a 'Romantic' in a sense un congenial to contemporary criticism. He defines this aspect of Romanticism as follows:

The marvellous is 'romantic', provided it does not make part of the believed religion. Thus magicians, ghosts, fairies, witches, dragons, nymphs, and dwarfs are 'romantic'; angels less so. Greek gods are 'romantic' in Mr. James Stephens or Mr. Maurice Hewlett; not so in Homer and Sophocles. In this sense Malory, Boiardo, Ariosto, Spenser, Tasso, Mrs. Radcliffe, Shelley, Coleridge, William Morris, and Mr. E.R. Eddison are 'romantic' authors.¹¹

All these authors, with the possible exception of Mrs. Radcliffe, have appealed to Lewis, though not exclusively for their provision of the marvellous. Shelley and Morris have given him more than the marvels of romantic narrative and the exuberant felicity of imagined worlds. Yet, in a quite narrow sense, the 'marvellous' is a principle element in Lewis's fiction, as the preceding account of Narnia has perhaps made

clear. It is not, moreover, a mere survival from nineteenth century poetry, but has a much broader basis. Lewis's examples of the marvellous element in literature are drawn from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the twentieth century, as well as from the nineteenth. The 'marvellous', it is true, figures disproportionately in the authors Lewis has praised and emulated, but he can find kindred spirits of the first rank in almost every century. Only, perhaps, in the twentieth century has the 'marvellous' been driven into the by-waters of the prose romance, where it has found a congenial home with science-fiction. There Lewis has found much to interest him in writers such as Wells, Lindsay, Stapledon and A.C. Clarke.

Lewis's liking for the 'marvellous' is partly tempered by his classical education - though his liking for the classics is of a rather 'romantic' kind. He rates the value of classical studies very highly, but believes that English literature has drawn on the classics for matter only, finding its Form and Spirit in a native, romantic strain. His account of this tendency shows, by its warm tone, where his own sympathies lie.

Our mother surrendered more to Old French than to the classics, but she did not surrender completely: even in the eleventh century she had a spirit of her own capable of transforming and assimilating what she received, modifying its gallantries with a homelier affection, hardening its heroisms, neglecting its ironies, broadening its humour, deepening its pathos, shading its marvels with a more awe-inspiring obscurity....¹²

Lewis's Romanticism is evident in all his literary criticism.

The Allegory of Love showed his interest in Guillaume de Lorris, the early Chaucer and Spenser; Rehabilitations his liking for Shelley and

Morris. His preface to George MacDonald: An Anthology dwelt upon myth, and the 'mythopoeic' art; his essay 'On Stories' revealed his taste for the prose romance; and the address 'On Three Ways of Writing for Children' contained a defence of 'fantasy'. All these romantic themes are assembled and developed in An Experiment in Criticism (1961), which provides a convenient general statement of Lewis's distinctive approach to literature.

In myth (chap.V) he finds a value 'independent of its embodiment in any literary work'. A good myth introduces us to 'a permanent object of contemplation - more like a thing than a narration - which works upon us by its peculiar flavour or quality, rather as a smell or a chord does'. We do not identify ourselves with its characters, but 'the pattern of their movements has a profound relevance to our own life'. Myth is fantastic (i.e. 'deals with impossibles and preternaturals'), is grave in tone and has a numinous quality.¹³

Some modern stories have the 'mythical quality' as, for example, the plots of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Wells's The Door in the Wall, and the Ents and Lothlorien in The Lord of the Rings. Some 'literary' readers lack a taste for myth, and all 'unliterary' readers are without it. Myth makes 'Event' almost independent of a particular set of words, but those who read merely for the story fail to enjoy it.

Lewis's analysis is useful in two ways: it goes far to explain his own response to Wagner, George MacDonald, the early Wells and David Lindsay, and provides a fruitful approach to romances like his own. One must approach a work like Perelandra with a receptiveness to description

and narration rather than to characterization. Only so can one be introduced to 'a permanent object of contemplation', such as the paradisaical quality of the planet, or discover in the pattern of Ransom's adventures 'a profound relevance to our own life'. The kind of method required has recently been employed by Bernard Bergonzi in his study of the early H.G. Wells, as summarised in Chapter X.¹⁴

The element of the marvellous, or fantastic, in myth leads Lewis to consider next the various meanings of 'fantasy' (chap.VI), where he is concerned to free the literary form from its unfortunate association with a term in morbid psychology. His definition of a 'fantasy' provides another insight into his reading tastes:

As a literary term a fantasy means any narrative that deals with impossibles and preternaturals. The Ancient Mariner, Gulliver, Erewhon, The Wind in the Willows, The Witch of Atlas, Jurgen, The Crook of Gold, the Vera Historia, Micromegas, Flatland and Apuleius' Metamorphoses are fantasies. Of course they are very heterogeneous in spirit and purpose.¹⁵

Some of these works have been touched on in the preceding pages.

As a psychological term, 'fantasy' describes two degrees of morbidity; either sheer 'Delusion', or the repeated and injurious entertainment of imaginative constructions - waking dreams of 'military or erotic triumphs, of power or grandeur, even of popularity'. Lewis calls this last activity 'Morbid Castle-building'.

But 'fantasy' may also refer to the moderate recourse to reverie in which we all indulge, and which is sometimes a prelude to real achievement. This 'Normal Castle-building' may be either 'Egoistic' or 'Disinterested'. In the first type the day-dreamer is always the hero, in

the second he is content to be the spectator. Lewis's account of how he has beguiled wakeful nights by entertaining himself with 'invented landscapes' immediately brings Narnia to mind. Children, he says, are also given to feigning whole worlds and people. He concludes that for the day-dreamer with talent there is 'an easy transition from disinterested castle-building to literary invention'.

Reading may also be divided into two kinds. Some reading is merely 'conducted egoistic castle-building', and there are stories which cater solely for this - 'success stories, certain love stories, and certain stories of high life'. Readers limited to this motive have 'no objection to monstrous psychology and preposterous coincidence. But they demand rigorously an observance of such natural laws as they know and a general ordinariness....'¹⁶ The day-dream must be the sort of thing that might, conceivably, happen to them.

For this reason they are precisely the kind of people who do not like literary fantasy, which they regard as 'silly':

...the more completely a man's reading is a form of egoistic castle-building, the more he will demand a certain superficial realism, and the less he will like the fantastic. He wishes to be deceived, at least momentarily, and nothing can deceive unless it bears a plausible resemblance to reality. Disinterested castle-building may dream of nectar and ambrosia, of fairy bread and honey dew; the egoistic sort dreams rather of bacon and eggs or steak.¹⁷

Those who, like Lewis, place the social-psychological novel of George Eliot, Henry James, Conrad and D.H. Lawrence in a category of supreme, almost exclusive importance, may conceivably be led by Lewis's rehabilitation of myth and fantasy to reconsider the value of these forms

His subsequent discussion of 'Realisms' (chap.VII) is much more controversial, but at least establishes that the 'marvellous', or, more modestly, the 'exceptional', has played a more essential role in great literature than much contemporary criticism would suggest.

Lewis distinguishes presentational realism from realism of content. In the first we find 'sharply imagined detail'; in the second probability, or 'truth to life'. The two can exist in isolation. Medieval literature provides fantastic stories full of presentational realism; in Constant's Adolphe and Racine's dramas the realism of content carries complete conviction, but realism of presentation is quite excluded;

The two realisms are quite independent. You can get that of presentation without that of content, as in medieval romance; or that of content without that of presentation, as in French (and some Greek) tragedy; or both together, as in War and Peace; or neither, as in the Furioso or Rasselas or Candide.¹⁸

(The last category is rather puzzling, but appears to include works which, unlike Racine's plays or Constant's Adolphe, handle human sentiments or passions detached from a probable context.)

This brings Lewis to his main point, and squarely contrasts his canons of art with those of contemporary criticism. He believes that all four ways of writing can produce masterpieces. The dominant taste, he alleges, 'demands realism of content. And usually realism of presentation as well'. The masterpieces of nineteenth century fiction have trained us to expect it.

No one that I know of has indeed laid down in so many words that a fiction cannot be fit for adult and civilised reading unless it represents life as we have all found it to be, in experience. But some such assumption seems to lurk tacitly

in the background of much criticism and literary discussion. We feel it in the widespread neglect or disparagement of the romantic, the idyllic, and the fantastic, and the readiness to stigmatize instances of these as 'escapism'. We feel it when books are praised for being 'comments on', or 'reflections' (or more deplorably 'slices') of life. We notice also that 'truth to life' is held to have a claim on literature that overrides all other considerations.¹⁹

If we locate the value of a literary masterpiece in its 'truth to life', and equate this with fidelity to 'The sort of thing that happens', we are faced with a difficulty, Lewis maintains. Middlemarch and War and Peace satisfy this criterion, but works like Oedipus Tyrannus and Great Expectations are based on extremely improbable situations. Moreover, before the nineteenth century, most works were of this kind. The heroism of Achilles or Roland, the burden of Orestes, the holiness of the saint, the fun in The Reeve's Tale were related because they were exceptional and improbable. Hesitating to eliminate these works from our list of masterpieces (against the judgment of past generations) we may emphasize their possibility, but this is a desperate stratagem:

For those who tell the story and those (including ourselves) who receive it are not thinking about any such generality as human life. Attention is fixed on something concrete and individual; on the more than ordinary terror, splendour, wonder, pity, or absurdity of a particular case. These, not for any light they might throw hereafter on the life of man, but for their own sake, are what matters.²⁰

Subtle problems are raised by this argument, problems which emerged in Lewis's earlier controversy with E.M.W. Tillyard (later published as The Personal Heresy). Is human life a generality, and are terror and splendour concrete? Lewis is not suggesting that a person is less real

or immediate than a sentiment or feeling. What he is suggesting is that 'truths to life', in literature, are mental constructions that come after the immediate experience of reading, and are of doubtful validity and utility. He is, in fact, extending to all literary criticism the kind of corrective offered to the 'character' school of Shakespearean criticism by Miss Caroline Spurgeon and Professor Wilson Knight.

(Lewis's own essay, 'Hamlet: the Prince or the Poem' is a rather extreme example.) Briefly, Lewis's argument here, and later, is that the value of literature must be sought in the actual reading, and not in some permanent acquisition of wisdom which may be transferred to the issues of real life ('not for any light they might throw hereafter on the life of man'). He does not deny that some literature, incidentally, may have such a practical value. Finally, when Lewis says that we read 'for the sake' of 'terror, splendour' etc., the average modern reader will probably reply that we read 'for our own sake'. I.A. Richards has provided the most thorough statement of this psychological approach in a theory which defines the value of reading in terms of a re-organization of sensibility. Lewis is still not satisfied. He finds the essential value in the contemplation or 'enjoyment' of some object outside ourselves. Partly a matter of temperament, this divergence of opinion ultimately turns on a philosophical issue. The Supernaturalist (whether Christian or Platonist, and Lewis is both) pictures his experience as the contemplation of ideal forms. The Naturalist, with varying degrees of stress on individual psychology and society, pictures it as some change in himself.

Lewis concludes that most stories cannot be forced into a radically realistic theory of literature. We can, therefore, enjoy fantasies (as defined above) with a clear conscience; they are less deceptive than many stories that have realism of content. All reading is a form of 'escapism', and we can escape from real responsibilities into realistic fiction just as thoroughly as into some literary divertissement.

For those who dismiss fantasy and fairy stories as childish he has two answers. First, the greatest examples were never addressed to children at all, and, secondly, there are childish elements in our reading which should be retained:

...who in his senses would not keep, if he could, that facility of suspending disbelief, that unspoiled appetite, that readiness to wonder, to pity, and to admire? The process of growing up is to be valued for what we gain, not for what we lose.²¹

At this point in his argument, Lewis, through his stress on plot, invention and the marvellous, has clearly disclosed the tastes and principles which determine his intense interest in, and high estimate of the romance. It is an interest, and an estimate, shared by few contemporary authors and critics outside his own circle at Oxford. Even his former pupil, John Wein, still an ardent admirer, cannot accept Lewis's evaluation of the romance, or share the enthusiasm of Lewis's Oxford colleagues and friends for its practitioners:

The literary household gods were George MacDonald, William Morris (selectively), and an almost forgotten writer named E.R. Edgison, whose work seemed to me to consist of a meaningless proliferation of fantastic incident. All these writers had one thing in common: they invented. Lewis considered 'fine fabling' an essential part of literature, and never lost a chance to push any author, from Spenser to Rider Haggard, who could be called a romancer.

Once, unable to keep silence at what seemed to me a monstrous partiality, I attacked the whole basis of this view; a writer's task, I maintained, was to lay bare the human heart, and this could not be done if he were continually taking refuge in the spinning of fanciful webs. Lewis retorted with a theory that, since the Creator had seen fit to build a universe and set it in motion, it was the duty of the human artist to create as lavishly as possible in his turn. The romancer, who invents a whole world, is worshipping God more effectively than the mere realist who analyses that which lies about him. Looking back across fourteen years, I can hardly believe that Lewis said anything so manifestly absurd as this, and perhaps I misunderstood him; but that, at any rate, is how my memory reports the incident.²²

Wain's recollection of Lewis's theory is given a partial corroboration by the address 'On Three Ways of Writing for Children', quoted in Chapter XVII, for there Lewis approves Tolkien's view that in fairy stories man 'most fully exercises his function as "sub-creator"'.²³

'Invention' and 'analysis', so differently esteemed by Wain and Lewis, are not, of course, absolutely opposed. The wildest romancer has to draw on elements from his own experience; the most meticulous recorder of contemporary life makes his own synthesis. The difference is one of emphasis. The realistic novelist demands fidelity to observable social and psychological conditions, tending to regard departures from such fidelity as an abdication of responsibility. The romancer insists on a creative freedom which, he feels, allows a clearer and more intense expression of the abiding elements in our experience.

Wain's rejection of the theory that the romancer, or 'inventor', is 'worshipping God more effectively than the mere realist who analyses that which lies about him' is natural and justifiable. One could make out a case for the realist on religious grounds by demonstrating that

he often exhibits qualities of humility and compassion more effectively than the romancer. (This is a point which is discussed in the comparison between Lewis and the Catholic novelists in the next chapter.)

This is not to say that religious convictions are unrelated to differing appreciations of romancer and realist. It certainly seems, when one has examined the work of MacDonald, Chesterton, Williams and Lewis, that vital metaphysical beliefs are conducive to an appreciation of the romance.

Whilst Lewis's depreciation of the 'mere realist' is rightly objected to by Wain, it is not the realist novel that needs defending to-day. Contemporary trends in sociology have, if anything, strengthened its position. It is likely to remain the dominant kind of fiction in the foreseeable future and, undoubtedly, Lewis underestimates its virtues. He reveals, in Surprised by Joy, how he came to 'acquire' a taste for the nineteenth century novel from his friend, Arthur,²⁴ and, one suspects, the taste is still not deeply ingrained. Nevertheless, it is Lewis's emphasis on neglected virtues of the romance which needs appreciation by the majority of contemporary readers.

The main bar to appreciation of the romance has been the low opinion of Story held by many novelists and critics. E.M. Forster regretted that Story was a necessary part of the novel, and spoke of it as a 'low, stivistic form'.²⁵ Henry James called it the 'spoiled child of art'.²⁶ Lewis realises, but regrets, this widespread depreciation:

It is astonishing how little attention critics have paid to Story considered in itself. Granted the story, the style in which it should be told, the order in which it

should be disposed, and (above all) the delineation of the characters, have been abundantly discussed. But the Story itself, the series of imagined events, is nearly always passed over in silence, or else treated exclusively as affording opportunities for the delineation of character. There are indeed three notable exceptions. Aristotle in the Poetics constructed a theory of Greek tragedy which puts Story in the centre and relegates character to a strictly subordinate place. In the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, Boccaccio and others developed an allegorical theory of Story to explain the ancient myths. And in our own time Jung and his followers have produced their doctrine of Archetypes [sic]. Apart from these three attempts the subject has been left almost untouched, and this has had a curious result. Those forms of literature in which Story exists merely as a means to something else - for example, the novel of manners where the story is there for the sake of the characters, or the criticism of social conditions - have had full justice done to them; but those forms in which everything else is there for the sake of the story have been given little serious attention. Not only have they been despised, as if they were fit only for children, but even the kind of pleasure they give has, in my opinion, been misunderstood. It is the second injustice which I am most anxious to remedy. Perhaps the pleasure of Story comes as low in the scale as modern criticism puts it. I do not think so myself, but on that point we may agree to differ. Let us, however, try to see clearly what kind of pleasure it is; or rather, what different kinds of pleasure it may be.²⁷

Lewis retains a child-like delight in a good story, but does not rate highly the value of the excitement which arises from a succession of events by the mere 'alternate tension and appeasement of imagined anxiety'. What he does value is the 'qualitative difference' between the imaginative dangers that the romance provides. In King Solomon's Mines, what grips his attention, in the crucial episode in the tomb of kings, is 'the whole sense of the deathly (quite a different thing from the simple danger of death) - the cold, the silence, and the surrounding faces of the ancient, the crowned and sceptred, dead'. This effect, he says, is unique: other dangers 'strike different chords from the imagine-

tion'. In the essay 'On Stories', from which these quotations are drawn, he provides examples from the fiction of Wells, Masfield, Lindsay, Poe, Homer, Tolkien, De la Mare and Eddison. Some of these examples have been quoted earlier; others abound in his own fiction.

Lewis claims that plot is a necessary means of striking such imaginative 'chords'. There is a sense, he admits, in which the romance cannot compete with poetry in the evocation of imaginative 'sensations', but not all readers respond to poetry, and in one respect romance comes 'where poetry will never come'. The tension of theme and plot in the story, in one sense its weakness, brings it closer to real life, for, in life, too, 'we are always trying to catch in our net of successive moments something that is not successive'.²⁸

Of the narrative 'net' itself, Lewis has surprisingly little to say in his essay 'On Stories', and even An Experiment in Criticism deals with it in general terms. This examination of Lewis's romances has attempted a more particular analysis by drawing attention to the use of the established patterns of the quest, the battle, the voyage, and the cycle of death and rebirth. One distinctive pattern of the romance, the 'eucatastrophe', (discussed in Chapter XVIII), provides, perhaps, the best example of the way in which a narrative 'net' can capture distinctive 'sensations'.

Lewis, if one is to accept the account of the origin of his stories already quoted and discussed, always works from imaginative 'sensation' to plot, and not from plot to imaginative 'sensation'. He is quite emphatic about this:

One thing I am sure of. All my seven Narnian books, and my three science fiction books, began with seeing pictures in my head. At first they were not a story, just pictures. ²⁹

It would be interesting to hear more of the process whereby Lewis evolves a plot for his pictures. It would also be interesting to discover whether other writers of romance create their stories in the same way. One thing is fairly certain. Realistic novelists do not work in this way. Some novelists, like Turgenev, begin with a character, some, like Henry James, with a germinal situation, and this determines the whole form and spirit of their fiction. The romance and the novel have different origins.

In defence of the romance, it may be said, then, that where a strong original inspiration exists, the resultant story avoids that inconsequent succession of events, that merely arithmetical 'and then - and then' which so dismayed E.M. Forster. It exhibits that 'functional involvement of successive events', which is Susanne Langer's definition of rhythm. ³⁰ So does a good novel, of course. The difference lies in whether the co-ordinating power resides in character, social analysis or imaginative 'sensation'.

For the reader to whom the romance appeals strongly, the reasons for this appeal are of secondary importance, but Lewis's reference to Jung's theories warrants some discussion.

Jung's discussion of archetypes and the collective unconscious is of great interest to the reader of Lewis's romances in that it uses other criteria than those of the naturalistic novel. The romance, Jung perceives, is a more 'primitive' form than the modern novel, drawing

more directly on the primordial elements of the psyche. It does not always choose to project these elements in human terms, and, when it does, rarely provides rounded characters in a realistic setting.

The theory of archetypes suggests why traditional patterns of narrative - those 'nets' to capture non-temporal realities - meet the needs of such writers as Lewis: quest and pilgrimage, disguise and discovery, death and re-birth, are objective-correlatives ('projections' in Jungian terms) of permanent structures and forces of the psyche. Speaking of the legend of the Seven Sleepers, for instance, Jung asserts that 'the story gives expression to parallel processes in his [the reader's] own unconscious which in that way are integrated with consciousness again'.³¹

This therapeutic value no doubt accompanies such themes as the exploration of the underworld (The Silver Chair), the threefold harmony of the races of Malacandra, and Ransom's experiences on the summit of Tai Harendrinar. 'The mountain,' Jung writes, 'stands for the goal of the pilgrimage and ascent, hence it often has the psychological meaning of the self'.³²

One cannot, however, find every key to Lewis's romances in Jung's theory of archetypes. The archetypes, as Jung himself admits, are 'patterns of instinctual behaviour', which draw their imagery from cultural and traditional sources. Literary criticism is primarily concerned with the images themselves, and only secondarily with their origin. Again, Lewis would not accept Jung's view of 'transcendental intuitions....as projections, that is, as psychic contents that were

extrapolated in metaphysical space and hypostasized'.³³ He regards them, rather, as broken and imperfect fragments of divine revelation, and resists any attempt to reduce 'numinous' experience to purely human terms. As regards the archetypes, Lewis, unlike Jung, is a Realist (in the medieval sense) and a Platonist.

It may be that a high value can be placed on 'fable' only by those writers who subscribe to some metaphysical system of belief. This would partially explain the distaste for it of the liberal agnostic such as Forster, and the high value given to it both by Aristotle and by the Christian allegorists. This value is enhanced when the metaphysical system is Christianity, the most historical of religions. For the Christian such as Lewis (as also to a large extent for the Jew), faith rests on what God has done in His mighty acts and wonders, rather than on philosophical speculations on His nature. Above all, the events centred in Christ - the Incarnation, Passion, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Second Coming of the primitive kerygma - are regarded as having unique and supreme significance. In them, event and meaning are inseparable. Any plot which adumbrates these events, or reveals their counterpart in Christian experience, or has some other vital relation to them is, therefore, capable of immense significance. From this arises the interest shown in narrative by Lewis and Williams, Dorothy Sayers and Tolkien.³⁴

It may be said, in conclusion, that in Lewis's romances the web of events in which the images are captured has in itself a symbolic value, and is continuously related to that hierarchical world which is the background of all his thought.

This analysis of story has served, incidentally, to show how Lewis defends the value of traditional and popular aspects of literature. It is a task which he considers very necessary, as the final chapters of An Experiment in Criticism make plain.

As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, Lewis's taste is eclectic, not rigorist. He is more concerned to distinguish literature from ephemeral works than to erect fences within literature itself. In reading, he does not hark after 'truths to life', but endeavours to suspend disbelief, to preserve appetite and wonder. He appeals to Matthew Arnold's plea for a 'free play of mind'.

The 'Vigilants', as Lewis calls the Leavis school of critics, also appeal to Arnold, but stress a different aspect of his teaching. They carry forward his war with the 'Philistines', and his replacement of dogma by culture. Again, the difference is that between Old Western, and Twentieth Century, Man. As literary criticism tends to fill a gap left by religion and philosophy, it becomes more earnest, strenuous and rigorist. It does more than develop a conscience; it assumes the solemn mantle of the sole guardian of culture. For its practitioners, it becomes almost a 'way of life'.

Lewis cannot take it quite so 'seriously'. As long ago as 1939 he wrote in Rehabilitations:

The Christian will take literature a little less seriously than the cultured Pagan: he will feel less uneasy with a purely hedonistic standard for at least many kinds of work. The unbeliever is always apt to make a kind of religion of his aesthetic experiences; he feels ethically irresponsible, perhaps, but he braces his strength to receive responsibilities of another kind which seem to the Christian quite illusory.

Directed largely against aesthetes like Pater, who 'prepared for pleasure as if it were martyrdom', this is only partly applicable to the Vigilants. By 1961 Lewis needed to switch his attack to a rather different front.

His new attack arises from his analysis of readers into the 'few' and the 'many', the literary and the unliterary. Briefly, he believes that the 'many' are not to be blamed for 'liking' the wrong things, when, in fact, they do not 'like' reading itself in a way at all comparable with the liking of the 'few'. It is more correct to say that they have no taste than to accuse them of bad taste. For them, reading is a marginal activity.

He cannot, therefore, identify the literary Philistine with the Philistine as such. Experience shows this simple transfer of judgment to be untrue:

I have a notion that these 'many' include certain people who are equal or superior to some of the few in psychological health, in moral virtue, practical prudence, good manners, and general adaptability. And we all know very well that we, the literary, include no small percentage of the ignorant, the caddish, the stunted, the warped, and the truculent. With the hasty and wholesale apartheid of those who ignore this we must have nothing to do.³⁶

In his second chapter, Lewis notes a danger in the study of English Literature as a 'subject' regarded as meritorious. In particular, the young agnostic of Puritan descent tends to apply to literature 'all the scruples, the rigorism, the self-examination, the distrust of pleasure, which his forebears applied to the spiritual life; and perhaps soon all the intolerance and self-righteousness'.³⁷

In his eighth chapter, 'On Misreading by the Literary', Lewis reverts to this subject. Nowadays, authors are 'reverenced as teachers and insufficiently appreciated as artists'.³⁸ In a subtle form, the literary expect 'truths' about 'life' from literature. Some derive from tragedies a 'tragic view' of life which Lewis regards as 'wishful moonshine'. Real miseries rarely arise from flaws in character, are not clothed in purple, and seldom close in grandeur and finality. The dramatists knowingly chose the atypical to secure a particular effect; critics sometimes forget this. Comedy is no less, and no more, true to life than tragedy. The world of farce is as 'ideal' as that of pastoral. The Miller's Tale is no more realistic than Troilus. Every work of art makes its appropriate abstraction - it is poemia (something made) as well as logos (something said):

One of the prime achievements in every good fiction has nothing to do with truth or philosophy or a Weltanschauung at all. It is the triumphant adjustment of two different kinds of order. On the one hand, the events (the mere plot) have their chronological and causal order, that which they would have in real life. On the other, all the scenes or other divisions of the work must be related to each other according to principles of design, like the masses in a picture or the passages in a symphony.³⁹

This is an aspect of literature which Lewis has often felt the need to stress. In 1956, for instance, in an address on Sir Walter Scott, he noted that 'He was not (save very incidentally) saying something about the world but making an objet d'art of a particular kind'.⁴⁰

Lewis feels that this aesthetic aspect of Literature is in particular danger of being neglected by the increasing numbers who are set to study English as a subject at the Universities. It is easier to discuss

a writer's views than to assess his artistic merit:

Hence literature becomes for them a religion, a philosophy, a school of ethics, a psychotherapy, a sociology - anything rather than a collection of works of art.⁴¹

(The tendency of modern literature to become the 'religion' of the young academic was, it is interesting to note, one of the main themes of a recent series of radio talks by Mr. Graham Hough.⁴²) Lewis believes that the 'philosophies of life' derived from literature often bear a dubious relation to the work of art and tell us more of the reader than of the artist.

Returning more directly to the Vigilant school of criticism, Lewis then complains that their advocacy of 'critical reading', unless carefully qualified, tends to inhibit natural responses. A work of art, he points out, must be 'received' before it can be evaluated. Excessive suspicion of bad writing may make an immature reader impervious to good. If he has been forewarned about the weaknesses of Shelley, or Lamb, or Kipling, he will find it easy to discover faults and resist seduction. Yet the history of literary criticism shows that comparative judgments within the pale of literature are notoriously uncertain in comparison with judgments as to what is clearly outside the pale.

Lewis believes that wherever we find people reading, and returning, to a work with the disinterested, obedient, attention he has defined earlier, we should beware of pronouncing it unworthy of serious discussion. This would have the desirable effect of reducing the number of literary 'dethronements':

These dethronements are a great waste of energy. Their acrimony produces heat at the expense of light. They do

not improve anyone's capacity for good reading. The real way of mending a man's taste is not to denigrate his present favourites but to teach him how to enjoy something better.⁴³

He admits that his own system would lead to a reduction in the amount of purely evaluative criticism, but believes that, by and large, this would be beneficial. He finds support for this belief in Matthew Arnold's view that the important thing is 'to see the object as in itself it really is', and that the best value judgment is that 'which almost insensibly forms itself in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge'. Accepting Arnold's pronouncement that 'The great art of criticism is to get oneself out of the way and to let humanity decide',⁴⁴ he maintains that he himself has learned far more from editors, commentators, lexicographers and literary historians than from evaluative criticism.

In analysing his own literary development, Lewis carries this denigration of evaluative criticism too far, forgetting, perhaps, that it may cultivate in the average reader standards which Lewis had the ability and opportunity to develop for himself. His subsequent critique of the assumptions of the Vigilant school of critics is more salutary, and indicates the differences between their view of literature and his own so well that it warrants lengthier quotation:

To them criticism is a form of social and ethical hygiene ... They labour to promote the sort of literary experience that they think good; but their conception of what is good in literature makes a seamless whole with their total conception of the good life. Their whole scheme of values, though never, I believe, set out en regle, is engaged in every critical act... Nothing is for them a matter of taste. They admit no such realm of experience as the aesthetic. There is for them no specifically

literary good. A work, or a single passage, cannot for them be good in any sense unless it is good simply, unless it reveals attitudes which are essential elements in the good life. You must therefore accept their (implied) conception of the good life if you are to accept their criticism. That is, you can admire them as critics only if you also revere them as sages. And before we revere them as sages we should need to see their whole system of values set out, not as an instrument of criticism but standing on its own feet and offering its credentials - commending itself to its proper judges, to moralists, moral theologians, psychologists, sociologists or philosophers.⁴⁵

As far as Lewis is concerned, the Vigilants are making assumptions which lack universal validity and are likely to prove restrictive rather than creative. They are pruning the already select ranks of literary masterpieces by limited or inappropriate criteria. The territory they stake out will not even accommodate the acknowledged masterpieces of our European heritage. It certainly fails to accommodate many simple, but legitimate pleasures of the common reader.

A paradoxical truth emerges from the contrast between the critical opinions of Dr. Leavis and Dr. Lewis. The 'committed' artist may be a liberal critic; the humanist may have dogmatic ideas about literature. Lewis, whose fiction is shot through and through with his religious convictions, has an eclectic taste. He does not need to share a writer's assumptions in order to enjoy his creations. Leavis, for whom literature is almost an ultimate value, a way of life, is, necessarily, more fastidious. For Lewis a new aesthetic experience offers not a new insight to integrate into one's soul, or, finding it wanting, to reject, but a window on the world. In reading literature, 'we seek an enlargement of our being';⁴⁶

We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own. We are not content to be Leibnitzian monads. We demand windows. Literature as Logos is a series of windows, even of doors. One of the things we feel after reading a great work is, 'I have got out'. Or from another point of view, 'I have got in'; pierced the shell of some other monad and discovered what it is like inside.⁴⁷

This, incidentally, goes a long way towards explaining Lewis's fondness, in his own reading, and in his own fiction, for imagined worlds and unusual characters. His own eyes are not enough for him; he will see through those of others. 'Even the eyes of all humanity are not enough. I regret that the brutes cannot write books.'⁴⁸

Those who find Lewis's plea for a more catholic criticism congenial, will not view all fiction, particularly the romance, through the spectacles provided by the Vigilants. If Lewis's attack on the demand for realism of content and presentation, and his defence of fantasy, myth and the marvellous in all its forms, have any validity, the way is clear for a sympathetic estimate of his own achievement.

Lewis is shrewd enough to see that for some of his readers this may appear to be the motive behind his whole argument:

Inevitably all this will seem to some an elaborate device for protecting bad books from the castigation they richly deserve. It may even be thought I have an eye to my own darlings or those of my friends. I can't help that. I want to convince people that adverse judgments are always the most hazardous, because I believe this is the truth.⁴⁹

Lewis makes a valid plea for a sympathetic judgment of the Romance. One could, after all, in an unsympathetic mood, view Henry James's adverse comments on the 'baggy monsters' of other novelists as mere propaganda for his own highly selective method, and Eliot's exposure of the limita-

tions of prose as a puff for his own verse drama. Realising, however, that the more a writer's thoughts and feelings are integrated, the more his theory and practice will go hand in hand, we refrain from taking such a jaundiced view.

This review of the issues at stake between Lewis and certain contemporary critics paves the way for an assessment of his fiction in the final chapter. In Chapter XX an attempt is made to throw further light on the content of his fiction by comparing it with the work of Francois Mauriac and Graham Greene.

CHAPTER XX

LEWIS, MAURIAC AND GREENE

So far in this thesis, Lewis's fiction has rarely been compared with the work of contemporary novelists. Such a comparison has largely seemed irrelevant or profitless. His affinities have been shown to lie with writers of the past, or with recent writers whose work lies outside the mainstream of the novel - Charles Williams and J.R.R. Tolkien in particular. Neither the content, form nor style of the vast majority of psycho-sociological novels, aiming at realism of content and presentation, offers a fruitful basis for comparison. When, however, as with Francois Mauriac and Graham Greene, religious themes and beliefs figure in the novel, comparisons, and contrasts of attitude, if not of form, are not only possible, but inviting.

Till We Have Faces, with its comparatively novelistic technique, and its move towards a more inward presentation of human weakness, offers the easiest opportunity for a comparison with the work of the Catholic novelist, Francois Mauriac.

In writing Till We Have Faces it is clear that Lewis set out to present a 'sinner' from the inside, an attempt not made on a large scale in the central phase of his fiction. The viewpoint is shifted to the consciousness of the rebel. Orual is allowed to tell her own story. The sinner is allowed to present her case, to attempt a self-justification, and in so doing she turns the spotlight on what seem to her to be the

inconsistencies and hardness of the 'righteous', of the god of the Grey Mountain and of Psyche herself.

Lewis is adopting, belatedly, a technique which is characteristic of Mauriac and Greene. One is reminded of Therese Desqueyroux' indictment of her family, for example. In so doing, his fiction is brought into contrast with the fiction of these Catholic novelists in a way which throws light on the similarities and, more interesting, the differences between them. These differences go to the very root of their respective themes and treatment.

Till We Have Faces may be most profitably compared with Mauriac's The Knot of Vipers,¹ reckoned by many critics, though not all, as one of his masterpieces. This story of the miser, Louis, an atheist set in a 'righteous' family, is conveyed (like Orual's story) through his own diary, but the correspondence is more than formal, as Mauriac's preface reveals:

The man here depicted was the enemy of his own flesh and blood [Orual is, in effect, the enemy of Redival, Psyche, Bardia]. His heart was eaten up by hatred [Orual has a similar obsessive hatred of the 'gods'] and by avarice [Orual's pursuit of power]. Yet, I would have you, in spite of his baseness, feel pity, and be moved by his predicament....What it was that he truly loved you may discover who have the strength of mind, and the courage, to follow his story to the end, to the ultimate moment of confession which death cut short.

With minor changes this can be applied to Orual herself. So can certain key passages in the novel. Chapter XI, in which the first phase of the miser's self-discovery crystallises, is particularly close. As with Orual, the unaccustomed self-examination required in the setting-down of past experiences throws a growing light on the heart. "It is

....when I study myself....and when I find my mind to be at its clearest, that the temptations of Christianity most torment me," writes Louis. "If I could reach the point of feeling satisfied with myself, I could fight this sense of pressure with more hope of success." A little later he adds, "Don't think that I am painting too pretty a picture of myself. I know my heart - it is a knot of vipers. They have almost squeezed the life out of it. They have beslavered it with their poison, but, underneath their squirming it still beats". Through a similar process of introspection, and through similar spiritual pressures, Orual comes to picture herself, with horror, as a 'swollen spider....gorged with men's stolen lives'². Again, just as the genuine affection of the child Marie has its long-term effect in Louis' final conversion, so Psyche's love at last breaks through Orual's defences.

Mauriac's story has a clearer and more powerful effect than Lewis's because (apart from having a richer psychology) it is presented in contemporary terms, in the solid, bourgeois society of Bordeaux which Mauriac always renders with such obsessive power. Lewis's study, with all its subtlety, is handicapped by its remote setting and sometimes confusing symbolism. Because of them it is unlikely to become a popular work.

A basic difference between Mauriac and Lewis is revealed by their treatment of the 'religious' characters in whose society the sinner is placed. The miser's family, with the exception of the child, Marie, are typical of the pious Pharisees and hypocrites who throng Mauriac's novels. The 'rational and moderate faith' of Hubert, the miser's son, never clashes

with self-interest. The miser's wife dispenses charity to the poor but treats her servants harshly. Their 'lukewarm' Christianity leads them to spy on their father, and they have not enough charity to recognise repentance when they see it.

In contrast, Orual has to deal with a sister whose beauty of character and sacrificial love invest her with an aura of saintliness. Elsewhere, too, Lewis's religious characters (with obvious satirical exceptions) are presented sympathetically. Ransom, the Dibles, 'George MacDonald', the Green Lady, Lucy, and Sarah Green are pious but not hypocrites. Their goodness may not be conveyed in each case with complete success - Ransom, in That Hideous Strength, is too remote and condescending - but in the last four Lewis has considerable success in conveying the quality of saintliness.

Maurice, with engaging frankness, has admitted, 'I nearly always make a mess of my virtuous characters'. In his journal he offers something of a defence by asserting that 'the devil loses his rights over the creature who is stripped before his Creator. And that is why the novel about sanctity will never be written'.³

'Never' is an overstatement, but exceptions are, admittedly, hard to find. One of the few saintly characters in a true novel who sustains critical examination is Alyosha in The Brothers Karamazov. Lewis himself has emphasised that 'bad' characters are easier to depict than 'good', but finds exceptions to this generalization in the otherwise unremarkable novels of George MacDonald.

One rare, and all but unique, merit these novels must be allowed. The 'good' characters are always the best and

most convincing. His saints live; his villains are stagey.⁴

The same cannot always be said of Lewis, but his relative success in depicting saintliness owes a great deal to his early encounter with MacDonald through the discovery of Phantastes.

The difference in this aspect of characterization between Mauriac and Lewis is partly accounted for by a difference in their personal histories. Mauriac, obsessed by the claustrophobic families of his native Landes in whose midst he was reared, is continually concerned with the self-deception of the righteous and the suffering it causes. The Pharisee is a constant figure in his fiction. Mauriac can escape neither the piety nor the pretences of this society which, as an artist, he has had 'imposed' upon him.

In contrast, Lewis's portraits of the Pharisee and hypocrite are fewer, and as frequently drawn from non-Christians as from Christians. The portrait of the Pharisee in the Divorce⁵ is a satire on respectability. It is the philosophical idealists who provide the hypocrites in the Regress. Lewis, it must be remembered, was not oppressed by religion as a child, and, in any case, approached Christian belief and practice afresh, from the outside, after a period of atheism. When he again encountered Christians, both in his books and in real life, he was the more disposed to feel the attraction of the 'severer virtues'.

His account of his response to Chesterton's books is particularly illuminating:

I liked him for his goodness. I can attribute this taste to myself freely (even at that age) because it was a liking for goodness which had nothing to do with any attempt to be good myself. I have never felt the dislike of goodness

which seems to be quite common in better men than me. "Smug" and "smugness" were terms of disapprobation which had never had a place in my critical vocabulary. I lacked the cynic's nose, the odora canum vis or bloodhound sensitivity for hypocrisy or Pharisaism. It was a matter of taste: I felt the "charm" of goodness as a man feels the charm of a woman he has no intention of marrying.⁶

He reacted in the same way to the good men who became his friends, recognising, for example, the moral superiority of Johnson, a company commander who was 'a man of conscience'.⁷ Later, he was fortunate, at Oxford, to find attractive friends who 'believed, and acted on the belief, that veracity, public spirit, chastity, and sobriety were obligatory'.⁸ Mauriac, on the other hand, is always recalling social groups, Christian at least in name, that seethe with passion and hate.

The difference affects all their fiction. They exhibit, in fact, two opposite solutions of the artistic problem presented to the Christian writer by his faith. The novelist, as Christian, is a citizen of two worlds, the earthly and the heavenly, and he can hardly avoid making a connection between them. In doing so, he will place either the one or the other in the foreground, though the choice will be made for him by his temperament, experience and limitations rather than by an act of will. Lewis places the spiritual realm in the foreground, seeking to convey its nature by whatever narrative patterns, personages, myths, symbols and metaphors seem most appropriate. For it is an inescapable fact that anything like a complete sketch of the spiritual realm is extraordinarily difficult to present in terms of a naturalistic study of society. There are very few Dostoevskys. Mauriac has taken the other way, gaining immense advantages as a novelist, but risking failure as the Catholic

apologist which some expect him to be. He has to trust that a faithful rendering of society will disclose its aberrations from the divine order. 'It is quite impossible, I said to myself, to reproduce the modern world as it exists, without displaying the violation of a holy law.'⁹

'To reproduce the modern world as it exists', in this lies Mauriac's difference from Lewis. Martin Turnell has neatly stated their contrasting approaches in speaking, in terms rather different from those used above, of the choices before the Christian novelist.

He may adopt a radically Christian standpoint, disregard (in so far as he can) the changes which have taken place in the past four hundred years, and write resolutely against the grain of his age. Alternatively, he can accept the situation in which he finds himself and try to give a Christian interpretation of the modern world.¹⁰

Turnell speaks of Claudel as an example of the first type, and of Mauriac and Graham Greene as examples of the second. Both, he points out, are liable to severe criticism.

It has been said of Claudel that he is outside the modern crisis and therefore remote from our present anxieties; it has been said of the other two that, instead of interpreting the modern age in the light of Christian belief, they have pushed compromise to the point at which it becomes complicity.¹¹

Like Claudel, Lewis writes 'against the grain' of his age, but there must be qualifications to a first impression that he is 'outside the modern crisis and therefore remote from our present anxieties'. For instance, he strenuously combats, rather than ignores, the contemporary climate of thought. Behaviourist psychology is attacked in That Hideous Strength, scientific imperialism in the planetary romances, linguistic philosophy in The Silver Chair. Where he most differs from Mauriac and

Greene, and it is the severest and most obvious of his limitations, is in a general avoidance of any detailed treatment of the twentieth century social scene. There is a similar avoidance of current social issues in his non-fiction, a fact regretted by some of his admirers. When Chad Walsh pointed this out to him he denied that it was symptomatic of an indifference to social issues or the Christian attitude toward them. They were, he said, 'not my vocation'.¹² He felt his gift was for the affirmation of the gospel itself and left its application to society to those better qualified. No doubt he felt that the scholar's life gave one little experience of the harsher aspects of life in an industrial society.

The same limitation of experience, and a complete difference of temperament, prevent him also from attempting those full-scale case histories of the sinner, rendered with close attention to the current manifestations of the world and the flesh, which are the staple ingredient of the fiction of Mauriac and Greene. He has no Therese Desqueyroux, no 'whisky priest' or Pinkie Brown.

Avoiding the danger of 'complicity', Lewis, like Claudel, invites the charge of harshness and smugness, and both terms have been applied to him. The harshness of the Regress and the complacency of Ransom in That Hideous Strength have been noted.¹³ There are touches of cruelty in Screwtape and irritating asides in The Chronicles of Narnia, it is true, but elsewhere the author of The Problem of Pain and The Abolition of Man is not unduly marked by these vices.

'Smugness' surely implies a complacent acceptance of one's own

security and superiority with a corresponding indifference to, or contempt for, those who do not share it. It is, in fact, the sin Screwtape tries to impose on his 'patient's' fiancée. This hardly squares with the concern to communicate and share his beliefs and values which is the driving force of Lewis's apologetics and fiction. What Jacques Riviere has said of Claudel may be applied to Lewis:

It is not our taste that he cares about pleasing; he demands our soul so that he can offer it to God. He wants to force our innermost consent. He is determined, in spite of ourselves, to wrench us from doubt and dilettentism.¹⁴

Lewis, however, appears to have a calmer temper and greater urbanity.

If, on the other hand, an unabashed spiritual joy, a confident and aggressive exercise of reason, and a belief in objective values, are to be regarded, in themselves, as 'smug' or 'harsh', then Lewis cannot escape the charge. His own defence is to affirm his belief that these factors, and the numerous pleasures of life, are as real, and as valuable, as the pain and suffering on which others feel obliged to dwell exclusively. His comments on this subject in Screwtape have been quoted.¹⁵ Of the kind of 'realism' associated with the fiction of Zola, he remarks that blood, sweat and tears are not more real than traditional sanctities and joys.

Yet an assured religious faith may be charged with smugness and harshness in a subtler and deeper fashion than this, as Lewis himself, in his role of apologist, is inevitably aware. The issue is raised in a crucial passage of The Great Divorce. The last wraith has disappeared, having rejected the Lady's invitation, and chosen the Hell of his self-imprisonment. The Lady, apparently defeated, yet with joy unimpaired,

has passed on with her chorus of Bright Spirits.

'And yet....and yet....', said I to my Teacher, when all the shapes and the singing had passed some distance into the forest, 'even now I am not quite sure. Is it really tolerable that she should be untouched by his misery, even his self-made misery?' ¹⁶

This problem is one that has obsessed another novelist of very different temperament from Lewis - Graham Greene. Lewis's answer to his own question, attributed in the book to George MacDonald, gains greatly in significance when considered against the background of Greene's treatment of the theme.

In The Heart of the Matter, Scobie, the chief of police, questions the morality of individual happiness in the strongest terms. "Point me out the happy man," he ruminates bitterly, "and I will point you out either egotism, selfishness, evil - or else an absolute ignorance." ¹⁷

Greene himself had expressed the same view more generally in his travel book, Journey Without Maps. 'I find myself always torn between two beliefs: the belief that life should be better than it is and the belief that when it appears better it is really worse.' ¹⁸ The implication is that the sensitive man must always be oppressed by the pain and suffering of others.

An obsessive, ambiguous sense of pity constantly leads Greene, as it leads Scobie, to identify himself with the weak, the failures, the fallen. Any move towards joy or peace is constantly infected by a fatal sympathy for the sinner. The strength and the weakness of the world Greene presents lies in its pity. It is at the centre of his 'dark theology', whose tenets, as exemplified in his fiction, connect, or con- ¹⁹

flict, with Lewis's in a way that bares their deepest intuitions.

Greene's conversion to Catholicism at the age of twenty-two seems to have left his innate pessimism intact. The doctrine of Original Sin needed, for him, no documentation. It squared with his experience. Like Newman, he felt that the human race was 'implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity'. His public schooldays had been as unhappy as Lewis's and he had less compensations. With him, pessimism was more than theoretical. Several times in his youth he inserted a cartridge into his six-cylinder revolver, span the chambers, and pulled the trigger. Only the dangerous gamble could give him an appetite for life.

His early reading made a lasting impact on him for, as he says, 'it is only in childhood that books have any deep influence on our lives'.²⁰

Lewis found the key to his future beliefs in the 'holiness' of MacDonald's Phantastes. Greene found his pattern of evil in Marjorie Bowen's novel,

The Viper of Milan:

I was not on the classical side or I would have discovered, I suppose, in Greek literature instead of in Miss Bowen's novel the sense of doom that lies over success - the feeling that the pendulum is about to swing. That too made sense; one looked around and saw the doomed everywhere - the champion runner who would one day sag over the tape; the head of the school who would atone, poor devil, during forty dreary undistinguished years... Anyway she had given me my pattern - religion later might explain it to me in other terms, but the pattern was already there - perfect evil walking the world where perfect good can never walk again, and only the pendulum ensures that after all in the end justice is done.²¹

This sombre vision dominates all Greene's fiction. In his first novel, The Man Within (1929), the protagonist, Andrews, speaks of 'a terror of life, of going on soiling himself and repenting and soiling

himself again'. The same mingling of pity and terror is found in all his subsequent characters with any sensitivity. Everywhere a 'dull shabby human mediocrity'²² calls out for our pity.

In Brighton Rock, the grimmest statement of this 'dark theology', which the rest of the novel does little to offset, comes from the young gangster, Pinkie Brown:

I'll tell you what life is. It's jail. It's not knowing where to get some money. Worms and cataract, cancer. You hear 'em shrieking from the upper window - children being born. It's dying slowly.²³

Lewis does not approach this bleak social comment, though he has his visions of darkness. In Perelandra Weston provides a complementary picture of the grim reality underlying life's deceptive facade. "Inside what do you get? Darkness, worms, heat, pressure, salt, suffocation, stink"²⁴. Yet Greene can find these elements in the contemporary scene - on the foreshore of Brighton, the atheist state of Tabasco, the seedy coast of West Africa. In Lewis the grim philosophy does not pass unchallenged. The vision of Hell gives way to a vision of Heaven.

Such visions are notably absent from Greene's fiction. Only 'the hint of an explanation'²⁵ appears. In The Lawless Roads he says of himself, 'One began to believe in heaven because one believed in hell, but for a long while it was only hell one could picture with a certain intimacy'.²⁶ He has yet to provide any intimate vision of heaven in his fiction.

At first Lewis's conversion involved 'no belief in a future life',²⁷ but when that belief did re-awaken the shafts of Joy had done their work. In terms of his fiction, the 'black hole' was offset by the island of

Sweet Desire.

For Greene's characters this life itself is the 'black hole' and only an inkling of Divine Grace percolates the gloom. Rose, remembering the slum where she and Pinkie were born, recalls that 'in the hole were murder, copulation, extreme poverty, fidelity and the love and fear of God'.²⁸ She herself has a touching faith in Heaven but she receives little comfort from Pinkie:

"Of course there's Hell. Flames and damnation," he said with his eyes on the dark shifting waters and the lightning and the lamps going out above the black struts of the Palace pier, "torments."

"And Heaven too," Rose said with anxiety, while the rain fell intermittently on.

"Oh, maybe," the Boy said, "maybe."²⁹

Pinkie's one-sided vision is doubtless nearer to the Spirit of the Age than Hanson's mountain-top experience. Modern literature provides numerous versions of Hell from Baudelaire's 'Un Saison en Enfer' to Sartre's 'Huis Clos'. Huxley, Orwell and Golding³⁰ provide notable examples. Versions of Heaven are rarer.

In his contrast between the earthy, respectable, a-religious Ida, with her naive insistence on 'right and wrong', and the two Catholics, Pinkie, the doomed sinner, and Rose, the potential saint, Greene makes that 'complete divorce...between goodness and respectability'³¹ which is another constant element of his fiction. Crudely stated in Brighton Rock, it acquires subtlety in the later novels, and is another link with Mauriac.

Lewis, like Greene, brings out the distinction between respect-

ability and goodness, crime and sin, virtue and faith, but he is careful not to carry the dichotomy too far. "Nothing, not even the best and noblest, can go on as it now is," says George MacDonald in The Great Divorce. "Nothing, not even what is lowest and most bestial, will not be raised again if it submits to death."³² Greene's divorce of morality and theology is powerful but too reckless. It is here that his novels most antagonise the reader. In the version of Catholicism that figures in his fiction, divorce is worse than adultery, murder not so deadly as marriage outside the Church. Moral injunctions (the Ten Commandments included) take second place to the pronouncements of the Church.

Yet Greene is never at ease with these implications of his Faith. His sympathy for the sinner is boundless, and extends, to the point of rebellion, to those at loggerheads with the Church's teaching. Its strength derives from the re-inforcement given it by Christ's compassion for the fallen: its weakness from the element of faith which it lacks. Pity and Charity are not quite synonymous.

This brings one back to the vital role of pity in Greene's mature fiction as seen in The Power and the Glory, The Ministry of Fear, The Heart of the Matter, The Quiet American and The Burnt out Case.

Pity is the key to the character of Arthur Rowe, the 'mercy-killer' of The Ministry of Fear. Its obsessive hold over him (and Greene) is clearly revealed in the penetrating comment that "Adolescents don't feel pity. It's a mature passion"³³. Pity, a fatal possession, is yet an essential quality of maturity. Without it, the adventure story is easy to write. With it, pity for the vanquished, however despicable,

complicates matters. That Lewis's 'Chronicles of Narnia' should be largely free from it is understandable. Its relative absence from That Hideous Strength is a more serious limitation.

Yet pity always leads Greene's characters into an impasse. Rowe feels 'dangerous pity stirring in the bowels'.³⁴ Faced by his Judges - 'He wanted to warn them - don't pity me. Pity is cruel. Pity destroys. Love isn't safe when pity's prowling around'.³⁵ Mr. Prentice, in the same novel, also knows this truth. "Pity is a terrible thing. People talk about the passion of love. Pity is the worst passion of all; we don't outlive it like sex."³⁶

Scobie presents both its strength and its weakness with the greatest subtlety. He is Greene's finest achievement. His 'Terrible impotent feeling of responsibility and pity'³⁷ controls the whole powerful, concentrated action. The 'terrible promiscuous passion which so few experience'³⁸ is both the sign of his superiority to the shallow people who surround him, and the fatal weakness which leads him, step by step, to the sins that hurt himself, other people, and his God:

Pity smouldered like decay at his heart. He would never rid himself of it. He knew from experience how passion died away and how love went, but pity always stayed. Nothing ever diminished pity. The conditions of life nurtured it. There was only one person in the whole world who was unpitiable - himself.³⁹

For Scobie, the second half of the commandment 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' has no reality.

Even in Greene's literary criticism the concept of pity is supreme. The highest praise he can find for Henry James is that 'it is in the final justice of his pity, the completeness of an analysis which enabled

him to pity the most shabby, the most corrupt, of his human actors, that he ranks with the greatest of creative writers'.⁴⁰

With the role of pity in Greene's fiction fresh in mind, it is clear how Scobie, or any other of Greene's characters, would respond to the question posed by Lewis in the Divorce - "Is it really tolerable that she should be untouched by his misery, even his self-made misery?"⁴¹ Scobie would have found it intolerable. He would have gone back to the Grey Town with the wreaths.

On more than one occasion, Greene finds some warrant for this tendency of his characters to damn themselves for others in the history of Father Damien, and of the Frenchman, Peguy. The priest in Brighton Rock refers to Peguy as one who "lived in sin all his life, because he couldn't bear the idea that any soul could suffer damnation"⁴². Some people, he adds, consider that he was a saint. Scobie makes his impact because he has some, at least, of the elements of saintliness.

What does Lewis find, through MacDonald, to say in reply to the doubts expressed about the happiness of the saved? The answer, so vital to this aspect of Lewis's beliefs, needs quotation at length:

'Would ye rather he still had the power of tormenting her? He did it many a day and many a year in their earthly life.'

'Well, no. I suppose I don't want that.'

'What then?'

'I hardly know, Sir. What some people say on earth is that the final loss of one soul gives the lie to all the joy of those who are saved.'

'Ye see it does not.'

'I feel in a way that it ought to.'

'That sounds very merciful; but see what lurks behind it.'

'What?'

'The demand of the loveless and the self-imprisoned that they should be allowed to blackmail the universe; that till they consent to be happy (on their own terms) no one else shall taste joy; that theirs should be the final power; that Hell should be able to veto Heaven.'

'I don't know what I want, Sir.'

'Son, son, it must be one way or the other. Either the day must come when joy prevails and all the makers of misery are no longer able to infect it; or else for ever and ever the makers of misery can destroy in others the happiness they reject for themselves. I know it has a grand sound to say ye'll accept no salvation which leaves even one creature in the dark outside. But watch that sophistry or ye'll make a Dog in a Manger the tyrant of the universe.'

'But dare one say - it is horrible to say - that Pity must ever die?' 43

MacDonald's reply to this further question has a peculiar relevance to Scobie, and to the comments on the permanence of the sense of pity scattered through Greene's novels.

'Ye must distinguish. The action of Pity will live for ever; but the passion of Pity will not. The passion of pity, the pity we merely suffer, the ache that draws men to concede what should not be conceded and to flatter when they should speak truth, [This goes to the heart of Scobie's weakness] the pity that has cheated many a woman out of her virginity and many a statesman out of his honesty - that will die. It was used as a weapon by bad men against good ones; their weapon will be broken.' 44

Almost every phrase of this paragraph could be related to Scobie's story. MacDonald ends with a description of the action of Pity.

'And what is the other kind - the action?'

'It's a weapon on the other side. It leaps quicker than light from the highest place to the lowest to bring healing

and joy, whatever the cost to itself. It changes darkness into light and evil into good. But it will not, at the cunning tears of Hell, impose on good the tyranny of evil. Every disease that submits to a cure shall be cured; but we will not call blue yellow to please those who insist on still having jaundice, nor make a midden of the world's garden for the sake of some who cannot abide the smell of roses.'⁴⁵

'The smell of roses' - this is an apt symbol for the heavenly joy which Lewis dwells on at the close of his story. Even at his most penitential and austere, T.S. Eliot captures something of the same positive note in his Four Quartets. Across the brooding meditations breaks, from time to time, the laughter of children in the hidden 'rose-garden'. Greene has no roses.

The application of MacDonald's description of charity to Scobie's story gains support from the ultimate strictures on The Heart of the Matter found in a sympathetic study of Greene by the Catholic critic, Marie-Beatrice Mesnet.

Pity is one of the harmonics of love in the presence of suffering, but not love itself...Pity is not a substitute for love; when separated from it, it is ultimately destructive, a negative sharing of a failure. Love, in Berdyaev's words, is "an eternal affirmation" of human personality. Love is fire and must often hurt in order to achieve its ends. Pity is the easy way, an escape for the weak, who cannot face truth directly or tolerate any impediment to their self-centred peace. It is the flaw in Scobie's strength; sentimental pity will drive him to his own destruction, first to professional delinquency, then to adultery, murder (of Ali) and sacrilegious communions, and finally to suicide.⁴⁶

Scobie, she points out, himself recognizes the deficiency in his faith. "I have lost the trick of trust" he realises, and confesses to God in agony, "You were faithful to me, and I wouldn't trust you." She attributes the flaw in Scobie's pity to a lack of the 'sense of trust'.⁴⁷

This is a fair judgment. It is the missing element of trust (and joy) which gives Greene's Catholicism its depressingly negative quality - our final impression from his long series of novels. Maria-Beatrice Mesnet locates the weak spot when she shows how pity, in Greene's fiction, is linked with a disturbing element of masochism, and a marked absence of religious assurance. But the issue is complex. His characters can never be dismissed out of hand because of the element of 'pure love implied in their supreme act'.⁴⁸ Yet her final feeling is of 'a certain uneasiness at finding that none of these characters seems capable of being at one with his deeper self, or reaching the inner vision in this life. They have lost their way in the dark.'⁴⁹

In Lewis's ability to convey the 'inner vision' lies his chief strength. Set alongside Greene's novels, his fiction reveals many deficiencies, it is true. There is a comparative detachment from the conditions of the poorer masses of society - from economic, social and legal pressures (That Hideous Strength provides only a partial exception). There are no comparable studies of contemporary men and women in a closely specified setting. But in this ability to convey the ardours, as well as the anguish, of faith Lewis has something that Greene lacks. His fiction provides at least some inkling of the 'weight of glory', a fact that alone makes it tolerable, and possible, for MacDonald to answer Lewis's next question as he does.

'Do you mean then that Hell - all that infinite empty town - is down in some little crack like this?'

'Yes. All Hell is smaller than one pebble of your earthly world; but it is smaller than one atom of this world, the Real world. Look at you butterfly. If it

swallowed all Hell, Hell would not be big enough to do it any harm or to have any taste.'

'It seems big enough when you're in it, Sir.'

'And yet all loneliness, angers, hatreds, envies and itchings that it contains, if rolled into one single experience and put into the scale against the least moment of the joy that is felt by the least in Heaven, would have no weight that could be registered at all. Bad cannot succeed even in being bad as truly as good is good. If all Hell's miseries together entered the consciousness of you wee yellow bird on the bough there, they would be swallowed up without trace, as if one drop of ink had been dropped into that Great Ocean to which your terrestrial Pacific itself is only a molecule.'⁵⁰

In Greene's fiction there is no such assurance. Writing of the sense of evil in Henry James, he seems to be writing of himself. 'His religion was always a mirror of his experience. Experience taught him to believe in supernatural evil, but not in supernatural good.'⁵¹ One can, of course, recognize and admire Greene's artistic integrity, whilst regretting the sad deficiencies in his religious view.

The judgment of Martin Turnell, another Catholic, on both Mauriac and Greene is shrewd, though severe. After referring to Scobie as 'the police officer corroded by a curiously sentimental form of pity',⁵² he concludes, 'Where both novelists are most open to criticism is the poor view that they take of human nature and the quality of their religion as it is exhibited in their work'.⁵³

Apart from a deficiency in the quality of their religion, Mauriac and Greene are faced by their naturalistic conventions with a difficulty in its presentation that does not confront Lewis in the same form. In their world, the operation of religious judgment on human affairs often produces an aesthetic dislocation. M. Jean-Paul Sartre's wholesale

attack on Mauriac along this line, with its devastating conclusion - 'God is not an artist, neither is M. Mauriac' - is well-known.⁵⁴ More surprising is the qualified support it receives from the Anglican critic, Martin Jarnett-Kerr. After a critical analysis of Therese Desqueyroux, in which he traces the intrusive comments of the author, he concludes 'that the transposition from 'she-subject' to 'she-object', from participatory narrative to external comment, is sudden, unprepared-for, and therefore jolting - the author himself is clearly unaware of what is happening, and the resulting jolt that he gives us betrays a loss of grip on his part'.⁵⁵ Of a more blatant example of the author's intrusion, in Le Desert de l'Amour, he complains, 'Here the author bursts frankly into the narrative, wagging an admonitory finger'.⁵⁶ Unlike Turnell, he argues that in Le Noued de Viperes, the divine action is better managed. Here Mauriac conveys, more persuasively than Greene ever does (except, perhaps, for the account of Scobie's suicide), a sense of divine pressure, even of joy.

Greene uses three techniques to present the verities of the Faith. Least successful is his use of a priest, whose arguments are often embarrassingly weak, sophistical or heartless. Readers have felt the same difficulty over Harcourt-Reilly in Eliot's The Cocktail Party. A second, more successful method, is the frequent employment of dreams. More compelling is the rarer success in making the sequence of events themselves bring home to consciousness the working of Divine Grace. In Scobie's final, agonized soliloquy we are aware, with him, of a yearning, divine presence, of someone who 'seeks to get in'. Here, at least, is

an awareness of that 'inexorable love' which is the constant theme of Lewis's fiction.

This comparison of Lewis with Greene and Mauriac has served to indicate clear differences in their treatment of society, sin, and religious belief. The weaknesses, and strength, of Lewis's religious romances can be more clearly appreciated when viewed against the background of such realistic novels. In the next and final chapter the limitations and achievement of Lewis's fiction are summarised.

CHAPTER XXI

CONCLUSION

Though the best scenes in Lewis's fiction owe their imaginative power to the intensity of his religious vision, the sustained engagement in Christian apologetics is sometimes responsible for limitations and faults. The apologist has to assemble evidence, expound arguments, and give his faith a logical and systematic expression. What was implicit has to be made explicit. Intuitions become theories; personal convictions are publicly asserted; sentiments are more sharply defined. The area of legitimate doubt contracts. This leads to coherence and power, but threatens an accompanying loss of richness and spontaneity.

The novelist works in a different way. He entertains a variety of opinions, and works out the situations he has chosen, or that have imposed themselves on him, with a passionate but detached curiosity. He has an insatiable thirst for what exists, and a comparative unconcern for what ought to exist. He is often impelled to pose a problem, but rarely constrained to provide a solution. Like Keats's 'chameleon poet' he has the gift of 'negative capability' - 'that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'. Keats complains of Coleridge, presumably thinking of him as philosopher and theologian, that he 'would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge'.¹ As theologian, Lewis, like Coleridge, seeks to link intuition to doctrine,

to compose a mental structure that makes sense of experience (or to explain where, and why, such a structure is not to be expected). In his fiction, too, he is always seeking to 'complete the picture'.² His plots move, inevitably, towards an ordered grouping, a ceremonial procession, a visionary enlightenment, an adumbration of cosmic harmony, of the Great Dance. In this process there is a necessary rejection, as well as an ordering, of experience.

To perhaps a majority of modern critics this intellectual rejecting and ordering by the artist is anathema. In various forms the theory of Negative Capability underlies much modern criticism and influences novelists themselves. Didacticism, once a standard element in theories of literature, is generally deprecated, though in the emphasis on 'commitment', 'engagement', and 'realism' it survives in new forms. The particular combination of these elements in the criticism of Dr. F.R. Leavis, with its stress on 'openness to life', its ethical and aesthetic earnestness, and its demand for 'specification' in the novel's setting, has been very influential in discussions of fiction. This approach is accompanied, at least in Leavis himself, by a distaste for metaphysics, and a rejection, implied rather than stated, of fantasy and myth. This critical code underlies Leavis's admirable evaluations of such novelists as George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad, from whose practice it is in part adduced, but it bears severely on Lewis's fiction.

Where Lewis can justly be accused of carrying the process of rejecting and ordering too far, the fault usually arises from the desire of the apologist to 'complete the picture', to see things from the divine

viewpoint. This excessive tendency is usually associated with either his choice of narrative framework, his 'point of view', or his supernatural machinery. Since these are also largely responsible for the artistic success of much of his work, the tendency towards excessive manipulation of experience is an inescapable danger of his method. His artistic virtues and defects are closely related.

Often, his assumption of a near-omniscient viewpoint, and his excessively externalized presentation of the spiritual world, produce effects like those that seriously mar the spiritual and aesthetic value of many episodes in Paradise Lost. Milton's role of omniscient narrator, and his constant transposition of Christian doctrine into the material actualities of epic, precludes or, more seriously, distorts certain aspects of spiritual experience - much of the 'numinous' aspect of worship is dissipated, and the reverent humility of the creature before his Maker is threatened. God the Father 'as a school divine' strikes a chill; the material splendours of Heaven can be repellent. Significantly, Lewis, in his own assessment of Milton's epic, does not allow these faults enough weight. His own fictional forms, though usually less crippling to the religious purpose than epic, can produce similar distortions.

These distortions are frequent in The Pilgrim's Progress. When, for example, John and Vertue are led back by their Angelic guide through the country they have previously traversed, they see everything with changed eyes. The land itself is 'a knife-edge between Heaven and Hell',³ the characters encountered earlier are little more than wraiths, the

Angelic guide explains everything in terms of black and white. Neither aesthetically nor spiritually is this very attractive or convincing. The reader may be prepared to allow that in a spiritual pilgrimage there will be 'a reversal of pre-conceptions', but this transformation is too sudden, too arbitrary. The narrative framework is over rigid and schematic; the heavenly interpreter too harsh and argumentative; the supernatural machinery conventional.

The advance from this to The Great Divorce is immense. There the framework of the Grey Town and the Heavenly Country is intensely imagined and infinitely suggestive. The spiritual commentator, George MacDonald, is wise and charitable. The machinery of wraiths and Bright Spirits allows for a genuine dialectic in the spiritual analyses.

Between these two extremes of the harsh diagram and the illuminating symbol Lewis's work is to be located.

Two factors in Lewis's psychology underlie this aspect of his fiction and are responsible for both success and failure. They are his innate tendency to visualize 'preternaturals' and the marked rationality of his theology. This second tendency, which he shares with Milton, sometimes dissipates awe and sometimes offends piety. It can produce, on the one hand, brilliant symbols of a world beyond and, on the other, a cartoon, even a caricature, of Christian theology, which can arouse, more readily than theology itself, the distaste of the unbeliever. Fortunately, Lewis, unlike Milton, is not so rash as to represent the Trinity in anthropomorphic terms. Nor can it be said, after the Regress, that he often falters in his presentation of angelic beings. The eldils and Aslan are

among his triumphs.

The tendency to caricature (not the less dangerous for being partly intentional) appears most clearly in Lewis's treatment of the infernal. Here his taste for the occult sometimes over-rules his discretion. In Screwtape and That Hideous Strength the wit and excitement of the attack on contemporary values through a revelation of the infernal are bought at a price. What is absent from the Apostles' Creed and peripheral in the New Testament is made central. A dimly apprehended mystery, figuratively expressed, becomes literal and concrete. This gives offence both to the humanist and to the liberal Christian - an offence that goes beyond the unavoidable clash of Lewis's 'classical' or 'credal' theology with 'modernistic' versions of Christianity. The unbeliever, entertained, perhaps, but unconvinced, carries over his sceptical distaste for the preternatural figures to the more soberly presented features of the Christian case. The pious non-intellectual is disturbed or even misled. Screwtape is not a book to recommend to the simpler-minded seeker after Christian belief. Its appeal is to the sophisticated believer.

The further criticism must be levelled at the supernatural machinery of these two books, that in the expression of infernal appetite and cruelty there lurks a disquieting appeal to the reader's sadism. To point out that there will always be readers who misuse what an author provides is not, here, an entirely satisfactory answer. When, in the Divorce, a human character shows a devouring appetite for another's personality, our response of shocked disassociation is immediate and unequivocal. We are horrified by the female ghost's demand for someone 'to do things to',⁴

appalled when she says of the husband whose earthly life she made miserable, "How can I pay him out if you won't let me have him?"⁴ But how are we to take some of Screwtape's gloating comments? Our amused participation in his satirical commentary on human folly has half identified us with his point of view. Presumably, a sudden withdrawal of sympathy should prevent us from actually sharing the tormentor's enjoyment of human pain. But can we avoid entertaining it for a fleeting moment? And is this, spiritually, a defensible technique on the author's part, seeing that he has led us into this position?

Similar moral questions arise over the fate of the leaders of N.I.C.E. in That Hideous Strength. The 'poetic justice' that overtakes Wither and Filostrate, Frost and Straik, is dealt out with a savage glee that is disconcerting. Men, in the true sense, they may no longer be, but 'Men are we and must weep when even the shade Of that which once was great is passed away'.

Elsewhere the reader is liable to be disturbed in a way that is a more legitimate and unavoidable part of forceful apologetics. A belief as sharply defined and expressed as Lewis's is bound to disturb the reader in some way, pleasant or unpleasant. In the preaching of the gospel, St. Paul believed that there was an inescapable, even essential, offence to human pride and intellect. "I have noticed," writes Chad Walsh, "that Lewis's books have an unsettling effect on readers who completely disagree with him or are only half in accord."⁵

This emotional disturbance and intellectual offence is comparable to the effect of the fourth book of Gulliver's Travels on Victorian

critics such as Theakeray, whose romantic and progressive ideals it outraged. The susceptibilities of readers sharing the liberal, humanistic ideals exemplified in the fiction of E.M. Forster and Virginia Woolf are as violently offended by the unabashed supernaturalism of Lewis's fiction as were Tennyson's readers by Swift's picture of human bestiality in the Yahoos.

The limitations imposed by Lewis's methods (related, of course, to limitations in his experience) are not confined to the treatment of the supernatural. The practice of viewing character from the outside, from the position of a near-omniscient arbitrator, often precludes the fullest kind of engagement with human weakness and sin. In Screwtape the central figure is so patently a cypher, so obviously the mere arena of conflicting forces, that the reader is never deeply involved in his fate, or strongly identified with his emotional life. This limitation is, in part, but only in part, the price which Lewis pays for the other, satirical effects at which he is aiming.

In the Divorcee, the wraiths who visit Heaven are more inwardly represented, but we see them predominantly in the context of Heaven. How far Lewis successfully balances sympathy with judgment is a critical question on which readers are likely to differ. A.C. Deane in the Spectator complained of the 'metallic hardness of its tone, its air of disdain, untouched by sympathy, for the various weaknesses of human nature....'⁶ My own view, indicated above, is very different. Admittedly Lewis rarely achieves the same balance of charity and truth as George MacDonald; nor has he Williams's gift for conveying the power of love

in a saintly character, such as Sybil Coningsby. In the Regress there is a frequent harshness, but in the Divorce it is hard to find this alleged insensitivity. Necessary qualifications and hesitations are expressed, and the objectifying of spiritual issues does not produce the same distortion of focus as in Screwtape. There is not the same invitation to take the symbols literally. The speculation is more avowed, and the more attractive for being so.

The broader limitations in Lewis's primary experience are obvious. His academic, scholarly life has not provided him with the first-hand experience of the common lot which is needed to make a Fielding, a Dickens or even a lesser writer like Graham Greene. Nor has it allowed him to explore the higher levels of the social scale, and so draw on the material that has fascinated novelists like Meredith and Henry James. In the two fields in which the true novelists have been strong he is weak. In this respect he has the same limitations, and merits, as other writers whose decisive social contacts have been made within the halls, studies and residences of the older University towns. His really interesting characters are mostly educated, masculine and adult, though he partly transcends this original limitation in his 'Chronicles of Narnie'.

Wisely, Lewis has not attempted to trespass far outside his own social domain, however far afield his speculation and imagination have taken him. He has realised, and accepted, the limits of his experience, and cultivated his distinctive strengths, as carefully as, in another way, did Jane Austen. Yet, whilst keeping within these limits, his

fiction has reached a wider public than is normally reached by writers from within the academic and theological spheres.

Even in his directly theological works Lewis has rarely ventured to make pronouncements on, or even to make a survey of, the more technical, or practical aspects of social and political life. He told Chad Walsh that 'Social Christianity' was not his 'vocation', and pictured himself as concerned with the 'spadework' rather than with the 'blue-prints' of a Christian society.⁷ In the same way, his fiction is concerned, as this thesis has endeavoured to show, more with Man's inner nature than with men in their social contexts.

Within its chosen field, Lewis's fiction displays a unique combination of powerful intuitions with a clear didactic purpose, of Orthodox Christian beliefs with a speculative imagination. Compared with most creative writers, he was late in arriving at his mature vision. Even The Pilgrim's Regress, published at the age of thirty-four, is embryonic. Yet the unproductive years before 1933 were not wasted. The interior debate between Reason and Intuition, in which the tough, sceptical intellect was finally reconciled with the enraptured imagination, eventually produced a personal philosophy of remarkable coherence and power. Meanwhile, voracious reading and industrious study had placed a wealth of material at the service of the imagination, helped to hammer out a firm structure of thought, and discovered literary vehicles appropriate to the new vision. The ground was long in preparation, and the seed grew slowly, but once the 'weather in the soul' was set fair the harvesting was rapid and abundant. At Oxford, in the war years, every-

thing conspired to assist Lewis in his creative work, especially the stimulus of Christian colleagues. Later, in the post-war period, 'The Chronicles of Narnia' provided a kind of second harvest. It is probably safe to assume that with The Last Battle, in 1956, the last sheaf was brought in. In the Autumn of his life Lewis has gleaned his mind through his scholarly and devotional works.

Paul Claudel has something to say of the artist which, though it hardly allows for the abundance, variety and self-renewal of the major writer, is largely true of those artists of the second rank, like himself and Lewis, who make a limited, but nevertheless authentic and unique contribution to literature. 'Every artist,' he declares, 'comes into the world to say a single thing, a single, quite small thing; it is that which it is a question of finding, whilst grouping the rest of his work around it.'⁸ Claudel himself provides an illustration of his own declaration, and the 'sole thing' which he has to say is, clearly, his affirmation of Heavenly joy. 'Joy,' states Charles Du Bos, categorically, 'is the first and last word of all Claudel.'⁹ This may be confidently applied to Lewis. His major theme of the crucial nature of human choice, and his comprehensive image of the Holy War, both derive from his intuition of Joy. In the title of his personal record, Surprised by Joy, he rightly indicated the heart of his vision. According to the intensity and delicacy of their response to this central affirmation, and their appreciation of the romantic forms through which it is conveyed, successive generations of readers will enjoy and esteem his fiction.

APPENDIX A'THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS' AND JOHN MACGOWAN'S 'INFERNAL CONFERENCE'

The following resemblances are worth noting:

1. The oblique, ironical method. The devils, who understand (in part) the nature of spiritual reality, are amazed, and delighted, to see men succumb to temptation, quarrel among themselves and pervert the gospel. Like Screwtape they seek to exploit these failings.

2. The review of intellectual fashions, as in the critique of ministers who undermine Christ's divinity (Dialogue XVI) which resembles Lewis's treatment of 'The Historical Jesus' (Screwtape XIII).

3. The promotion of a special vocabulary to combat righteousness. Avaro notes with pleasure how 'My English vassals, for instance, commonly worship me under the false names of industry, frugality, prudence, or laudable care'. As a defence against faithful preachers of the gospel he advocates the encouragement of such terms as 'enthusiast', 'methodist', 'anabaptist', and 'fanatic' (XVI). Elsewhere Impiator discourses on the usefulness of the word 'but' (VII).

4. The devils' delight at the prospect of human perdition. Infidelis boasts of those thousands of supposedly good people whom he has 'conducted very safely down to the dark abodes of ever-growing anguish' (III). Impiator says of hardened youths, 'I commonly employ them in my deepest mines' (XVII).

5. Discordans's employment of a distorting telescope (Prejudice) and an inverting glass (False Reasoning) whereby 'I cause offence to be taken, where none is offered nor designed' (VIII). This comes close in thought to Screwtape's third letter.

Of course, there are important differences. Infernal Conference is far longer and more diffuse than Screwtape, containing extensive paraphrases of biblical narratives, and long, frequent catalogues of vices, minutely sub-classified. Its author was a Baptist minister in a period not noted for its ecumenical spirit, and the numerous attacks of its devils on Methodists, Quakers, Presbyterians, Anglicans and, above all, Papists are hardly balanced by some softer blows at his own communion.

APPENDIX BSCIENCE FICTION AND THE COSMIC VOYAGE

The following accounts have been found useful:

1. Science Fiction

Fison, Peter, 'That Thing from Another World' in The Twentieth Century Sept. 1955, pp.280-88.

Moore, Patrick, Science and Fiction 1957.

Crispin, Edmund, editor, Best of: science fiction stories 1958.

Menzies, Ian S., 'New Trends in Science Fiction' in The New Scientist 18 Sept. 1958, pp.461-63.

Mitchell, Stephen O., 'Alien Vision: The Techniques of Science Fiction' in Modern Fiction Studies vol.4 no.4, Winter 1958-59, pp.346-56.

2. The Cosmic Voyage

Nicholson, Marjorie Hope, Voyages to the Moon the Macmillan Company, New York, 1948.

Contains illustrations, a full bibliography and an index.

Deals especially with the period stretching from the publication in 1610 of Galileo's Siderius Nuncius to the first successful balloon ascents of the Montgolfiers in 1783-84.

Shackleton, Roger, editor, in his edition of Fontenelle's, Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes 1955.

Green, Roger Lancelyn, Into Other Worlds: Space-Flight in Fiction, from Lucian to Lewis London and New York, 1957. Dedication 'To C.S. Lewis'.

Clarke, A.C., The Exploration of Space 2nd ed.1959.

Mainly an account of the scientific factors involved in space-travel, but there is some discussion of fiction.

APPENDIX CTHE ANTIQUITY OF MARS

I am indebted to R.L. Green's Into Other Worlds for the following information on Greg, Cromie and Arnold.

1. Percy Greg (1836-89), Across the Zodiac (1880)

Greg's Mars is older than Earth and its civilisation has progressed further. A scientific intelligentsia, who have 'disproved' religion, dominate the planet and run it on utilitarian lines. They are opposed by 'The Children of Light', believers in an Almighty Maker. Green classes it with those works by Wells, Huxley and Orwell which give 'forecasts and warnings of our future on this Earth'. (Green p.111)

2. Robert Cromie (1856-1907), A Plunge into Space (1890)

His chief character, a scientist Henry Burnett, makes this interesting prophecy regarding Mars:

'I tell you, the planet Mars is old. Rude and hardy vegetation has everywhere, as you see, been supplanted by delicate growths. Those pretty animals are delicately shaped, but see how sensitive they are, - a thousand of them would not face a tiger. The inhabitants that we shall find will be creatures for surpassing ourselves in every attribute of mind and body. They will have developed social, moral and physical conditions such as we cannot imagine. They are at the pinnacle of their perfection. Before them is no further progress. Their only change must be towards decay.' (Green p.116)

Compare this with the words of the Oyarza of Malacandra:

'...Malacandra is older than your own world and nearer its death. Most of it is dead already. My people live only in the handramits; the heat and the water have been more and will be less. Soon now, very soon, I will end my world and give back my people to Maleldil.' (OSP pp.157-58)

3. Edwin Lester Arnold (1857-1935), Lieutenant Gulliver Jones: His Vacation (1905)

Green describes this as 'the most haunting and convincing picture of the immeasurably ancient world of Mars, before the discovery of Malacandra' depicting 'a golden age of pale and shadowy sunlight'. (Green pp.122, 123)

4. H.G. Wells, The War of the Worlds (1898)

The antiquity of Mars is particularly stressed in the following passage:

It must be, if the nebular hypothesis has any truth, older than our world; and long before this earth ceased to be molten, life upon its surface must have begun its course. The fact that it is scarcely one-seventh of the volume of the earth must have accelerated its cooling to the temperature at which life would begin.

Nor was it generally understood that since Mars is older than our earth, with scarcely a quarter of the superficial area and remoter from the sun, it necessarily follows that it is not only more distant from life's beginning but nearer its end.

(chap.1)

APPENDIX DVENUS IN EARLIER FICTION

Few writers have chosen Venus as the setting for their cosmic adventures. Bernerdin de St. Pierre, author of Paul et Virginie, 'described a terrestrial paradise and placed it in the planet Venus' (Green p.164), thus anticipating Lewis. Olaf Stapledon in Last and First Men (1931) took his explorers to Venus, where they found a world consisting of scattered islands in an ocean subject to tremendous currents and storms. Like Lewis, he pictures a time when the cloud envelope will have thinned away (cf. Perelandra p.243). The most elaborate account of Venus is provided by John Munro in A Trip to Venus (1897). Its main similarity to Perelandra lies in its account of 'Womla', a beautiful land lying in the crater of a great volcanic island, 'a paradise of eternal spring, of glorious flowers and trees and creatures' (Green p.167)

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The following works have been found particularly useful.

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Green, Roger Lancelyn, Tellers of Tales new ed. 1953

Lewis's children's books are discussed on pp.259-60

Meigs, Cornelia, and others, A Critical History of Children's Literature

New York, 1953

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is discussed on p.480.

Muir, Percy, English Children's Books, 1600-1900. 1954

Arbuthnot, May Hill, Children and Books Scott, Foresman and Company,

U.S.A., new ed. 1957

The Library Association, Chosen for Children: an account of the books

which have been awarded the Library Association Carnegie Medal,

1936-1957. Library Association, 1957

Darton, F.J. Harvey, Children's Books in Britain: Five Centuries of

Social Life second ed., with an introduction by Kathleen Lines,

and additions to the bibliography, 1958

Crouch, Marcus, Treasure Seekers and Borrowers: Children's Books in

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APPENDIX FINDEX OF AUTHORS WHO HAVE INFLUENCED LEWIS'S FICTION

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NOTESCHAPTER I

- 1 p.1 SJ p.11
- 2 p.1 SJ pp.11-12
- 3 p.2 Quotations in this, and the next three paragraphs are from SJ chap.1
- 4 p.4 SJ chap.II, as also the quotations in the previous paragraph
- 5 p.4 SJ p.49
- 6 p.5 SJ p.105
- 7 p.5 Lord Hailsham, Spec. vol.195, pp.805-6
- 8 p.5 The Old School; Essays by Divers Hands ed. Graham Greene, 1934, pp.199-214
- 9 p.5 SJ p.15
- 10 p.6 SJ p.39
- 11 p.6 SJ chap.IV, as also the quotations in the previous paragraph
- 12 p.7 SJ p.114
- 13 p.8 SJ chap.V, as also the quotations in the previous two paragraphs
- 14 p.8 SJ p.112
- 15 p.9 SJ chap.IX
- 16 p.9 Presumably the Arthur Greeves to whom The Pilgrim's Regress is dedicated
- 17 p.10 SJ p.147
- 18 p.10 The title of SJ chap.X
- 19 p.11 MacDonald p.21
- 20 p.12 SJ chap.XI, as also the quotations in the previous three paragraphs

- 21 p.13 Paul Claudel, Pages de Prose ed. André Blanchet, Gallimard, 1944, p.276 /my translation/
- 22 p.13 SJ pp.180, 181
- 23 p.14 SJ p.181
- 24 p.14 SJ p.188
- 25 p.16 SJ chap XIII, as also the quotations in the previous three paragraphs
- 26 p.17 SJ chap XIV, as also the quotations in the previous four paragraphs
- 27 p.17 SJ p.223

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- 1 p.21 SJ pp.195, 196
- 2 p.22 The Month, new series, Jan. '56, vol.15 no.1, pp.9-13
- 3 p.22 Ibid. p.9
- 4 p.22 1953, photographs by Cecil Beaton
- 5 p.23 Ibid. p.69
- 6 p.23 See EPCW, Lewis's preface
- 7 p.23 i.e. EPCW
- 8 p.23 Ibid., Lewis's preface, p.v.
- 9 p.24 Walsh chap.17
- 10 p.24 Arthurian Torso 1948
- 11 p.25 Twentieth Century Authors: A Biographical Dictionary, First Supplement, 1955
- 12 p.25 Rehabilitations p.122
- 13 p.25 Four Loves p.137
- 14 p.25 Ibid. p.159
- 15 p.25 Persona Greta, see note 4 above.
- 16 p.26 SO chap XII. For discussion of this see chap XVI below

17 p.28 Op.cit., Lewis's preface p.7

18 p.29 Experiment p.124

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1 p.30 Page references are to the seventh ed., 1950

2 p.30 Maisie Ward, Gilbert Keith Chesterton 1944. Penguin Books, 1958, p.149

3 p.30 Op.cit., p.14

4 p.31 SJ p.15

5 p.31 Dynner, London, Dent : New York, the Macmillan Company, 1926
References are to the reprint, 1950

6 p.31 Walsh chap.7

7 p.32 Dynner pp.xiii-xiv. This last episode reflects Lewis's
encounter with Yeats's occultism

8 p.32 Ibid. p.xi

9 p.33 SJ pp.201-202

10 p.33 Regress p.5

11 p.35 Ibid. p.13. The quotations in the four previous paragraphs
are on pp.7-10

12 p.36 Ibid. p.5

13 p.36 Allegory p.45

14 p.36 Ibid. p.69

15 p.37 Ibid. p.260

16 p.37 Regress p.10

17 p.38 Ibid. pp.10, 11

18 p.38 Ibid. p.12

19 p.38 In her introduction to The Image of the City and other
essays by Charles Williams, O.U.P., 1958, p.lxx

20 p.38 Arthurian Torso p.159

21. p.39 Regress p.86
- 22 p.40 Ibid. p.13
- 23 p.42 Ibid. p.24
- 24 p.43 Ibid. p.53
- 25 p.44 Ibid. pp.62-63
- 26 p.44 Ibid. p.73
- 27 p.45 of. SJ chaps XIII-XIV and Regress p.5
- 28 p.46 Regress pp.84-85
- 29 p.47 Ibid. p.117
- 30 p.47 Ibid. page headings pp.134, 135
- 31 p.47 Ibid. p.147
- 32 p.48 Ibid. pp.144-145
- 33 p.48 Op.cit. Introduction
- 34 p.49 Regress p.176
- 35 p.49 Ibid. page heading p.183
- 36 p.50 Ibid. pp.190-91
- 37 p.50 TLS, 6 July, 1933, p.456
- 38 p.51 'C.S. Lewis', in The Month, new series, Jan. '56, vol.15, no.1, pp.9-13
- 39 p.52 Walsh chap.6
- 40 p.52 Transposition pp.21-33
- 41 p.52 Essays and Studies vol XXVII, 1941

CHAPTER IV

- 1 p.53 Allegory p.232 and Rehabilitations p.43
- 2 p.53 Allegory p.61
- 3 p.54 SJ p.7
- 4 p.54 RFCW pp.38-89

- 5 p.55 Rehabilitations p.44
- 6 p.55 By Rider Haggard, David Lindsay, E.R. Eddison, Olaf Stapledon and J.R.R. Tolkien respectively
- 7 p.55 By George MacDonald, Edith Nesbit, Kenneth Grahame and J.R.R. Tolkien respectively
- 8 p.56 Transposition pp.9-20
- 9 p.56 Op.cit., p.55
- 10 p.56 A term coined by J.R.R. Tolkien in 'On Fairy Stories' (see 4, above). For further use of this term see pp.189 and 311-312 below
- 11 p.57 Pain p.25
- 12 p.58 MacDonald pp.23, 25
- 13 p.58 Pain p.29
- 14 p.58 From MacDonald's sermon 'The Last Farthing' (Unspoken Sermons, Second series), quoted MacDonald p.58
- 15 p.59 Divorce p.7
- 16 p.61 Screwtop p.53
- 17 p.62 Ibid. p.60
- 18 p.62 Transposition p.60
- 19 p.62 Screwtop p.116
- 20 p.62 Divorce p.88
- 21 p.63 Ibid. pp.77-81
- 22 p.63 Perelandra p.148
- 23 p.63 Ibid. p.146
- 24 p.63 ME pp.47-48
- 25 p.64 ECW p.vii
- 26 p.65 MacDonald p.20
- 27 p.65 Ibid. p.67 ('The Fear of God' in Unspoken Sermons, Second series)

- 28 p.66 Rehabilitations p.185
- 29 p.66 Ibid. p.188
- 30 p.66 Transposition p.37
- 31 p.67 'The Contented Christian', Cambridge Journal vol.5, no.10, July '52, pp.603-12. This quotation p.610
- 32 p.67 The Figure of Beatrice, 1943, passim
- 33 p.67 Transposition pp.21-33
- 34 p.67 Regress n.s. 1943, p.151f
- 35 p.68 MacDonald p.21
- 36 p.68 Allegory p.55

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- 1 p.69 MC p.6
- 2 p.69 See ELSC pp.451-63 and Pain pp.70, 88, 98
- 3 p.70 ELSC pp.33f
- 4 p.70 See MC p.7
- 5 p.70 See Pain p.25
- 6 p.70 Allegory pp.322-23
- 7 p.70 MacDonald p.18
- 8 p.70 Reflections p.112
- 9 p.71 See Regress 3rd ed., preface, p.12, for Grace and Nature. In ELSC p.460 Lewis quotes approvingly Hooker's remark that 'nature hath need of grace....grace hath use of nature' (L.E.P. III, vii, 6)
- 10 p.71 Regress, passim, and MC Book 1, passim
- 11 p.72 EP. CXX, 3, 4 as given in Alan Richardson's Christian Apologetics 1947, pp.24-25
- 12 p.72 See Miracles chaps.II-VI
- 13 p.72 Ibid. pp.213-16, and Reflections chaps I-XII

- 14 p.72 MC p.44
- 15 p.72 See op.cit. March '46 pp.334-42, and March '45 pp.317-24
- 16 p.73 ELSC p.461
- 17 p.73 Ibid. p.49
- 18 p.74 The Miracles of our Lord, Strahan and Company Ltd., n.d., pp.153-54
- 19 p.75 Ibid. pp.159-60
- 20 p.75 Transposition pp.21-33
- 21 p.75 Rehabilitations pp.135-158
- 22 p.77 Transposition p.42. The reference to the elan vital is on p.25
- 23 p.77 See Radio Times (Junior inset) 15th July, '60, 'It All Began with a Picture....'
- 24 p.77 Miracles pp.194-95
- 25 p.77 Divorce pp.93-94
- 26 p.77 Miracles p.112
- 27 p.77 Ibid. p.135; cf. Perelandra chaps.13, 14

CHAPTER VI

- 1 p.78 TLS, 1942, p.100
- 2 p.78 TLS, 1946, p.58
- 3 p.78 Reprinted in Time and Tide: Anthology, 1956, pp.255-57
- 4 p.79 See Bibliography B
- 5 p.79 Unspoken Sermons, 1st Series, quoted MacDonald p.33
- 6 p.80 MC p.6
- 7 p.83 Samuel Richardson, Preface to Clarissa
- 8 p.84 Letters to Young Churches, 1947, with an introduction by C.S. Lewis

- 9 p.84 The Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast,
1961, p.11
- 10 p.85 Letter 11, p.58
- 11 p.85 Letter 22, pp.113-14
- 12 p.86 Letter 31, p.156
- 13 p.86 Letter 8, p.46
- 14 p.86 Compare Wither's remarks, "You need not doubt that I would
open my arms to receive, to absorb, to assimilate this
young man". THE p.298
- 15 p.86 Letter 31, p.160
- 16 p.87 Letter 22, p.115
- 17 p.87 Letter 27, pp.138-40
- 18 p.89 James 11, 19
- 19 p.89 Letter 1, p.11
- 20 p.89 Letter 9, pp.51-52
- 21 p.90 Letter 10, p.55
- 22 p.90 See Letters 13, 28 and 30
- 23 p.90 Letter 10, p.55
- 24 p.90 Letter 17
- 25 p.91 Letter 2, p.17
- 26 p.91 Letter 5, p.30
- 27 p.92 For further discussion of this issue see pp.379-380, below
- 28 p.93 Letter 31, p.159-60

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- 1 p.98 Divorce p.7
- 2 p.99 Ibid. pp.52, 60, 63, 64, 87 and 114 respectively. See
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- 3 p.100 Ibid. p.16

- 4 p.100 Ibid. p.18
- 5 p.100 Ibid. p.112
- 6 p.101 Ibid. pp.26, 29 and 53 respectively
- 7 p.101 John iii, 20
- 8 p.101 Divorce p.19
- 9 p.102 Ibid. p.23
- 10 p.102 Ibid. p.26
- 11 p.102 Ibid. pp.8-9
- 12 p.102 Ibid. p.45
- 13 p.102 Ibid. p.48
- 14 p.102 Ibid. p.89
- 15 p.103 Ibid. p.93
- 16 p.103 Ibid. p.42
- 17 p.103 Ibid. p.43
- 18 p.103 Norman McKimel, 1901
- 19 p.103 Divorce p.32
- 20 p.103 Ibid. pp.22, 28, 30 and 49 respectively
- 21 p.103 Ibid. pp.36, 40
- 22 p.104 Ibid. p.25
- 23 p.104 Ibid. p.59
- 24 p.104 Ibid. p.24
- 25 p.105 Ibid. pp.41, 42
- 26 p.105 Ibid. p.39
- 27 p.105 of W.E. Sangster, The Craft of the Sermon, 1954, pp.107-10
- 28 p.106 Divorce p.49
- 29 p.106 Ibid. p.52

- 30 p.107 Ibid. p.99
- 31 p.107 Ibid. p.101
- 32 p.108 Ibid. p.106
- 33 p.108 Ibid. pp.107-8
- 34 p.108 Ibid. p.109 (cf. Matt. vii, 23)
- 35 p.108 Ibid. p.110
- 36 p.109 Ibid. pp.117-18

CHAPTER VIII

- 1 p.110 Infernal Conference (see Bibliography E) is discussed by M.E. Johnson in 'Dialogues of devils', Congregational Quarterly, Jan. '45, pp.47-52. She appears to know only of a reprint (complete?) of 1862.
- 2 p.111 Op.cit., 1815 ed., p.iv
- 3 p.112 Divorce pp.59-60
- 4 p.112 George MacDonald and his Wife, 1924
- 5 p.112 MacDonald p.18
- 6 p.113 Phantasies pp.31-32
- 7 p.113 Ibid. p.59
- 8 p.114 Ibid. p.75
- 9 p.115 Ibid. p.212
- 10 p.115 See Appendix F for an Index of other references to MacDonald's influence.
- 11 p.115 See Chesterton's preface to George MacDonald and his Wife, 1924.
- 12 p.116 Heretics, 1905, p.60
- 13 p.116 Ibid. pp.228-29
- 14 p.117 Orthodoxy 1909, chap.IV, 'The Ethics of Elfland'

- 15 p.117 Ibid. chap.VIII, 'The Romance of Orthodoxy'
- 16 p.118 In the introduction to her selection of essays by Charles Williams, The Image of the City, 1958, pp.liv-lv
- 17 p.118 EPCW p.xi
- 18 p.118 The Borderland, 1960, p.53
- 19 p.118 Time and Tide, Oct. '43. Reprinted in The Image of the City, Section 111
- 20 p.118 Preface, Dedication to Charles Williams
- 21 p.118 'Merlin himself is somehow apart from the whole question of sin and grace' - 'Malory and the Grail Legend', Dublin Review, April, 1944. Reprinted in The Image of the City. See also Arthurian Torso p.172.
- 22 p.119 Republished in Charles Williams: Selected Writings ed. Anne Ridler, 1961
- 23 p.120 Perelandra p.243
- 24 p.121 THE preface p.8
- 25 p.122 The Lord of the Rings, dustjacket
- 26 p.125 See Tolkien's essay 'On Fairy Stories' (EPCW), and Lewis's TWOC.
- 27 p.126 EPCW
- 28 p.126 See p.251 and 255, below, and the discussion on pp.255-56, 306-309.
- 29 p.126 See 'On Stories', EPCW.

CHAPTER IX

- 1 p.128 Dymer, 1950 ed., Preface p.ix
- 2 p.128 TWHF, prefatory note
- 3 p.128 Ibid. p.305
- 4 p.129 1 Cor. xiii, 12
- 5 p.129 Lilith pp.127-28. In the previous chapter, 'A Gruesome

Dance', p.117, there is a similar train of thought:

Had they used their faces, not for communication, not to utter thought and feeling, not to share existence with their neighbours, but to appear what they wished to appear, and conceal what they were? and, having made their faces masks, were they therefore, deprived of those masks, and condemned to go without faces until they repented?

"How long must they flaunt their facelessness in faceless eyes?" I wondered. "How long will the frightful punishment endure? Have they at length begun to love and be wise? Have they yet yielded to the shame that has found them?"

- 6 p.129 Letters ed. M.B. Forman, 3rd ed. p.336
- 7 p.129 TWHF p.11
- 8 p.131 Ibid. The quotations in this paragraph are on pp.29, 32 and 31 respectively
- 9 p.131 Ibid. p.58
- 10 p.132 Sonnet 151
- 11 p.132 Op.cit., p.15f., et passim
- 12 p.132 TWHF p.84; cf. Divorce, p.86, the possessive mother, 'You are heartless. Everyone is heartless....'
- 13 p.133 TWHF p.129; cf. LB chap XII
- 14 p.133 TWHF, dustjacket
- 15 p.133 Ibid. p.135
- 16 p.134 Augustine, 'fides praeceat rationem', Ep. CXX, 3,4: of pp.71-72, above
- 17 p.134 Orthodoxy, 1909, p.49
- 18 p.134 MacDonald p.41 (Unspoken Sermons, 2nd Series, 'The Way')
- 19 p.135 TWHF p.143
- 20 p.135 Ibid. p.147
- 21 p.135 Ibid. p.157

- 22 p.135 of. Divorce, p.104, the words of the 'Tragedian' regarding the 'cruelty' of his saintly wife; 'would to Gud I hed seen her lying dead at my feet before I heard those words....'
- 23 p.135 TWHF p.174
- 24 p.135 Divorce p.82f. and 99f., respectively
- 25 p.135 TWHF p.182
- 26 p.137 Ibid. p.258
- 27 p.137 Ibid. p.259
- 28 p.137 Ibid. p.263
- 29 p.138 Ibid. p.275
- 30 p.138 Ibid. p.291
- 31 p.138 Ibid. p.292-93
- 32 p.139 of. Four Loves, p.59:
 "A hit of a girl - a whipper-snapper of a boy - being shows things that are hidden from their elders?" And since that is clearly incredible and unendurable, jealousy returns to the hypothesis "All nonsense".
- 33 p.139 of. Divorce p.86:
 "I want my boy and I mean to have him. He is mine, do you understand? Mine, mine, mine, for ever and ever."
- 34 p.139 TWHF pp.302,303
- 35 p.139 Ibid. p.305
- 36 p.140 Ibid. p.312
- 37 p.140 Ibid. p.315
- 38 p.140 TLS, 1956, p.551
- 39 p.142 Orthodoxy, 1909, p.145
- 40 p.142 Season Agonistes, 300-306

CHAPTER X

- 1 p.143 SJ pp.40-41

- 2 p.144 SJ p.62
- 3 p.144 SJ p.166. See also Lewis's Dymer, and his preface to the 1950 reprint .
- 4 p.144 THS p.330
- 5 p.144 See, for example, ELSC pp.5, 6, 14.
- 6 p.144 Rehabilitations pp.117-32
- 7 p.145 Ibid. p.128
- 8 p.145 The Great Chain of Being, Harvard University Press, 1936 and 1950
- 9 p.145 The Elizabethan World Picture
- 10 p.145 OSP p.166
- 11 p.146 SJ pp.195, 196; of. pp.15, 21 above
- 12 p.146 For further details see Appendix B: SCIENCE FICTION AND THE COSMIC VOYAGE .
- 13 p.147 For further information on Lucian, and other writers referred to in this paragraph, see Nicolson, esp. chap.III, 'Kepler, the Somnium, and John Donne'.
- 14 p.147 See DNB and Nicolson pp.77, 113.
- 15 p.147 'Printed by E.G. for Michael Sparks and Edward Forrest' - copy in the Brotherton Collection, the University of Leeds

The book was enlarged in 1640, and a further work published along with it, the two having the general, engraved title page, 'A Discourse concerning A New World and Another Planet In 2 Bookes', whilst the individual title page now read, 'The First Book. The Discovery Of A New World, Or, A Discourse tending to prove, that 'tis probable there may be another habitable World in the Moone. With a Discourse concerning the possibility of a Passage thither....'

'Printed for John Maynard, & to be sold at the George in Fleet Street near St. Dunstan's Church, 1640 [copy in the Brotherton Collection]

- 16 p.148 Op.cit., p.186
- 17 p.148 Ibid. pp.189-90

- 18 p.149 See also Lewis's article 'Will We Lose God In Outer Space?' in World Christian Digest, July '58 (condensed from the Christian Herald, U.S.A.).
- This discusses the implications of possible life on other planets .
- 19 p.149 Miracles p.59
- 20 p.149 This, and the following quotations, are from Miracles pp.60-63 .
- 21 p.152 Abolition p.20
- 22 p.152 SJ p.48
- 23 p.152 Newnes, 1901. Subsequent quotations are from The Works of H.G. Wells, Atlantic Edition, 1925, vol.6 .
- 24 p.152 1898
- 25 p.153 OSP chaps .18-21
- 26 p.153 FMM p.298
- 27 p.153 THE chap.IX and FMM chap XXIV
- 28 p.154 FMM chap XVI, and Perelandra chaps .14 and 15
- 29 p.154 p.vi of his introduction to FMM published in 'The Century Library', Eyre and Spottiswoode
- 30 p.154 FMM pp.98-99
- 31 p.154 FMM p.145
- 32 p.154 See, especially, OSP chaps .19, 20, and Perelandra pp.91-92 and chap.7.
- 33 p.154 FMM p.112
- 34 p.154 See Abolition, p.20 r
- 35 p.155 Perelandra pp.91-92
- 36 p.156 Since OSP the more imaginative writers of science-fiction, such as Ray Bradbury, have often taken a pro-planetary, anti-terrestrial line .
- 37 p.156 e.g. OSP p.40 and Perelandra pp.208-9

- 38 p.156 SJ pp.15-16
- 39 p.156 Perelandra chap.14
- 40 p.156 FM p.182
- 41 p.156 SJ p.67
- 42 p.156 OSP p.36
- 43 p.156 KPCW p.97
- 44 p.156 Ibid. p.96
- 45 p.157 FMM pp.181-82
- 46 p.158 Methuen, 1920. Republished Gollancz, 1946, with a note by E.H. Visiak, 'The Arcturan Shadow: A complement to Milton's Satan' (reprinted from Notes and Queries, 30th March, '40).
- (Victor Gollancz, in his note to the reprint, reveals that, though the first edition was 'a plain flop', the book was constantly recommended to him in the late thirties.)
- 47 p.159 KPCW pp.97-98
- 48 p.160 cf. Screwtape p.49
- 49 p.160 Arcturus p.56
- 50 p.160 Perelandra p.52
- 51 p.160 Phantastes chaps. IX and XVI
- 52 p.160 Arcturus p.51
- 53 p.161 Perelandra pp.228-29
- 54 p.161 See pp.157 and 159, above.
- 55 p.161 'The Contented Christian' [an examination of the planetary romances], The Cambridge Journal vol.V, pp.603-12 (July '52). The quotation is on p.603.
- 56 p.162 Allegory p.45
- 57 p.163 Experiment p.109
- 58 p.163 New Maps of Hell 1961, p.18

- 59 p.163 Ibid. p.26
- 60 p.164 See p.159 above.
- 61 p.164 Manchester, 1961
- 62 p.164 Experiment p.109. See p.162 above.
- 63 p.164 Bergonzi, op.cit., p.20
- 64 p.164 Ibid. p.61
- 65 p.164 Ibid. p.45

CHAPTER XI

- 1 p.165 The phrase, obviously derived from Wells's Tales of Space and Time, 1899, occurs in the dedication of OSP.
- 2 p.165 See Appendix B.
- 3 p.166 See Appendix C.
- 4 p.166 Green p.184
- 5 p.166 Nicolson p.252
- 6 p.167 See chap X, p.154, above.
- 7 p.168 OSP p.28
- 8 p.169 Ibid. p.44
- 9 p.169 of. Clarke pp.72-73
- 10 p.169 OSP p.40
- 11 p.170 Op.cit. pp.83-84, 95 and 102
- 12 p.170 See Appendix C.
- 13 p.170 SJ p.23
- 14 p.170 Ibid. p.74
- 15 p.171 He evades the problem of the composition of the Martian atmosphere.
- 16 p.171 OSP p.164; of. Clarke p.130: 'They could quite possibly

be old river beds, canyons, or similar formations....'

- 17 p.171 In fact, owing to Mars's low gravity, its atmosphere is less compressed than Earth's, and would hardly be denser in canyons than on intervening tablelands.
- 18 p.171 Quotations in this paragraph are from OSP pp.48-59.
- 19 p.172 OSP p.59
- 20 p.172 Ibid. p.53
- 21 p.172 Clarke p.185
- 22 p.172 FM
- 23 p.172 OSP pp.60-61
- 24 p.173 Ibid. p.65
- 25 p.173 Ibid. pp.83, 84
- 26 p.174 Ibid. p.77
- 27 p.175 The quotations in this, and the previous paragraph, are from MC p.76.
- 28 p.175 OSP p.96
- 29 p.175 Ibid. p.114
- 30 p.176 Ibid. p.109
- 31 p.176 Ibid. p.116. The even closer parallel of Cavor's talk with the Grand Lunar is recalled earlier by Ransom himself (p.79).
- 32 p.176 OSP p.47
- 33 p.177 Ibid. p.87
- 34 p.177 Ibid. pp.118-19
- 35 p.178 1955, passim
- 36 p.178 Lewis refers to this episode as an example of the numinous in Pain p.6.
- 37 p.178 OSP p.123. This feeling recurs in Perelandra.
- 38 p.178 OSP p.126

- 39 p.179 The situation and atmosphere recall Hebrews xxii, 1.
 40 p.179 of. PL VI, and Charles Williams's War in Heaven, 1930
 41 p.179 OSP pp.138-39; of. 1 Peter i, 12
 42 p.179 Ibid., p.140. This theme of the 'Empirical Bogey' is taken up in Perelandra (p.188 et passim).
 43 p.180 OSP p.148
 44 p.180 PL 1, 680-83
 45 p.181 OSP pp.154, 155
 46 p.182 Ibid. p.166
 47 p.183 Ibid. pp.161, 162
 48 p.183 Ibid. p.164
 49 p.183 Ibid. p.175
 50 p.184 Walsh chap.5
 51 p.184 Perelandra p.68

CHAPTER XII

- 1 p.185 Green p.173
 2 p.185 Walsh chap.5
 3 p.185 I cannot agree with Patrick Moore that Perelandra, as a story, is 'weak' (Moore p.159).
 4 p.185 See, particularly, Pain chap.5, 'The Fall of Man'.
 5 p.186 See Appendix D for Venus in earlier fiction.
 6 p.186 See pp.113-114, and 160, above, and notes 15, 16 and 22 below.
 7 p.186 See pp.157-61, above.
 8 p.186 Perelandra pp.227-32
 9 p.187 Lewis's admiration for Prometheus Unbound is shown in his essay 'Shelley, Dryden and Mr. Eliot' (Rehabilitations)
 10 p.187 Lewis's remarks on Prometheus Unbound (Rehabilitations pp.29-30 et passim) are also relevant to Perelandra

- 11 p.187 I owe these phrases to Dr. W.E. Sangster's The Craft of the Sermon, 1954, pp.xxii and 96.
- 12 p.189 'Eucatastrophe', happy ending, a term coined by J.R.R. Tolkien in his essay 'On Fairy Stories' (EPCW p.81). See p.56 above and pp.311-312, below.
- 13 p.190 The Letters of Henry James ed. Percy Lubbock, 1920, vol.1, p.330
- 14 p.190 'High and Low Brows' (Rehabilitations pp.100-101)
- 15 p.191 of Phantastes p.101 '....the sky reflects everything beneath it, as if it were built of water like ours'.
- 16 p.191 Perelandra pp.37-39. Cf. with this last paragraph Phantastes p.161 'It was a perpetual twilight'.
- 17 p.192 See Clarke p.125, '....for the Sun would be a more potent raiser of tides in the Venusian oceans than is the moon in the seas on Earth'.
- 18 p.193 What Lewis says of Milton's Adam and Eve is relevant here - 'Their life together is ceremonial - a minuet, where the modern reader looks for a romp....' (Preface p.115)
- 19 p.193 See, for example, Perelandra pp.66, 67, 70, 73, 76 and 78. Weston also employs the waves as symbols: see, for example, pp.129, 130, 156. The trees and fruits of the floating islands are also used as symbols. Cf. also pp.200 and 203, below
- 20 p.194 This quotation, and those in the next four paragraphs, are from pp.47-63.
- 21 p.196 Perelandra pp.63-4
- 22 p.196 of Phantastes p.4, where the Fairy tells Anodos, '"Form is much, but size is nothing."'
- 23 p.197 Perelandra p.74; of Gen. iii, 20
- 24 p.197 of Gen. ii, 17 and iii, 3
- 25 p.198 Perelandra p.85
- 26 p.198 Ibid. p.99. The phrase is Weston's; of Devine in THE pp.45, 46. See also p.217, below

- 27 p.199 Perelandra p.102. Weston echoes Shew's theory of the Life Force, and the theory of Emergent Evolution propounded by Professor S. Alexander in Space, Time and Deity, 1920 (see SJ pp.205ff), and by Lloyd Morgan in Emergent Evolution, 1923 and Life, Mind and Spirit, 1926. For Lewis's critique of the Life Force theory see Broadcast Talks chap.4 and Miracles pp.101, 144.
- 28 p.199 Perelandra p.104; cf. Lilith's final speech in Back to Methuselah:
- ...after passing a million goals they press on to the goal of the redemption from the flesh, to the vortex freed from matter, to the whirlpool in pure intelligence that, when the world began, was a whirlpool in pure force.
- In Transposition (p.25) Lewis speaks of 'all the nonsense that Mr. Shaw puts into the final speech of Lilith'.
- 29 p.199 Perelandra p.106. The thought, though not the tone, reflects the philosophy of Professor S. Alexander. See note 27, above.
- 30 p.199 A new theme - a variant of Fontenelle's 'la pluralité des mondes' - is introduced in Ransom's glimpses of semi-human creatures in worlds beneath the waves (cf. Voyage chap XV. See p.315, below).
- 31 p.199 cf. Satan 'Squat at the ear of Eve', PL IV, 800, though the temptations which follow more closely resemble Christ's sustained temptations in the wilderness
- 32 p.200 Op.cit., p.66
- 33 p.200 Ibid. p.208
- 34 p.201 Ibid. p.64
- 35 p.201 Perelandra p.126
- 36 p.201 Ibid. p.141. It is illuminating to compare the Un-Man with Milton's Satan, and with Lewis's discussion of him (Preface chap XIII). The Romantic view survives Lewis's expose of Satan's monotonous egoism, but in his own Un-Man Lewis, whilst giving the Devil his due, presents a less ambiguous figure.
- 37 p.201 Perelandra p.160
- 38 p.202 Ibid. p.129

- 39 p.202 Ibid. p.130; of. John x, 10
- 40 p.202 Quotations in this, and the next three paragraphs, are from pp.132-44.
- 41 p.204 Perelandra p.158
- 42 p.204 Ibid. p.162. For the importance of this theme in Lewis's fiction see chaps. IV and VII of this thesis.
- 43 p.205 The conception of a body used by alien spirits occurs in Charles Williams's All Hallows Eve (1945) which was read to Williams's circle at Oxford (see chap. II above).
- 44 p.205 Perelandra p.188
- 45 p.206 Perelandra p.194. The form of this image perhaps comes from Wells's account of the moon's structure (PM).
- 46 p.206 For Lewis's own fear of insects see 8J pp.15-16.
- 47 p.206 Perelandra p.211. Perelandra's 'diversity of creatures' (cf. chap. IV p.268-270 below) is an important subsidiary theme. The coronation theme of chap. 17 is here anticipated.
- 48 p.206 Except for his bleeding heel - a symbol of sacrificial redemption: see THE passim, and compare Frodo's wound in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings, III
- 49 p.206 of. Ezek. 1, 22 and Rev. xxi, 10, 11
- 50 p.207 Perelandra p.213
- 51 p.208 Ibid. p.215
- 52 p.208 The references are to OSP chaps. 19, 20, THE pp.395-405, and Divorce pp.97-99 and p.116, respectively.
- 53 p.209 Perelandra p.238
- 54 p.210 The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, 1959, vol.9, part 1) p.355
- 55 p.210 Mountains are, of course, traditional holy places. Sinai, Carmel, Olivet are Biblical examples.
- 56 p.210 of. PL, IV, 131-83, and Lewis's discussion of it (Preface pp.47-50)
- 57 p.210 Miracles p.136. See also, ibid., pp.135, 136, 139, 140, 147, 151, 181 and 192

- 58 p.210 cf. Philippians, ii, 5-11. For the significance of the name Elwin Ransom see Perelandra pp.168-69 and 224.
- 59 p.210 Miracles p.135. Lewis applies the image to Christ's redemptive work.
- 60 p.211 Rehabilitations p.33. The reference is to Prometheus Unbound II, iii-iv.
- 61 p.211 Rehabilitations p.32
- 62 p.211 Preface p.114. Lewis pictures the approach of mankind to an unfallen and immortal Adam.
- 63 p.211 cf. Ezek. i, 15-21 and Preface p.7
- 64 p.211 Perelandra p.229
- 65 p.212 What Lewis says of Prometheus Unbound IV (Rehabilitations pp.33-34) applies to this episode - 'It is an intoxication, a complicated and uncontrollable splendour'.
- 66 p.212 Perelandra p.183
- 67 p.213 Karl Pflieger, Wrestlers with Christ, trans. E.I. Watkin, 1936, pp.241-42
- 68 p.213 La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle, quoted by Pflieger (see note 67 above) p.242
- 69 p.214 PL, I, 217-18
- 70 p.214 See chap.VIII, pp.119-121, above.
- 71 p.214 cf. Gen. ii, 19-20 and PL VIII, 342-54
- 72 p.214 cf. Rom. viii, 19-23 and Divorce p.99
- 73 p.214 cf. 1 Cor. xv, 49f., and 2 Thess. i, 7-10
- 74 p.214 See Miracles chap.IV for Lewis's discussion of this issue.
- 75 p.214 Job chaps. xxxviii-xli
- 76 p.215 e.g. The Greater Trumps (1932), chap.VII

CHAPTER XIII

- 1 p.216 'The Lewis Trilogy: A Scholar's Holiday', The Catholic World vol.167, June '48, pp.337-44

- 2 p.218 Abolition p.25
- 3 p.218 Ibid. p.30
- 4 p.219 Ibid. p.32
- 5 p.219 Ibid. pp.33. 34
- 6 p.220 Op.cit., p.23
- 7 p.220 THE p.41
- 8 p.221 of. W.B. Yeats's 'The Wild Swans at Coole':
We were the last Romantics, took for them
Traditional sanctity and loveliness....
- 9 p.221 THE p.99
- 10 p.222 Transposition pp.55-64
- 11 p.222 Ibid. pp.58, 60, 61, 62
- 12 p.222 THE p.22
- 13 p.222 Ibid. p.45
- 14 p.223 Ibid. pp.46-47
- 15 p.225 Ibid. p.238
- 16 p.226 of. Serwape p.39
- 17 p.226 THE p.249
- 18 p.226 Nineteen Eighty-Four Penguin ed., p.200
- 19 p.227 Ibid. p.214
- 20 p.227 Ibid. p.216
- 21 p.227 Lewis, 'The Personal Heresy in Criticism', Essays and Studies 1934, vol.19, p.21
- 22 p.228 THE p.55
- 23 p.228 Ibid. p.442
- 24 p.228 Ibid. p.70
- 25 p.229 Ibid. p.91

- 26 p.229 Ibid. p.218
- 27 p.229 See Wayland Hilton-Young, op.cit., p.607.
- 28 p.229 THE p.259
- 29 p.230 Ibid. p.202
- 30 p.231 TLS 25 Aug. '45, p.401
- 31 p.232 THE p.319
- 32 p.232 Ibid. p.366
- 33 p.233 Ibid. p.418
- 34 p.233 Ibid. p.337
- 35 p.234 Ibid. p.350
- 36 p.234 Ibid.p.360
- 37 p.234 Ibid. p.343
- 38 p.234 Wayland Hilton-Young, 'The Contented Christian', The Cambridge Journal vol.5, no.10, July '52, pp.603-12
- 39 p.236 THE p.398
- 40 p.236 Ibid. p.404
- 41 p.237 Ibid. p.440
- 42 p.239 THE Pan ed., Lewis's preface

CHAPTER XIV

- 1 p.241 'A Letter to the Editor', The Junior Bookshelf vol.1, no.4, April '37. Reprinted by Crouch, M., in Chosen for Children (See Bibliography E)
- 2 p.242 TWGC, 1
- 3 p.242 TWGC, 11
- 4 p.243 SJ p.22
- 5 p.243 Ibid. p.21
- 6 p.243 Walsh chap.I

- 7 p.244 SJ p.40
- 8 p.244 Ibid. pp.57-58
- 9 p.244 Ibid. p.13
- 10 p.244 Ibid. p.17
- 11 p.245 Ibid. p.19. With 'chivalrous mice' compare Reepicheep (Caspian, Voyage and LB, passim) and see pp.301-302, below
- 12 p.245 Ibid. p.20
- 13 p.245 Ibid. p.22
- 14 p.245 See Appendix E for this and other works on children's literature
- 15 p.246 Darton, preface to 1st ed.
- 16 p.248 TWNO, 1
- 17 p.248 Mireelee p.159
- 18 p.249 Orthodoxy, 1909, p.115
- 19 p.249 See chap.1, above. Edith Nesbit's trilogy has been republished by Penguin Books. R.L. Green provides an introduction, 'E. Nesbit and the World of Enchantment', to Five Children and It.
- 20 p.250 Children and Books, p.461 (See Appendix E)
- 21 p.251 See HB, passim; Fledge in MN; and Divorcee pp.93-94
- 22 p.251 ILS, 'The Myth Makers', Children's Book Supplement, 1st July, '55
- 23 p.252 Phantastes, Everyman ed., p.10
- 24 p.252 Ibid. p.39
- 25 p.252 Ibid. chaps XV-XVI
- 26 p.252 Ibid. p.156
- 27 p.252 Ibid. pp.61-62
- 28 p.253 Ibid. p.171; cf. MN p.140
- 29 p.253 The Princess and the Goblin, 1872; The Princess and Curdie, 1883

- 30 p.253 Heb. xi, 1
- 31 p.253 See his introduction to Greville Macdonald's George MacDonald and his Wife, 1924.
- 32 p.253 The Princess and Curdie passim
- 33 p.253 Strahan, 1871; Blackie, 1886
- 34 p.254 Wordsworth, Prelude 1
- 35 p.254 TLS, 'The Myth Makers', Children's Book Supplement, 1st July, '55

CHAPTER XV

- 1 p.255 TWNC, 1
- 2 p.255 TLS, 'The Myth Makers', Children's Book Supplement, 1st July, '55
- 3 p.256 'On Stories', EPCW p.91
- 4 p.256 See Lewis's essay, 'Hamlet: the Prince or the Poem' (Bibliography).
- 5 p.256 Miracles pp.79, 81
- 6 p.256 Pauline Diane Baynes, b.1922:
 She speaks of being "passionately fond of animals", of disliking towns and crowds. She believes her work has been entirely influenced by medieval and Persian painting, and having made a study of costume, she enjoys specialising in historical works.
Ruth Hill Viguers ed., Illustrators of Children's Books: 1946-1956, The Horn Book Inc., Boston, 1958, p.71
- 7 p.259 Stephen O. Mitchell, 'Alien Vision: The Techniques of Science Fiction' (See Appendix B)
- 8 p.260 LB p.52
- 9 p.260 MN p.177
- 10 p.260 Ibid. p.25
- 11 p.261 Crough p.249: an excellent article, to which I owe this idea of a historical analysis

- 12 p.262 It includes Aslan's creation of Narnia, chap.VIII (of Gen. i, 1-5); the entry of Evil, chap.VIII (of Gen. iii); Aslan's creation of flora and fauna chap. IX (of Gen. i, 11-13, 24-25, ii, 19, and PL VII, 451-76); the endowment of creatures with speech and reason, chap. IX (of Gen. ii, 7); and temptation scenes, chaps.IV and XIII (of Gen. ii, 16-17, iii, 1-5)
- 13 p.262 HB p.9
- 14 p.263 TLS, 'The Myth Makers', Children's Book Supplement, 1st July, '55
- 15 p.263 Voyage p.61
- 16 p.264 HB p.103
- 17 p.264 Crouch p.248
- 18 p.265 Voyage p.170
- 19 p.266 SC p.34
- 20 p.267 Allegory p.284. Lewis is speaking of Stephen Hawes's Festive of Pleasures, a work which appears to parallel the close of LB in several respects.
- 21 p.267 Crouch p.249
- 22 p.268 Ibid. p.248
- 23 p.268 Miracles p.159. See p.248, above.
- 24 p.269 'On Stories', EPCW, p.95
- 25 p.269 SC p.76
- 26 p.269 LNW p.140
- 27 p.269 Ibid. p.155
- 28 p.270 Crouch p.250
- 29 p.270 Preface p.56

CHAPTER XVI

- 1 p.271 TLS, 'The Myth Makers', Children's Book Supplement, 1st July, '55

- 2 p.272 See pp.253-54, above .
- 3 p.272 Rev. v, 5
- 4 p.272 Anabel William-Ellis, Spec. vol.195, pp.51-52
- 5 p.273 Dorothy L. Sayers, Spec. vol,195, p.123
- 6 p.273 The quotations in this paragraph are from HB p.178 LWW p.77, HB p.148, LWW p.131, Voyage p.149, MN p.104, and LB pp.37, 7, respectively. For Aslan's role in Narnia's 'last days' see pp.284-88 and 317-21, below .
- 7 p.274 Pain p.131
- 8 p.274 See Voyage p.149 and LB pp.21, 25, 31, 35 and 77 .
- 9 p.274 LWW p.138
- 10 p.274 1917; translated by J.W. Harvey as The Idea of the Holy, 1923
- 11 p.274 Pain chap.1
- 12 p.275 Op.cit., chap.IV
- 13 p.275 LWW p.67
- 14 p.275 See p.65, above and pp.296-97, below .
- 15 p.276 SC p.26
- 16 p.276 LWW pp.117, 119
- 17 p.276 MN p.100 and SC p.211
- 18 p.277 Descent into Hell pp.16-17
- 19 p.277 Ibid. p.65
- 20 p.278 Voyage p.222
- 21 p.278 See note 1 above
- 22 p.279 Transposition p.24
- 23 p.280 SC pp.151-52
- 24 p.281 Ibid. p.160

- 25 p.282 Transposition pp.10-11
- 26 p.282 Ibid. p.13
- 27 p.282 Ibid. p.15
- 28 p.283 Ibid. p.17
- 29 p.283 Ibid. pp.19-20
- 30 p.284 SC p.164
- 31 p.285 2 Tim. iii, 1
- 32 p.285 Rev. xvi, 13; xix, 20; xx, 10
- 33 p.285 2 Thess. ii, 9
- 34 p.285 Mark xiii, 22
- 35 p.285 LB pp.21, 25, 31, 35 and 77
- 36 p.286 Mark xiii, 13
- 37 p.286 PL, V, 803-907
- 38 p.286 LB p.92
- 39 p.287 of. THE chap.XVI
- 40 p.287 Rev. xxi, 1

CHAPTER XVII

- 1 p.289 The title of chapter IV of G.K. Chesterton's Orthodoxy (1908). Page references are to the Collins, 'Fontana' edition, 1961.
- 2 p.289 A Defence of Poetry
- 3 p.289 'On Fairy Stories', EPCW
- 4 p.290 Orthodoxy p.9
- 5 p.290 Ibid. p.49
- 6 p.290 Ibid. p.52
- 7 p.290 Ibid. p.54

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- 4 Kipling's World
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