



2006

Evolution of Thought Concerning Love and Suffering in the Life of C. S. Lewis

Margaret Mahoney

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May 2, 2006

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FROM: Christopher Craig, Director of College Scholars

RE: Margaret G. Mahoney, 415-55-5965

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Her transcript should read:

Major: College Scholars Program

Emphasis: Medieval and British Studies of English and History, Pre-Nursing

Ms. Mahoney should be considered for top honors in the Humanities division of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Thank you for your care in this.

*The Evolution of Thought Concerning Love and Suffering in the Life of Clive
Staples Lewis*

Jack Exposed: his affectionate heart confronts his rational mind

Written by Maggie Mahoney

Prepared for College Scholars Senior Project

May 2, 2006

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Abbreviations

GO- *A Grief Observed*
POP- *Problem of Pain*
TF- *Till We Have Faces*
SBJ- *Surprised By Joy*

INTRODUCTION

“All great storytellers since the dawn of time—from the ancient Greeks through Shakespeare ad up to the present day—have dealt with this fundamental conflict between subjective expectation and cruel reality (McKee).”

After working in a medical clinic all summer, the reality of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual suffering became all too evident for me on a daily basis. This constant reminder of pain from different patients not only troubled me, but also initiated a desire to delve more into the question of what is the role of suffering in human life? Every patient that entered those doors had experienced pain on some level. I am not only referring to medical pain, but also the inevitable anguish that encumbers us throughout life. Initially, I viewed most of the men and women as patients with a problem that needed a doctor’s care, and then sent on their way. Within a week, however, these ‘medical patients’ transformed into real people or ‘characters’ who became part of my personal life. As I listened to them talk about their lives, it became evident that they were inviting me into a story which radically altered my perceptions of them. I have always viewed life as a story, and why would I not view theirs in the same way. From this realization came the desire to not only listen to their stories, but also to offer them some hope in the midst of their conflict.

At first I was uncertain of how to accomplish this. I knew a good story must have three main qualities: setting and characters, conflict, and resolution; these qualities can obviously look different depending on the author, genre, and time period, but they are all present in some form. Dan Allender, a psychologist and the President of Mars Hill Graduate School, claims that “good stories tell about the intersection of desire

(“subjective expectation”) and tragedy (“cruel reality”). A story begins when our desires collide head on with reality. Good stories demand tragedy, an “inciting incident” (Allender 40). But along with the tragedy, the story must include a denouement, which in French means, “an untying, a relaxing of a knot of complexity.” “Denouement is the rest that comes when all the disparate plot of lines of a story, gnarled and taut, have been untied and an order has come about that brings a new moment of shalom,” thus Allender concludes that, “tragedy mars shalom, but denouement invites us to remember our innocence and dream of a day of even greater redemption” (Allender 49-50). If I was to view these patients’ narratives as a story then resolution, or denouement, must enter the equation at some point. Even though I could not provide the ultimate resolution to their problem, I longed to soothe the raw effects of their present suffering. This desire was the motivation to try and understand how redemption can be accomplished through suffering.

Due to both my religious beliefs and love of the Medieval and British studies, C.S. Lewis naturally came to the forefront of my mind when thinking about the topic of suffering. Throughout all of his works, Lewis presents the issue of suffering as both inevitable in the world and as an indispensable tool for personal growth. Lewis focuses on three main topics through all of his literary works: reality, identity, and the priorities of love. He interweaves these concepts in various ways depending on his literary intentions, but also as an underlying reflection of his personal life. Reading Lewis’ works, I noticed that his views on suffering nuanced as he grew older. His personal experience of suffering greatly affected his life and contributed to this change in perspective. As the years went on, Lewis did not foundationally change his views on suffering but softened his rigorist theological presentation with the reality and effects of

pain. When I first began to read Lewis, he lived in my imagination as an untouchable hero, someone who grasped the hardest questions in life. Now as I write this introduction—having read biographies, autobiographies, and primary sources I discovered a more approachable, less heroic Lewis, whose thoughts, struggles, and questions, while unquestionably wise, reflect his own struggles and historical context. I focus on Lewis not as a model of the sole example of a suffering man, but rather to expose him as everyman—for every man suffers in some form throughout his life and that suffering inevitably shapes and molds his beliefs and actions. My goal, therefore, is to observe through the life of C.S. Lewis how the rational mind apprehends and understands suffering and then how the emotional side engages in it.

After his conversion to Christianity in the fall of 1931, Lewis basically believed that suffering is the inevitable result of a broken world with broken people with a good, omnipotent God who offers His people the chance at redemption and restoration. This process of restoration, a process that calls us to discriminate amongst what is true against what is an illusory truth, initially produces more pain, but the product of that process far outweighs the pain. Beginning with *Problem of Pain*, I worked at understanding his theological presentation of suffering in the world. Lewis accepts the Scriptural narrative, albeit not anthropomorphically, that God created humans without sin but through an exercise of free will sin and suffering entered the world. From this book I moved to *Till We Have Faces*, which is a mythological retelling of the Psyche and Cupid story. In this story, Lewis reveals the questions and angry pleas toward God due to changes and tragic events in life. His focus in this text shifts from a one-sided, pragmatic argument, which

we see in *Problem of Pain*, to a complex and balanced accounting of theology and authentic emotion.

While his fictional telling exposes his own struggles, it does not reveal the intense vulnerability that he expresses in his published diary, *A Grief Observed*. Written after the death of the love of his life, his wife Joy, Lewis confronts God and himself in an emotional, authentic *crie d'coeur*. *A Grief Observed* presents the real Jack—the one who cannot reconcile his head with his heart; the two opposites come face to face with each other and he is forced to choose. Lewis chooses to believe that God was redeeming him through his suffering and that perhaps his desires were too weak compared to God's plans for his life. In the midst of what Lewis refers to as the “nightmare unreality” and “vast emptiness” (GO 56), he confesses that, “If there is a good God, then these tortures are necessary. For no even moderately good Being could possibly inflict or permit them if they weren't” (GO 43). Though he never fully understood the reasoning behind God's methods, he believed “that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us,” as Saint Paul wrote in Romans 8:18.

At the end of his life, Lewis clung to the hope of heaven and saw himself as a weathered pilgrim suffering along the way with the steadfast promise that he would soon become fully redeemed. Lewis concludes his Narnia series with the children finally reaching Aslan's [the Christ figure] country, where a unicorn exclaims, “This is my real Country! I belong here!” (*Last Battle* 196). It was in this description of a redeemed land that Lewis found joy in the midst of his suffering:

And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only

the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before. (*Last Battle* 210)

I would hope that my thoughts on Lewis's suffering shed light on his personal life, and also provide a channel of hope and comfort for the reader who experiences the weight of pain.

Chapter 1

A Sketch of C.S. Lewis' Life

"In a sense the central story of my life is about nothing else... it is that of an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy."

Drawn primarily from C.S. Lewis' autobiography, *Surprised by Joy, The Narnian*, by Alan Jacobs, George Sayers' biography, *Jack*, and Walter Hooper's *C.S. Lewis: A Complete Guide to His Life and Works*, this introduction to C.S. Lewis' life underscores his intellectual, psychological, and spiritual development, and how this development greatly affected his literary works. Lewis exemplified a life of suffering, yet learned to love and grow in the midst of his grief. Every man is influenced by the minutest details combined with dramatic events. None of the details in Lewis' life can be disregarded as insignificant to who he became as a person. Not only does this short sketch of Lewis' life reveal facts about his life, but it illumines the reader to C.S. Lewis as a person, a human being who experienced the joys, pleasures, and pains that all humans suffer- the only difference being his thoughts have been displayed for all the world to read. As Dr. R. Harvard wrote in the appendix of Lewis' *Problem of Pain*, "Pain provides an opportunity for heroism; the opportunity is seized with surprising frequency" (162). Lewis met this challenge of pain, and became one of the heroes of the twentieth century.

Clive Staples Lewis was born in 1898 in Belfast, Ireland to a solicitor and a clergyman's daughter. His two parents were "as different in temperament as in origin" (SBJ 3). His father, Albert, was a Welshman whom he classified as "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" (SBJ 3). On the other hand his mother, Flora, came from a line of "lawyers, clergymen, and

sailors” with her blood tracing back to a Norman knight (SBJ 3). His mother’s family “were critical and ironic” with a sincere ability for happiness (SBJ 3). Flora openly admitted that she did not have intense feelings for Albert, but was very “fond of him and hates the prospect of ceasing to see him, which she would have to do if she refused to marry him” (Sayer 33). She never claimed to have a deep romantic desire for Albert, but cherished his friendship enough to marry him. Lewis noticed from an early age this stark contrast between his father and mother, and developed a liking for his “mother’s cheerful and tranquil affection” (SBJ 4). Regardless of their different temperaments, both of his parents were considered intellectual and bookish for their time. They engaged in voracious reading, especially after dinner, which Lewis would later mimic as an adult. Lewis inherited his parents’ desire for reading, though his taste would be somewhat different. At the age of four he announced that his name was ‘Jacksie’, which was later shortened to Jack, a name which his closest friends would call him. He had an older brother Warren, or Warnie as Jack called him, “who was not only his brother, but his best friend” (Sayer 44).

Growing up in Belfast, Lewis developed a deep love for the sea and sailors. Since his parents were overly cautious and believed that he had a “weak chest” (Sayer 40), Lewis stayed indoors while longing to play outdoors. This ‘imprisonment’ actually led to his discovered interest in reading and writing. Since he could not engage in the actual adventures of the sea and exploration, Lewis decided to imagine them in his mind. “You can do more with a castle in a story”, he says, “than with the best cardboard castle that ever stood on a nursery table” (SBJ 12). Along with his mother’s strict instructions to stay indoors due to his weak immune system, Lewis also suffered from an “extreme

manual clumsiness” due to a single joint in his thumb, which made simple skills such as cutting with scissors or shooting a gun difficult (SBJ 12). From this inability, Lewis entered a world of stories in his imagination that opened his eyes to a happiness of which he had never dreamed. Some of his favorite imaginary discoveries included an Animal-Land that combined his “two chief literary pleasures- “dressed animals” and “knights in armor” (SBJ 13).

Lewis’ fascination with writing not only led to the development of his imagination, but deepened his spiritual and psychological intuition. Lewis describes three vivid memories of his imaginary world in his childhood that led to “an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction” (SBJ 18). This desire Lewis later labels as “Joy”, which is the one thing that Lewis cannot find adequate words to describe. He still finds a way to eloquently describe that which is indescribable with the one characteristic

that anyone who has experienced it will want it again... it might almost equally well be called a particular kind of unhappiness or grief. But then it is a kind we want. 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 and before I knew what I desired, the desire itself was gone, the whole glimpse withdrawn, the world turned commonplace again, or only stirred by a longing for the longing that had just ceased. It had taken only a moment of time; and in a certain sense everything else that had ever happened to me was insignificant in comparison.
(SBJ 18)

This joy that he describes is a consistent thread that runs throughout all of Lewis’ life and writings. Lewis developed many reasons to long for these moments of joy to escape from his sufferings. Many people believe Lewis to be an extraordinary man and theologian to whom all of the right answers came naturally. What they fail to recognize is the pain and

suffering that he endured both as a child and throughout all of his life; this suffering would become the instrument through which all of his writings filtered.

Drawn from all of his childhood experiences, the one quality which was forced upon Lewis was solitude. Jacobs explains that “After the death of his mother, solitude was more reliable, more secure, than anything else Jack knew” (Jacobs 18). Since his mother died at such an early age in his life, Lewis had only a limited experience of the nurturing relationship of a mother claiming, “Everything that had made a house a home had failed us” (SBJ 19). His father never took on the role of making sure that his son participated in various activities that a mother would be more apt to ensure. As a result Lewis spent many of his days in the Little End Room, as Warnie and him called it. In this room, the beginnings of all the fantasy worlds developed. Many believe that these invented worlds were the result of Lewis’ particular and imaginative talents, but I believe that these worlds stemmed from a much deeper longing within Lewis. Along with the loss of his mother, “all settled happiness, all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life” (SBJ 21). Through these imaginary worlds, Lewis created a place in which he could escape from the reality of his present world and live where fantasy consoled the pain and heartache of a little boy.

Though he does not claim that the loss of his mother affected him all that much, the lingering effects of her death emerge throughout his personality, his relationships, and his writings. Life grew grim with only a mercurial father in the house. Ever since Albert sent Jack to boarding school, his relationship grew more distant from his son. Though his mother had been a religious woman, Lewis possessed no real belief in God, or rather a faith in a good God. Due to early circumstances in his life, he developed “a settled

expectation that everything would do what you did not want it to do” (Jacobs 47). Many of his expectations and desires were squelched through his family life and the relationships that he encountered throughout his childhood years in school.

In *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis’ chapter on his years at boarding school is titled ‘Concentration Camp’ which speaks volumes on his experience. His first boarding school in Hertfordshire, run by a wicked headmaster ‘Oldie’, proved discouraging and gruesome for Lewis. He could not grasp certain subjects as arithmetic, and the teachers offered no grace to their students. Lewis claims that Oldie “lived in a solitude of power” (26) and actually did little teaching. Lewis, however, grants Oldie his initial ability to reason, and claims that this school was once much more prestigious than when he attended, giving more credit to his father for sending him there. Though his schooling experience rendered harsh memories and actually squelched his imaginative life, Lewis later reflects that “what really mattered was that I here [at boarding school] heard the doctrines of Christianity” (33). His ultimate thanks to this place was that “life at a vile boarding school is in this way a good preparation for the Christian life, that it teaches one to live by hope” (36).

After leaving this school, Jack attended Malvern College, where he underwent much psychological and spiritual agony. Not only did he face issues with his sexuality, but he also struggled to gain the approval and friendship of the older prefects in the school. This harsh treatment wounded him deeply, and it is a wonder that he later developed such close friends with the Inklings. At Malvern a group of the school aristocracy called the ‘Bloods’, boys that were the most athletic, wore the best clothes, and used the right slang, tormented Lewis. Lewis never enjoyed the intense games or the

materialistic emphasis to which many of the students were consumed. His miserable circumstances began to taint his views toward God and religion. Walter Hooper notes that the only two blessings for Lewis at Malvern were his classics master Harry Wakelyn Smith and the school library, called the Gurney. Through his passion for poetry and literature, Smith, called 'Smugy', taught Lewis to also love poetry. From Smugy, Lewis learned both analyzing techniques for poetry and the ability to draw out the essential rhyme and music in the poems (Sayer 88). Despite Jack's close relationship with Smugy, he remained unhappy claiming that "a school day contains hardly any leisure for a boy who does not like games" (Hooper 8). Though Warnie loved Malvern and stayed to graduate, his father sent Jack in 1914 to study at Great Bookham in Surrey as a private student under Albert's old headmaster, Mr. William Thompson Kirkpatrick, whom Jack called 'The Great Knock' (Sayer 90).

Jack spent two years at Great Bookham where he was free to discover his own taste in literature and write about the things that he had always desired to study. At Great Bookham, Lewis uncovered his love for the Romantics. Lewis owes his ability to reason logically to Kirkpatrick as he would not allow Lewis to make a statement without having sufficient evidence or proof that his statement was valid. This penchant for logical expression remained with Lewis throughout his life and proved to be one of the reasons that many fellow students and professors at Oxford would avoid conversations with him. Kirkpatrick became one of the most significant intellectual influences for Jack; along with his scholarly influence, Kirkpatrick's atheistic beliefs affected Jack. During his stay with Kirkpatrick, Lewis' letters to Arthur Greeve, a childhood friend, exposed his own shape of atheism admitting, "I believe in no religion. There is absolutely no proof for any

of them, and from a philosophical standpoint Christianity is not even the best. All religions, that is all mythologies to give them their proper name, are merely man's own invention" (Hooper 9).

His relationship with Arthur Greeves, a boy who suffered from a serious illness and who lived near Lewis as a child, fascinates many Lewis' scholars. The two met around the age of ten. Greeves was the only friend whom Lewis found in his childhood that equally loved Norse mythology and the fantasy worlds. Both Lewis and Arthur encouraged one another to explore the other's preferred literature: "Because of Arthur's enthusiasm, Jack read many of the classical English novels in his father's library that he had never thought of reading before" (Sayers 101). From this foundation of literature, the boys' relationship grew. Lewis' letters to Arthur contain some of his most intimate thoughts and actions throughout his life. According to Sayers, "Jack was more open and responsive to Arthur's guidance than he was to anyone at all in later life, except his wife and Charles Williams" (Sayers 101). Arthur was a Christian who both challenged Lewis in his beliefs and provided a safe environment for Lewis to be honest about his struggles and emotions. Arthur is one of the only friends with whom Lewis shared his suppressions of his sexual particularities and struggles as an adolescent and early adult. He also confided in Arthur concerning his relationship with Mrs. Moore, the mother of Paddy, one of his friends from the war.

Lewis was a good student in his school years and his obvious studiousness made it possible for him to attend Oxford University. Although he was born in Ireland and could have attended any of the best Irish Universities, Lewis did not feel they were sufficiently prestigious. This choice for Oxford over the Irish universities suggests a

passion in the young Lewis to break free from his provincial origins and underscores his ambition. Lewis' decision to attend university was something only the precious few could attain to in the years before WWI. The percentage of English children who attended university, almost all of whom were from the upper classes was likely not greater than 5% and those who attended those two elite universities of Oxford and Cambridge were proportionally smaller. The atmosphere at Oxford resonated with signs of the war. Most of the university was converted to an Army hospital. Shortly after arriving at Oxford, Lewis enlisted for WWI and met Paddy Moore, an Irishman whom Jack roomed with at Oxford for Army training. Since Paddy's family lived close to Oxford, he invited Lewis to his home on the weekends. Lewis grew close with Paddy's family, especially his married mother who was separated from her husband. During Lewis' month leave before going overseas, he chose to spend three weeks of his time at the Moore's which aggravated and disturbed his own father; Albert was already beginning to raise questions about Lewis' affection for Mrs. Moore. Before leaving, Paddy and Lewis made a pact with each other that were one of them to die at war, the other would take care of his family. Lewis' agreement held much higher stakes: for he would have to care for a mother separated from her husband and a daughter, while Paddy would merely watch after Lewis' self-sufficient father. Lewis had no idea of the weight of this seemingly small pact with his friends. Tragically, Paddy died while at war and Lewis subsequently and loyally bore the burden of Mrs. Moore, also called Minto, and Maureen, his sister. Mrs. Moore is an important and controversial figure in Lewis' life. Some scholars suggest that she limited and perhaps even prohibited his need for self-exploration.

Lewis left for France in November of 1917. In February of 1918, 'trench fever' overtook Lewis. He was sent back from the trenches to recover. By the end of April, now fit again, he returned to his battalion but there received serious wounds in April. He was hit on his left hand, leg, and knee. The wounds were serious enough to have him returned to Endsleigh Palace Hospital in London (Hooper 11). Sayer comments that "the wound in his wrist bothered him for the rest of his life tending to interfere with his writing" (Sayer 150). Lewis not only suffered physically, but he appears to have suffered from what is commonly called "shell-shock" or post-traumatic stress syndrome. He experienced nightmares and grieved for his friends that did not survive. Not until this time in the hospital, did Warnie and Jack's relationship begin to grow again after their sporadic visits over the past few years. Though Warnie came to visit Jack, his father never came due to bouts of bronchitis which caused even more distance between the two, especially when Jack discovered his father was attending work though he claimed he was too ill to visit his son. Throughout the rest of Albert's life, he and Jack suffered in their estranged relationship. Albert generously supported Jack throughout his long education, but he never gave him the affection that his son deeply desired. During this time of loneliness for Jack, he turned to Mrs. Moore, Paddy's mother, who willingly visited Jack in the hospital and afterward opened her home to him.

There has been much speculation about the extent of Jack and Mrs. Moore's relationship. After reading various biographies of Lewis and reading his letters to Arthur Greeves, I believe that he did 'fall in love' with Mrs. Moore. Jack's letters to Arthur written during the war reveal his true emotions toward Mrs. Moore, emotions which he revealed to no one else. Lewis confessed: "Perhaps you don't believe that I want all that

[their friendship] again, because other things more important have come in: but after all there is room for other things besides love in a man's life" and he later wrote "However, we may have good times yet, although I have been at a war and although I love someone" (Jacobs 82). These words reveal a love for Mrs. Moore that surely meant more than merely a motherly love. His letters reveal that Mrs. Moore not only cared for him in a maternal way, but she also offered a romantic love that he had never before experienced with a woman. Lewis' refusal to discuss the specifics of his relationship with Mrs. Moore to anyone, even Warnie, alludes to his need to suppress a possible romantic love. Lewis and Mrs. Moore burned their letters to each other written in the twenties.

The timing is crucial to the state of this relationship. During the twenties, Lewis struggled with numerous losses from the war, the remembrance of the loss of his mother, and his spiritual beliefs. During this time of uncertainty, it makes more sense that Lewis engaged in an ambiguous relationship with a woman twenty six years older than him. From my own observations, I noticed that Lewis began referring to Mrs. Moore as his "mother", rather than alluding to her as his lover, simultaneously with his movement toward theism and Christianity. Along with his movement away from atheism, Lewis became more of a caretaker for the aging and ill woman whom he likely began to see more as a mother than a mistress. If anything, his relationship with Mrs. Moore illustrates his desire for someone to care for and love him at a time when he was desperately lonely and struggling with the effects of his childhood and the war.

Many scholars are suspicious of Jack's relationship with Mrs. Moore, because of the immense disapproval from his father and brother. Albert remained skeptical of his son living with such an older, married woman. Warnie had a particular dislike for her

personality and the obligations she placed on Jack. Though Jack never claimed that Mrs. Moore restricted him from his studies or scholarly work, Warnie noted that she kept Jack from his work making him do all of the house chores with Mrs. Moore constantly calling on him for help while he tried to write. Lewis, however, admitted to George Sayer that Mrs. Moore “was generous and taught me to be generous too... If it were not for her, I should know little or nothing about ordinary domestic life as lived by most people” and “I was brought down to earth and made to work with my hands” (Sayer 155). Behind all of his secrecy with Mrs. Moore, we see his loyal commitment to his pact with Paddy and also to the individuality of Mrs. Moore and her daughter Maureen. His devotion and loyalty to Minto, especially in her old age when she was critical, hyper-sensitive, and suffering from dementia, is quite impressive. He sacrificed many of his friendships, including his father’s and brother’s, to uphold his commitment to this family. People too often use his relationship with Mrs. Moore as a way to discredit his character and writings. They see in this secrecy a neurotic self-suppression and guilty sexuality.

Sayer, a pupil and friend of Lewis in the thirties gives his account and opinion of Mrs. Moore in his biography, describing her as “generous and hospitable to a fault and made a lifelong habit of caring for anyone in need” (Sayer 154); therefore, it was “entirely in character that she should devote herself to looking after this poor young man who had lost his mother” (Sayer 154). Owen Barfield, a good friend of Jack’s in the 1920’s, told Sayer that the likelihood of Jack and Mrs. Moore as lovers was “fifty-fifty” (Sayer 154). Sayer openly struggles with making sense of certain aspects of their relationship. He comments, “Although she was twenty six years older than Jack, she was still a handsome woman, and he was certainly infatuated with her. But it seems very odd,

if they were lovers, that he would call her “mother.” We know, too, that they did not share the same bedroom. It seems most likely that he was bound to her by the promise he had given to Paddy and that his promise was reinforced by his love for her as his second mother (Sayer 154).”

He also gives an exact account of meeting Mrs. Moore in the Kilns:

Some of those who have written about C.S. Lewis regard his living with Mrs. Moore and Maureen as odd, even sinister. This was not the view of those of us who visited the Kilns in the thirties. There she was, a rather stately woman, sitting at the tea table. “Mother, may I introduce Mr. Sayer, a pupil of mine?” is what he would say. Like his other pupils, I thought it completely normal those days that a woman, probably a widow, would make a home for a young bachelor. (Sayer 154)

Many negative things can and have been said about Mrs. Moore. On her death Warnie commented in his diary: “And so ends mysterious self-imposed slavery in which J[ack] has lived for at least thirty years. How it began, I suppose I shall never know” (Jacobs 93). There is no way to fully know what happened between Jack and Mrs. Moore. Robert Green and Walter Hooper, two prominent biographers of Lewis, refer to her as a ‘mother substitute’ which sounds the most comforting. Mrs. Moore surely did serve as a mother figure for Lewis, but his letter to Arthur, his secrecy about the relationship, and his actions toward her cannot be minimized. I believe they likely had romantic, even erotic feelings, for each other at the beginning of their relationship before Lewis became Christian. I do not necessarily believe that those feelings led to a consummation between the two. By the 1930’s, Lewis solely referred to Mrs. Moore as a mother figure, and he a caretaker for her. I do believe that Mrs. Moore filled the long time void in Lewis’ life of a dependable, loving woman. Her life influenced Lewis in a way that was crucial to his writings. His relationship with Mrs. Moore was one more

detail in his life to add to the pain that he experienced. Jack experienced the meaning of sacrifice and without Mrs. Moore he might not have had the compulsion to write about what he did.

During the same time that his relationship with Mrs. Moore was supposedly romantic, he immensely struggled in his spiritual beliefs. Lewis' view of God ever since adolescence was one of cynicism and pessimism. Sayer directly quotes from a remark that Lewis made to one of his friends during that time: "The trouble about God is that he is like a person who never acknowledges your letters and so in time you come to the conclusion that he does not exist or that you have his address wrong" (158). As a child, Jack and Warnie were forced to attend a Protestant church where their grandfather was a rector. Both boys understood this practice as political rather than a religious rite. The friction between the Protestant and Roman Catholic Church was rampant following World War I. At Malvern College, Jack went to chapel, but he claims that the services meant nothing to him. Great Bookham fed his unbelief, and he did not attend church at all. G.K. Chesterton and George Macdonald, two prolific writers, greatly influenced Lewis' literary mind, but he did not integrate their Christian beliefs into his own life until the late twenties. It was in these later years of reading their writings that Lewis could not discard arguments such as Chesterton made that "in claiming to be the Son of God, Jesus Christ was either a lunatic or a dishonest fraud or He was speaking the truth" (Sayer 253).

Though Lewis moved toward a theistic belief in 1926, he did not convert to Christianity until 1931. On his acceptance of toward theism, he describes the event:

You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. 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 of England. I did not then see what is not the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms. The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape?... The hardness of God is softer than the kindness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation. (SBJ 228-229)

Lewis began regularly to attend Sunday services in 1929, but did not become a practicing member of the Church of England for two more years. His acceptance of Christianity occurred as a result of various factors. The scholarly evidence of the Gospel's authenticity, his father's death in September of 1929, his brother, and the Inklings all culminated in his conversion. Jack merits his final decision to convert on September 19, 1931 from a conversation that he had with J.R.R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson, two professors who were dinner guests at Magdalen College and became his dearest friends in the future. These men had begun to take long walks at night to discuss scholarly and spiritual issues on a regular basis. After dinner the three men took a stroll through Addison's Walk where they begin to discuss the origins of myths. As an adolescent and early adult, Lewis withheld his beliefs primarily due to the *story* of Christianity. Not until the creation, fall, and redemption could become a positive and authentic story in his mind would Lewis consider these beliefs to be true. It was this night in September that Tolkien and Dyson convinced Jack of the "true nature of myth and the place of the Gospel narrative in the world of mythological stories. He became a Christian not through accepting a particular set of arguments but through learning to read a story the right way. And maybe others could move closer to Christian belief by the same path" (Jacobs 238).

After this conversation, Lewis wrote to Arthur explaining his epiphany:

Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with tremendous difference that it *really happened*: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering that it is God's myth where the others are men's myths: i.e. the Pagan stories are God expressing himself through the minds of poets, using such images as he found there, while Christianity is God expressing himself through 'real things'" (Jacobs 149)

Jack's letter reveals not only his new understanding of Christianity, but this theme of Christian myth runs throughout the rest of his fictional works. I will spend more time on the myth of Christianity in the following chapters. For now, my focus is on Lewis' conversion and the effects that his new belief had on his domestic and intellectual life. His actual conversion after the conversation with Tolkein and Dyson took place on September 22, 1931 while sitting in the sidecar of Warnie's motorcycle on the way to the zoo. "When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," Lewis wrote, "and when we reached the zoo I did" (Sayer 226). Rather than an emotional or rational decision, "It was more like when a man after long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake" (Sayer 226).

Lewis admitted that his greatest fear in turning from atheism was that he would be "interfered with" and that he could no longer "call my soul my own" (SBJ 228). His desire for control in his own life prolonged his surrender to Christianity. From his conversation with Tolkien and Dyson came one of Lewis' most treasured joys—the Inklings. This was a group of men who would gather on Thursday nights in Lewis' rooms in Magdalen College to discuss Christianity and myth. They devoted most of their time to read aloud and to critique each others' work. He loved stimulating conversations, especially with those who were intellectually inclined to understand his ways of thinking.

Among the regulars were Dyson, Nevill Coghill, Adam Fox, Owen Barfield, Charles Williams, Warnie, Tolkien, and sporadically Tolkien's son Christopher (Jacobs 196). The Inklings also began to meet on Tuesday mornings at a pub called the 'Eagle and Child'. Here they would enjoy good conversation over pipes, beer, and cider.

The Inklings played a significant role in Lewis' life not only for their influence on his literary works, but also for their friendships. Above all else, Lewis found great joy in his friends and laughing. His stepson once said in an interview that laughter was one of Lewis' greatest pleasures. His greatest pleasure came

when the whole group is together, each bringing out all that is best, wisest, or funniest in all the others... when the whole world, and something beyond the world, opens itself to our minds as we talked; and no one has any responsibility for another, but all are freemen and equals as if we had first met an hour ago, while at the same time an Affection mellowed by the years enfolds us. Life—natural life—has no better gift to give. Who could have deserved it? (*The Four Loves* 98-99)

Lewis especially found Charles Williams intriguing and enjoyable. William's literary works fascinated Jack, some of the most famous being *Descent into Hell* and *All Hallow's Eve*. William's most influential concept for Lewis was the idea of co-inherence, which simply meant that Christians physically, mentally, and emotionally helped bear the burdens of their friends who were experiencing deep pain. When a friend takes on another's burden, he is able to ease the pain of his fellow friend. Not until later in life, did Jack personally experience this idea through his marriage.

Though he deeply respected all of the men in the Inklings, he was forever indebted to Tolkien. He owed him his newfound views of Christian truth and myth. Though Tolkien and Lewis disagreed on many issues, especially theology and the mixing of the real world with the myth world, they probably respected each other. Lewis' letters

reveal how he craved the praise and critique of Tolkien; Tolkein felt the same though he did not express his gratitude quite as nicely as Lewis. Lewis continually encouraged Tolkien with his trilogy series, which grew to be a burden. Tolkein was never satisfied with his work and was incessantly changing it. Tolkien did not return Lewis' compliments, but rather noted that the *Narnia* series was unsuccessful. Tolkein could not reconcile the real world with the myth world, which is exactly what Lewis loved to do. For Lewis the mythic and the real are always interpenetrating; *Narnia*, his space trilogy, *The Great Divorce*, and *Till We Have Faces* exemplify this. Though their friendship experienced many ups and downs, Lewis and Tolkein contributed to one another's personal, spiritual, and intellectual growth in incalculable ways.

Besides Lewis' ambiguous relationship with Mrs. Moore, he did not interact with women on a romantic level until meeting his wife, Joy Davidman Gresham. Joy was a New York Jew, who began to write Jack letters in 1950 thanking him for his works and telling him how much they had personally affected her life. She converted to Christianity later in her life, just as Lewis had. This correspondence continued for quite some time until she traveled to England where the two finally met. She left the States for a time with her two boys David and Douglas in 1952, because of her husband, who was a drunkard and somewhat abusive. Joy decided to stay in England once her husband informed her that he was with another woman and wanted a divorce. Warnie described her on their first meeting as "quite extraordinarily uninhibited" giving an account at a Magdalen lunch: "She turned to me in the presence of three or four men, and asked in the most natural tone in the world, 'Is there anywhere in this monastic establishment where a lady can relieve

herself?'" (Jacobs 272). Though Warnie was skeptical of Joy at first, probably due to Jack's previous relationship with Mrs. Moore, he came to love, respect, and cherish her.

Since Joy was an American, she received a notice stating she could not remain in England. Lewis decided to offer her his hand to her in a civil marriage so she could remain in England and her sons would receive the benefits of British subjects. Joy would remain in her own house with the boys and Lewis visited daily to make sure that they were properly cared for. He never told Tolkien about Joy, because he knew that Tolkien would disapprove of a marriage to a divorcee, but most of the other Inklings knew. Withholding the news of his marriage to Joy only added to the estranged relationship with Tolkien in their later years.

In 1954, Lewis moved from Oxford to Cambridge to assume the Professorship in the faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages. Shortly after he took this position, Jack decided that Joy and her boys should move into the Kilns, a home Lewis had recently purchased. Shortly before Joy was to move, she tripped in her house, which resulted in a broken femur. When taken to the hospital, the doctor discovered that Joy's frail bone was the result of cancer, with numerous tumors in her left breast, right leg and shoulder. With this discovery came Jack's personal discovery that he truly loved Joy and wanted to marry her again: this time not as a common law marriage, but for the commitment and devotion of love. Lewis spoke openly of his emotional, physical, and spiritual connection after their second marriage. From here there is much debate as to when Jack actually discovered that he loved Joy sexually. Though Walter Hooper and Roger Green, two scholars on Lewis, insist that he did not fall in love with Joy until after her illness, Lewis' brother and stepson claim otherwise. Though Lewis denies any love for Joy previous to

her cancer, his actions proved otherwise, according to those closest to him. Regardless of the specific time, Lewis indeed fell in love with the brassy American woman. They were officially married on March 21, 1957 in Joy's hospital room by an old pupil of Jack's, the Reverend Peter Bide, because the bishop of Oxford would not grant his priests permission to hold the ceremony due to Joy's previous marriage (Sayer 368). In a letter that Lewis wrote to Dorothy Sayers, he confesses that "We soon learn to love what we know we must lose" (Jacobs 278-79). He also told Nevill Coghill that "I [Lewis] never expected to have, in my sixties, the happiness that passed me by in my twenties" (Jacobs 279). Not only does this emphasize his deep love for Joy, but also alludes to his ambiguous relationship with Mrs. Moore.

Though the doctors sent Joy home with the prognosis of a death soon to come, she miraculously began to heal. Lewis was reminded of Charles William's theme of co-inherence. As Joy began to gain strength in her bones, Jack began to weaken physically, developing osteoporosis. Jack desired more than anything for Joy's sufferings to be transferred to him, and so he began to physically bear her burden shortly after. Since the couple was never allowed a honeymoon after their marriage due to Joy's illness, they decided to take a trip to Greece, which was tiresome for both, but the benefits of time spent together and cherished memories exceeded the pain. Shortly after their return, Joy grew very ill and would only live for three more months. These few months were gruesome for Joy and unbearable for Jack to watch her suffer. Once again, Jack took on the role of caretaker for a woman he loved. Joy died on July 13, 1960 leaving behind her friend, scholar, nurse, and lover. It seems so cruel to allow him the experience of a love so real only for it to be snatched away so quickly.

Out of Lewis' grief, he wrote *A Grief Observed*, which is his personal journal. He initially did not intend to publish it but only relented after much pressure from his friends who had read portions of it. Through this work, which remained anonymous until he died, the world could read about grief from someone who had personally experienced the weight of loving so much in life that he wanted to give everything up. From this book we see the authentic emotions of Lewis after the death of his wife, which challenged his theological beliefs. Some people believe that Lewis lost his faith after the death of Joy, but this is definitely a false conclusion. Lewis entered a paralyzing grief with the loss of Joy that initially challenged his beliefs, but later strengthened them. Lewis suffered physically, emotionally, and spiritually until his death on November 22, 1963. Near the end of his death, Jack calmly told Warnie, "I have done all I wanted to do, and I'm ready to go" (Hooper 119). Warnie had his mother's favorite Shakespeare quote placed on Jack's tombstone: "Men must endure their going hence."

My intentions were to give a brief overview of the significant events that influenced his thoughts and his literary works. I have included a detailed timeline of Lewis' life and the significant events. I highly recommend the biographies mentioned at the beginning of this chapter to further your own personal studies.

Chapter 2

Problem of Pain: Lewis' Theological Approach to Suffering

“He [God] has paid us the intolerable compliment of loving us in the deepest, most tragic, most inexorable sense (33)... love may cause pain to its object [mankind], but only on the supposition that the object needs alteration to become fully lovable”. (POP 48).

C.S. Lewis developed a worldview and belief system that drastically altered in 1931 when he converted to Christianity. Ten years prior to this, Lewis expressed his atheistic views without hesitation. With these beliefs, Lewis not only claimed that there was no God, but also that he was quite glad to live without “a bogey who is prepared to torture me for ever and ever if I would fail in coming up to an almost impossible ideal” (293 Hooper). His concept of God was that of a cruel dictator who was waiting on his peasants to make mistakes so he could punish them for their shortcomings. Lewis’ experience in the trenches of war only escalated his rebellion toward God. During World War I Lewis believed that pain came from humans’ inability to uphold His God’s requirements, and that idea repulsed him. By this time, the pain in Lewis’ life from the loss of a mother, the war, and relationships evolved into something so unbearable that the “‘ancient hope’ of there being a ‘just God that cares for earthly pain is merely a dream’” (Hooper 293). This view of God starkly contrasts with his book *Problem of Pain* written twenty years later in 1940. Lewis tackles the universal question of pain and why that suffering occurs in the lives of every human being. Not until his view of God changed in the late 1920’s and early thirties was Lewis able to reconcile the idea of pain with some form of goodness rather than torture. In *Problem of Pain*, Lewis uses his rational mind to understand and accept the suffering in the world and the God that allows that pain to

occur. My goal in this chapter is not to summarize Lewis' book, though I will give a brief summary, but rather to focus on his theological presentation of suffering and the paradox of tribulation.

Lewis begins his introduction expressing his prior beliefs as an atheist. Since he did not have a definite answer to the burning questions of pain in a 'good' world, he assumed that the creator must not be good. With this belief as a former backdrop, Lewis invites the reader to view his newly discovered beliefs about his personal God. Lewis claims three essential characteristics of God crucial to understanding one's view of pain and suffering. God, in the most basic sense, is Divine Omnipotence; meaning that "no cause other than Himself produces his acts and no external obstacle impedes them—that His own goodness is the root from which they all grow and His own omnipotence the air in which they all flower" (POP 27). Lewis excludes the assumption that God uses his power to do that which is intrinsically impossible, for that would translate to nonsense. In this regard, Lewis is not speaking of the power of miracles, but arbitrary choices. "Not even omnipotence," he says, "could create a society of free souls without at the same time creating a relatively independent and 'inexorable' Nature" (Hooper 298). Within this divine omnipotence, humans do not possess the right to question whether it was better for God to create or not to create if He knew that his creatures would have to experience such suffering. That is a question we have not the mind to tackle. We can, however, conclude: "our design... is only to discover how, perceiving a suffering world, and being assured, on quite different grounds, that God is good, we are to conceive that goodness and that suffering without contradiction" (POP 27).

From this Divine Omnipotence comes the Divine Goodness of God. According to Lewis, the goodness of God presents a dilemma for all humans:

On the one hand, if God is wiser than we His judgment must differ from ours on many things, and not least on good and evil. What seems to us good may therefore not be good in His eyes, and what seems to us evil may not be evil (POP 28)...The Divine Goodness differs from ours, but it is not sheerly different: it differs from ours not as white from black but as a perfect circle from a child's first attempt to draw a wheel (30).

Lewis affirms that God's goodness is not foreign to humans, because he would not require his creatures to practice that which is completely alien; rather He appeals to our existing moral judgment and reveals the gap from what is perfect goodness and what we presume to call good in our finite minds. Not only does God possess a divine goodness, that is not fully understandable, but his definition of goodness is much more than our simple explanation. Goodness in the human sense usually equates with some form of our own happiness as long as it is morally acceptable. We ask for goodness that allows happiness without suffering, while God offers a refining love that forces us to examine our own hearts and the world around us. Since Lewis believes that God is love in his Divine omnipotence and goodness, he concludes that his [Lewis'] "conception of love needs correction" (POP 32).

Love is not, therefore, an attempt to give humans what they want but rather the action to make them into lovable creatures. God would cease to be God if his love was satisfied with us in our present state of finite desires. "His love must, in nature of things, be impeded and repelled by certain stains in our present character [original sin]" and "because He already loves us He must labor to make us lovable" (POP 41). God is not concerned with our present happiness, but desires to make us into that which he

originally created us to be. He seeks to change our desires to be like his so we can find ultimate happiness in him and not in temporary desires. Since we cannot comprehend this type of love, we assume that he must really not love us at all but rather desires to dictate our lives. Our own love of self inhibits us from fathoming a selfless love. God expects to receive nothing from us; his ultimate desire is to give, and this is true goodness.

According to Christian belief, our sin creates the illusion that our own desires are inherently good, causing us to place our happiness in that which will essentially not make us happy. So while we do not understand his goodness or love, “those Divine demands which sound to our natural ears most like those of a despot and least like those of a lover, in fact marshal us where we should want to go if we knew what we wanted” (POP 46). In our efforts to avoid suffering, Lewis accuses humans of wishing that “God had designed for us a less glorious and less arduous destiny; but then we are wishing not for more love, but for less” (POP 35).

The reason which we desire this less glorious destiny stems from the Fall at the beginning of creation. Lewis’ fourth and fifth chapters expound on the idea of original sin, which results in a fallen world with fallen people trying to comprehend the actions of a God perfect in His love and goodness. That term does not imply, however, that man is not able to do good things for the world and those that occupy it; that would be an absurd claim, for there are traces of goodness in men. So man in his fallen state is not as good as he could be, nor as bad as he should be. Much of Lewis’ beliefs concerning the state of man reflect St. Augustine’s idea of Original Sin. St. Augustine was a neo-Platonist at the time of his conversion and brought that philosophical tradition to his study of the Christian scriptures, particularly to the Pauline Epistles. According to St. Augustine, sin

is the “result of Pride, of the movement whereby a creature (that is, an essentially dependent being whose principle of existence lies not in itself but in another) tries to set up on its own, to exist for itself” (POP 69). “From the moment a creature becomes aware of God as God and of itself as self, the terrible alternative of choosing God or self for the centre is opened to it” (POP 70). Man chose himself over God and from that choice, the consequences of a fallen species encompassed the entire world. Since we departed from God in the beginning, his mission is to bring us back to the position where we are not wicked. This process, though painful, is not to be viewed as a punishment, but to make us into what he deems beautiful. Ultimately, our present condition is in one sense a horror to God, and a horror to ourselves when we actually see it as we truly are. Lewis’ theological beliefs on the origin and effects of the Fall allow for his argument on suffering. Lewis concludes these two chapters on the condition of man simply stating, “man, as a species, spoiled himself, and that good, to us in our present state, must therefore mean primarily remedial or corrective good. What part pain actually plays in such remedy or correction is now to be considered” (POP 85).

Lewis devotes the rest of the book to the idea of pain as a remedy for the human soul. This statement is paradoxical; pain in its definition usually needs a remedy rather than equating as one. According to Christianity, however, tribulation is at the core of its theology. The ultimate tribulation was the divine Christ dying on the Cross for his people. Christ’s crucifixion is the pinnacle of all paradoxes; through his death “he bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by his wound you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). His death provided life, and through that life came a gain that outweighs all of the temporary pain and suffering on earth. This belief is

the pinnacle of Lewis' conclusions regarding the necessity of suffering. If God is good in his very nature, and yet sent his Son to suffer for mankind, then the only feasible assumption is that Christ's suffering merited some good although the actual event was horrific. Our suffering, of course, is different from Christ's because we are not gods. Christ suffered to provide a way for man to become like Him. If we grant this as a premise, then pain, regardless of how bad it seems, must provide some necessary means of annealing our souls' capacity for true discernment.

This is where Lewis begins his debate on the reasons for human suffering. There are many different types of pain that one can access from various situations in life. There is pain from the consequences of a particular action or the action of someone else that has horrific effects. There is physical pain that comes from illness or injury. Perhaps the most puzzling form of pain is that which appears to result from no particular reason, and often afflicts 'good' people. This form of pain is usually referred to as a tragedy. Dan Allender, a psychologist, refers to tragedy as "cruel reality" (Allender 40). No explanation suffices for the circumstances at hand. Everyone knows this kind of pain; whether from personal experience, watching a close friend, or reading an article in the newspaper, we all have heard of tragedies. The ancient Greeks were preoccupied with trying to explain the causes of such pain and Sophocles explores this conundrum in his "Theban Trilogy." For Americans, perhaps the most notable example of such pain is the terrorist attack of September 11. There is no logical explanation for these events, and that lack of explanation causes an intellectual insecurity which in turn leads to a spiritual anxiety. Some people, especially Christians, interpreted 9/11 as a punishment for the moral state of America. But such judgments are facile since in making such radical claims, they

pretend to know that which they have no authority or power to know. Lewis never stated that this form of tragedy and pain came as a punishment. Rather, he would have made some claims as to what we could learn from that situation; observations not unlike those that he made in *Problem of Pain*, during WWII.

While Lewis did not view tragedy as a form of punishment, he does claim that “pain is a megaphone to arouse a deaf world”. God wants us to realize that ‘All is not well’ in the world and through this realization emerges the need to change our identity. We must somehow get back to our original state when this world was right. Since man is fallen, God must in a very real sense kill the old self to begin refining the new. The most feasible way to do this is to remind man that he is not well, and the only way to illumine man to his own spiritual death is through pain. To some, the suffering comes worse, but this is only so that we can surrender our life to Him in whom our true happiness lies. Lewis quotes St. Augustine in saying, “God wants to give us something, but cannot, because our hands are full—there’s nowhere for Him to put it” (POP 94). If one does believe that there is a God who created mankind, then is it not fair to say that the Creator knows exactly what His creatures need? Lewis believes that God is actually doing us a divine service by showing us through certain pains that we are not satisfied with what we had thought. Our desires, in certain regards, are too weak in comparison with God’s as He seeks to give us more. Lewis concludes the Problem of Pain with this belief that “where God’s providence seems to be most cruel, that the Divine humility, the stooping down of the Highest, most deserves praise” (POP 94).

The paradox of suffering parallels the principle of the cross. Only from suffering can redemption surface and give beauty to a life that was not worth living before the pain.

Simone Weil, a French Jew and philosopher who devoted her life to following God, addresses the paradox of the cross and the unchanging character of God within that horrid act:

God created through love and for love. God did not create anything except love itself, and the means to love. He created love in all its forms. He created beings capable of love from all possible distances. Because no other could do it, he himself went to the greatest possible distance, the infinite distance. This infinite distance between God and God, this supreme tearing apart, this agony beyond all others, this marvel of love, is the crucifixion. (Waiting for God)

This act on the cross seems foreign to a world, especially contemporary America, that relies on comfort and security; a world where luxury equates with happiness and success. But Lewis challenges the conceptions of the world with his belief that the world is far from complete.

The concept that we need reminding of our own spiritual brokenness and the fleeting promises of the world reminds me of a dear old lady I met last summer while working in a gastroenterology clinic. I will call her Marjorie. She was an eighty year old, active woman. She worked in her garden every day, took food baskets to the poor, and various other activities. Marjorie felt the normal aches and pains that come with age, but she seemed completely healthy overall. One day she began having intense cramps in her abdomen, and days later she finally went to the doctor. The tests results revealed cancer of the stomach and colon. For months, the cancer had been eating away at her intestines, but she had no idea. The absence of pain kept her ignorant to her own disease. The doctor claimed it was too late for her fragile body to endure treatment; if they had only known sooner, there might have been a way to heal her. In this incident, the absence of pain proved detrimental to her life. If she had felt those intense pangs months earlier, her

illness would have been diagnosed. I tell this anecdote to show the necessity of pain. Marjorie was not well physically, but her body did not warn her in time to allow for a cure. Though she did not welcome pain, she regretted that warning signs of her approaching death did not come sooner. Her only chance of survival was to recognize that something was not right with her body. Lewis makes similar claims about pain applicable not to the body, but to the soul. Mankind needs to know that something is not right in his soul, because he lacks something that cannot be found in this world. There is a longing, according to Lewis, for something more. He calls glimpses of the fruition of that longing, *joy*.

People must experience pain to be authentically human, to be physically healthy and spiritually not trapped by illusions. We must realize that what we have, no matter how good or bad, is not enough for us. Since God created us, he knows what makes us happy and that we cannot be completely happy without him. Everything cannot be well if we do not have him as part of our 'ALL', even if we are disillusioned to think otherwise. God seeks to warn people, even those that we merit as good, that in the end they must have him to achieve true goodness. We must come to believe that He "may really be right when He thinks that their modest prosperity and the happiness of their children are not enough to make them blessed: that all of this must fall from them in the end, and if they have not learned to know him they will be wretched" (POP 95). Therefore, he uses circumstances to make them long for something more, something that this world cannot give them.

The next logical question to ask is why pain continues to haunt those that understand their condition and the world's. Once a man learns this truth, why must he

continue to suffer? Is it really necessary for 'good' men to suffer? This is one of the fundamental questions of humanity. Lewis relies on his beliefs of God contrasted with his beliefs of man to answer this question. If God is ultimately good, then he can never cease to be good and do good to mankind. Man is not good in his very essence and therefore has a distorted standard and conception of what is actually good. This argument seems somewhat ambiguous, but Lewis' description of God, which he draws from the Scripture, allows for the unexplainable. If God is infinite in his understanding, then finite men cannot interpret or fully comprehend His ways. This is where man must truly *believe* and not just say that God must in fact know what we need more than we do. It is in our longing for happiness in the feeble things of this world that God reminds us that what we think will make us better, actually will not.

Lewis emphasizes that this refinement by God is a continual process. Since our desires are not pure, they will continue to wander back to the things that cannot fulfill us. So while we might think we are miserable, God is actually doing us an unthinkable favor; He saves us from our hold on this world and reminds us that there is a greater world to come. Much of Lewis' metaphysical speculation, particularly his idea of another world, reflects Lewis' fascination with Plato. For Plato, all of life is but a shadow of what is actually real. In a similar way, this world is merely a shadow of the restored world for which God presently is preparing us. God withholds from us the ultimate happiness and security that we all desire as a constant reminder that only he can satisfy us. He allows tastes of pleasure and enjoyment on the earth, but they are not the kind that give us entirely what we crave at the depths of our soul. God's intentions are not to make people miserable on earth as "our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but

will not encourage us to mistake them for home” (POP 116). Suffering, therefore, is preparing us for our true home. Suffering, though it does extend from evil, does not necessarily produce more evil though it does extend from evil. Lewis claims that suffering actually produces greater attributes. This contributes to the redemption through suffering as “the redemptive effect of suffering lies chiefly in its tendency to reduce the rebel will” (POP 112). God seeks to break people from evil so that they can be made into something more beautiful.

Take an artist creating a colorful mosaic: before he can begin his project, he must shatter the pieces of glass that he will use to produce an orderly masterpiece. The glass must break into tiny pieces to exhibit the potential beauty of the glass; without shattering the glass, there would have not been a way to produce a masterpiece. In light of this analogy, imagine a God who knows that his people are not as beautiful as they could be. The only way to show them that they would become more beautiful is through breaking their hearts; once they realize that the world is not all that it could be, they are willing to entertain the thought of becoming a better form of who they presently are. Once the person is willing, God as the artist can remake him or her into a more beautiful person.

This is the paradox of tribulation: the shattering of our hearts and former desires to give us what we ultimately need; and realizing throughout the whole process that the former desires provided false satisfaction and security, while these new desires though somewhat painful are far more lasting. Lewis tries to legitimize his theology of pain by providing examples of men that have become great through suffering. He claims that “I have seen great beauty of spirit in some who were great sufferers, I have seen men, for the most part, grow better not worse with advancing years, and I have seen the last illness

produce treasures of fortitude and meekness from most unpromising subjects. I see in loved and revered historical figures, such as Johnson and Cowper, traits which might scarcely have been tolerable if the men had been happier” (POP 108-109). He does not wish people to suffer, but recognizes the personal growth that people experience through hardships. Lewis supports this belief with the help of one Dr. R. Harvard, who claims, “pain provides an opportunity for heroism; the opportunity is seized with surprising frequency” (POP 162). Though this is not always the case, “the wonder is that the failures are so few and the heroes so many” (POP 161).

Lewis does not obsess over the idea of suffering, but rather acknowledges that suffering encompasses the entire world. He recognizes the universal affects of pain in the world. Everyone, in their own form, experiences unbearable grief. Not only does he discuss the universal pain of the world, he also distinguishes the universal longing that everyone possesses whether it is physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. We want more out of life than what we have, so we are left looking within a world that can never give us what we ultimately want. We must believe that there is an actual thing or place for which we are longing while living in the present world. He describes the experience of someone reading a book, which makes them come so alive or touches a part of their heart so starkly, and yet they are unable to describe this feeling to anyone. Usually people think they are eccentric for finding such enjoyment in a book. These inexpressible joys are all around us. All of these desires or glimpses through an experience or a specific moment defend Lewis’ claims that we were made for another world. Lewis acknowledges this personal and possibly inexpressible beauty in his remark:

All of these things that have ever deeply possessed your soul have been but hints of it—tantalizing glimpses, promises never quite fulfilled, echoes that died away just as they caught your ear. But if it should really become manifest—if there ever came an echo that did not die away but swelled into the sound itself—you would know it. Beyond all possibility of doubt you would say ‘Here at last is the thing I was made for.’ . . . if we lose this, we lose all. (151)

Pain is the realization that desires inhabit your soul which cannot be satisfied in this world. The experience of that pain produces redemptive beauty that permeates throughout all of Lewis’ works, which reiterates the paradox of pain—that redemption is only accomplished through suffering. This redemption comes solely through the recognition of ones’ true ontological identity and seeing the need for the former identity to be stripped away lest it obscure the real self. To get back to our own self is a “grievous pain” for to “surrender a self-will inflamed and swollen with years of usurpation is a kind of death” (POP 89). This losing of yourself to find yourself comes directly from the Scripture (Matt. 16: 24-26). Lewis’ understanding of the paradox of suffering primarily stems from his understanding and belief in the Scripture. If someone disclaims the truths in the Scripture, then it is most likely that they will not fully agree with Lewis’ interpretation of suffering.

At this point in his life, Lewis was in his early 50’s and had not yet experienced the most grievous of sufferings, the loss of his wife. As we move further along in Lewis’ life, his understanding of this subject becomes less an academic abstraction and more an expression of personal anguish fashioned into a lived theology. His discussion of pain in this book might appear as insensitive and emotionless, but his primary argument in *Problem of Pain* was not to discuss the personal heartache of pain, but rather to observe how the rational mind understands the necessity of pain. Lewis even calls himself a

coward when it comes to experiencing pain, and if he “knew any way of escape, I [Lewis] would crawl through sewers to find it” (POP 105). The heartbreak, grief, fear, and loneliness that extend from pain should not be downplayed by Lewis’ theological discussion. His approach to the subject reveals that Lewis had not yet embarked on his most grievous journeys while writing this book. We will see in my last chapter Lewis’ description of personal pain when it pierces his own soul. Lewis was not arguing in *Problem of Pain* that “pain is not painful”; he was “only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made ‘perfect through suffering’ (Hebrews 2:10) is not incredible” (POP 105). It is clear that Lewis does not encourage suffering for suffering’s sake, but for the eternal consequences. God’s character, as we come to know it, juxtaposed with the character of men proves that ‘all is not well, but can be made well through an initially painful process. Therefore suffering, all suffering, anguish and physical pain alike, can be understood as part of the redemptive process of the maturation of the soul which provides an individual the opportunity to discern the true condition of the world, his or her situation therein, and to provide glimpses of God.

Chapter 3: *Till We Have Faces*—Mythology in light of Reality and the Priorities of Love

“How can they [the gods] meet us face to face till we have faces”

In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis presents a more rigid view to the cause and circumstances of pain rather than exploring the various pain and questions that comes with suffering. His statements appear bold, strictly logical, and somewhat unemotional to the reality of pain in the midst of tribulation. A few years after finishing *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis began writing fiction that would later become renowned. Through these stories, Lewis underscores the necessity of mythology in a profoundly materialistic world. His approach to these stories not only touches upon the more personal side of pain, but it also reveals the heart of Lewis. This percolation of his own life into his works paints a more realistic picture of him as a man rather than the ideal theologian and scholar. Lewis wrote *Till We Have Faces* in the midst of his wife’s cancer and his own physical ailments of osteoporosis with his own pain more readily filtering into this work.

His background and scholarly work in Medieval and Renaissance studies greatly influenced his fascination with mythology. As I stated in the first chapter, Lewis discovered Norse mythology at an early age, which was one of his initial ties with Arthur Greeves, his lifelong friend whom he shared his most intimate thoughts and beliefs. George MacDonald was another inspiration for Lewis whom he called his ‘master’. Lewis noted that he “knew hardly any other writer who seems to be closer, or more continually close to the Spirit of Christ himself” than MacDonald (Jacobs 64). MacDonald fused the fantasy world with the ‘real world’. One of Lewis’ other heroes, Tolkein, highly objected to this idea, believing that the real world be kept completely separate from the myth world; according to Tolkein, this was the only correct form of

mythology, and perhaps this is why he never supported Lewis' works of *Narnia*. He hated that the children could re-enter from an imaginary place back to the material, tangible world within the same chapter. Lewis interwove the two worlds together and formed a greater sense of reality. Lewis authentically believed that the 'real' earthly world as people call it is actually a shadowed representation of another, more real world to come.

Lewis' adoption of this belief stems from the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's *Republic*. From this dialogue Lewis derived the notion of Heaven as the unchanging reality behind this changing world of *shadows*, or *shadowlands* as Lewis called it. Lewis resembles Plato's idea of this world and intellect as mere shadows to the real world and true intellect. This idea of Forms and shadows was more than an analogy of true intellect for Lewis. He believed that this world was a mere shadow of the resurrected world to come. St. Augustine of Hippo adopted this idea of Plato's in the fourth century and transformed it into a Christian perspective, called Christian Neo-Platonism, which many Christians have accepted and modified over the centuries. This theology claims the One as God; Lewis did not fully believe that all of Plato's philosophical beliefs could translate to Christian theology, but he did focus on the idea of this world, people, and the thoughts that occupy our minds as a flicker of the true, real flame. People cannot become their real self until they are in final communion with God, being the ultimate reality. A skeptic might argue that this world is real, and therefore it seems absurd to think that there could be a different world—one which we were actually made for where all of the pain and suffering would be absent.

Lewis knew this was a difficult concept to grasp. He knew just as well as anyone else through his disclaimer of God for the first thirty years of his life. It was through “that long night’s talk with Tolkein and Dyson that made all the difference to him, the talk that revealed to him the true nature of myth and the place of the Gospel narrative in the world of mythological stories. He became a Christian not through accepting a particular set of arguments but through learning to read a story the right way. And maybe others could move closer to Christian belief by the same path” (Jacobs 238). After his conversion, Lewis saw no better way to communicate the truths he had come to believe than through the method which he first learned them. This is where the significance of mythology and reality intertwine:

Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with tremendous difference that it really happened: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering that it is God’s myth where the others are men’s myths: i.e. the Pagan stories are God expressing himself through the minds of poets, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing himself through “real things” (Jacobs 149)

Lewis presented his mythological fiction as a faint representation of the true myth of Christ. This is not to say that the present world does not contain any good in itself, but it can never be as good as the original. Just as a replica of a Da Vinci painting still appears beautiful, and is, it does not contain the authenticity and mastered skills of the original painting. We desire to see the ‘real’ version of the Mona Lisa, even though a copy still produces amazement. Just as an imitation of a painting, this present world and the people that inhabit it are shadows of the real world. If people were created for a different reality than the present one in which they live, then pain is inevitable. Our hope and joy lies within longing for that other world, and with longing for that world humans come closer

to their full potential as spiritual beings. Since humans have a skewed view of reality, this forces their view of themselves to become distorted. Lewis' beliefs concerning identity are in correlation with his view of reality. We have not yet become our full selves just as we have not yet arrived to the real world. Lewis uses his stories of myth to depict this belief.

I have discussed Lewis' fascination with another world to parallel the mythological version in *Till We Have Faces* of realizing 'All is *not* well' in this world just as Lewis pragmatically explains in *Problem of Pain*. He uses different methods in these two books, but conveys the same truths: human beings are not 'well', and if they are not well then the world is equally not well. Not only must our perspective of reality change, but our identity as humans must be stripped to realize that we as individuals are not well. If this is the case, then our love for ourselves, others, and this world must be altered. If anything, though the stories are imaginary, his myths communicate a more heartfelt version of the necessity of pain. On writing the *Narnia* series, Lewis' "hope was that when, at an older age, the child came into contact with the real truths of Christianity, he or she would find these truths easier to accept because of reading with pleasure and accepting stories with similar themes years before" (Sayer 419-420). Since stories were the ultimate way that Lewis came to understand life, his own written stories penetrate to the very heart of who he was as a person revealing his authentic beliefs. He wanted to "let the pictures tell their own moral. For the moral inherent in them [stories] will rise from whatever spiritual roots you have succeeded in striking during the whole course of your life" (Jacobs 244). His stories were an outpouring of the longings and truth in his soul.

His understanding of God's story, in the Christian sense, permeated throughout all of his stories, because that story was the pinnacle of all the stories ever told.

With the understanding of the present world as a dim representation of another world comes the expectation of pain. Lewis reiterates the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians where he claims that "our citizenship is in heaven" (3:20); and again in his letter to the Corinthians: "for indeed in this house [earth] we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven" (2 Corinthians 5:2). Living in a world that is not our final destiny produces a dilemma. If humans were created for a different world than their current one, then their happiness cannot come to full fruition in this present world. Their happiness cannot be fulfilled in a place in which they were not created to ultimately live. According to Lewis, this dilemma created the necessity for myth:

It is only while perceiving the myth as a story that you experience the principle concretely... what flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always about something, but reality is that about which truth is) and , therefore, every myth becomes the father of innumerable truths on the abstract level. Myth is the mountain whence all the different streams arise which become truths down here in the valley... Or, if you prefer, myth is the isthmus which connects the peninsular world of thought with that vast continent we really belong to. (Hooper 584)

Myth allows for the best interpretation of the truths and reality which cannot be communicated on normal terms. They communicate truth about a reality that humans have not yet fully experienced, and that reality is thus partially unexplainable. Lewis claims that the Incarnation is the ultimate example of a myth, because it also became fact. A historical being, Christ, entered the earth, lived and died. Sufficient evidence supports that Christ existed as a person during a particular time and place. This mixture of reality

with myth traces back to “the essential meaning that all things came down from ‘heaven’ of myth to the ‘earth’ of history” (Hooper 585).

The mythology of Christianity is essential to Lewis’ perspective on pain. He saw Christ as the ultimate sufferer, though He was least deserving of anyone in the world. Christ suffered, not because he did not know how to escape the punishment of the cross, but because he knew about another world, another love, and another life. This makes Christ’s sacrifice something he desired to do on his own. A delusional person might jump out of a building because he or she imagined a better life. Christ’s sacrifice was an act of love of God and atonement for prior sins of mankind in order to restore the rupture of sin. This knowledge allowed Christ to endure the pain of the cross. According to Lewis, all other myths are the representation of this one *true* myth. The implication of a representation is that it is not completely real; it might look very similar, seem beautiful, but it does not embody the holistic significance that the real version does. This shadow of the real myth and real world accounts for the existence of pain in a world that is not fully complete. Pain interrupts this present world, reminding us that this world is not exactly as it should be. Just as a lock is unable to open if the dial is the slightest bit off from the correct number, so too is the world locked outside from itself trying to reshape into a place that it was meant to be.

From this concept evolves Lewis’ interest in joy, a longing for something deeper than anyone can describe. In *Surprised By Joy*, he gives account of his first memory of this longing for something so great that words could not describe:

As I stood beside a flowering currant bush on a summer day there suddenly arose in me without warning, and as if from a depth not of years but of centuries, the memory of that earlier morning at the Old House when my brother had brought his toy garden into the nursery. It

is difficult to find words strong enough for the sensation which came over me; Milton's 'enormous bliss' of Eden (giving the full, ancient meaning to 'enormous') comes somewhere near it. It was a sensation of course, of desire; but desire for what?...and before I knew what I desired, the desire itself was gone, the whole glimpse withdrawn, the world turned commonplace again, or only stirred by a longing for the longing that had just ceased. It had taken only a moment of time and in a certain sense everything else that had ever happened to me was insignificant in comparison. (SBJ 16)

After giving this account Lewis tells the reader to put away his autobiography if this sort of longing does not in some way attract the reader, claiming that the "central story of my life is about nothing else...it is that of an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy" (SBJ 18). Joy is usually associated as a Christian term, but its meaning can be somewhat ambiguous. Lewis defines Joy simply with

the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again. Apart from that, and considered only in its quality; it might almost equally well be called a particular kind of unhappiness or grief. But then it is a kind we want. 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. But then Joy is never in our power and pleasure often is. (SBJ 18)

This is the essence of Lewis' belief after his conversion to Christianity. He only experienced true joy after his conversion, because he could then personalize those longings he had felt since he was a little boy toward a personal God. He believed that his unquenched desires would ultimately be met in the future, which gave him hope in the midst of present pain. All of his grief and longings for something that he could not pinpoint now pointed to a specific person, Christ.

Pain flows from an unmet longing for a different reality; but in order to even long for another world, one needs to know that he is not satisfied in the present one. In his

chapter “Checkmate” in *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis recalls his recognition of worldly desires failing him. After struggling for years to find the manifestation of his desires:

Joy itself, considered simply as an event in my own mind, turned out to be of no value of all. All the value lay in that of which Joy was the desiring. And that object, quite clearly, was no state of my own mind and body at all. In a way, I had proved this by elimination. I had tried everything in my own mind and body; as it were, asking myself, “Is it this you want? Is it this?” Last of all I had asked if Joy itself was what I wanted; and, labeling it “aesthetic experience,” had pretended I could answer yes. But that answer too had broken down. (SBJ 221)

Lewis, himself, had to travel through this painful journey of recognizing his own dissatisfaction. He began his journey with the dreadful loss of his mother, the estrangement with his father, leading to his rejection of fellow students at Malvern, and into the trenches of WWI. All of these circumstances along with many more initially contributed to his denial of a good God, but simultaneously stripped him of his faith in a world that continued to disappoint him. Through this realization, Lewis was compelled to adopt some system of belief to recompense for his unmet longings. He traveled through atheism, to theism, and finally to Christianity where the door to all of his suppressed desires finally opened into a secure realm. The personal process of spiritually and psychologically wrestling with “What is the real truth; how can we know?” gnawed at the core of Lewis. The process was nothing short of painful, but after his conversion “the door at which I had been knocking for all those years finally opened”.

Once Lewis saw his true self, he knew why all of his questions had remained unanswered for so long. He could not find the answer until he looked in the right place. He had been looking to the world instead of listening to God, trying to trace all those longings that had ‘haunted’ him since he was a little boy—those longings that revisited

him trying to convey that he was not satisfied. Searching for his desires, his love for the world became distorted. He was trying to make himself love what was tangible without first loving what he was ultimately created to love, hence Lewis' belief on the priorities of love. Lewis did not tackle this idea until his conversion, because his priorities were backwards. After discovering the root from which his longings stemmed, Lewis could enjoy and correctly love the things in this world. After seeing the author of those things, God, he actually delighted in them more than he ever had in the past. He now understood their origin along with his own. With this understanding he claims, "Put first things first and we get second things throw in: put second things first and we lose *both* first and second things" (*Letters of C.S. Lewis* 228).

Now that he recognized the 'true' myth, he could incorporate that myth into his present world of reason. Not relying on the world to satiate his desires, Lewis devoted his fictional writing to expressing the combination of the myth with the present world. Lewis explores the concepts of reality, identity, and priorities of love in *Till We Have Faces* by retelling the myth of Cupid and Psyche. This classical story is of a king and queen who had three daughters, of whom the youngest, Psyche, was so beautiful that men viewed her as a goddess. This beauty, however, provoked Venus to extreme jealousy, and so she punished Psyche by sending her son Cupid to afflict her with a passion for terrible men. Once Cupid saw Psyche, he instantly fell in love and carried her off to a secret, stately Palace. His one requirement was that she could not look upon his face, and so he only visited her at night. Psyche, though she loved Cupid, longed to see her two sisters and convinced Cupid to let them visit. With much reluctance, Cupid consented and the sisters became consumed with envy for both her palace and husband. Therefore, they convinced

Psyche that her husband was actually a monster, and she must look at his face to unveil this horror. When Psyche agreed, she held the lamp over her husband's face to discover a beautiful god. Enraged, Cupid destroyed her sisters and sent Psyche into desolation to wander in the desert. Venus captured her and ordered her to complete impossible tasks. After Psyche's many failures, the last being her curiosity that convinced her to open Persephone's closed box, Cupid had pity and forgave her. He negotiated with Jupiter who consented to let Psyche become a goddess, and they all lived happily ever after.

Lewis follows the main story line of this myth in this story, but he also incorporates a few major changes. The central alteration was in making Psyche's palace "invisible to normal, mortal eyes", for this is the way Lewis thought the story should have been since the first time he read it (Hooper 248). Though he tried to retell this myth in 1923 before his conversion, he could never perfect his attempts. After his conversion, he saw the story from a completely different perspective, and with the help of his wife Joy he completed the story in 1955. After becoming a Christian, Lewis discovered why he had always wanted the palace invisible:

The elder sister (I reduce her to one) couldn't see Psyche's palace when she visited her. She saw only rock and heather. When P.[Psyche] said she was giving her noble wine, the poor sister saw and tasted only spring water. Hence her dreadful problem: 'Is P. mad or am I blind?' As you see, though I didn't start from that, it is the story of every nice, affectionate agnostic whose dearest one suddenly 'gets religion', or even every lukewarm Christian whose dearest gets a Vocation. Never, I think, treated sympathetically by a Christian writer before. I do it all through the mouth of the elder sister. (Hooper 249)

The setting of *Till We Have Faces* begins in Glome, where the queen of the land has just died and the king is left with three daughters, Orual, Redival, and Psyche, respectively. Shortly after the queen's death, the king hires a Greek slave, 'Fox', to care

for and teach the children. Orual is unattractive, unfeminine, and becomes a mother figure for Psyche, who calls Orual, Maia. Despite Orual's desire to care for Psyche, her love turns possessive. Meanwhile, Fox continues to teach the three daughters about the necessity of mythology and philosophy. The city of Glome undergoes a plague that Fox catches and Psyche nurses him back to health. As this news spread, the civilians began to believe that Psyche carries healing powers, and the king forces her to mingle with the commoners to appease them. Shortly after, Psyche falls ill herself, and the people turn against her. The Priest of Ungit, the goddess of the mountain, visits the king and claims that the Brute, Ungit's son, needs a victim to appease the wrath of the gods. Psyche is doomed to be the victim of the 'Great Offering'. She, however, is less terrified than Orual, and admits her deep longing for something more than her life in Glome has offered wondering if death "opens a door out of a little, dark room (that's all the life we have known before it) into a great, real place where the true sun shines and we shall meet—." (TF 73) She goes on to confess:

I have always—at least, ever since I can remember—had a kind of longing for death... you [Orual] don't understand. Not that kind of longing. It was when I was happiest that I longed most. It was on happy days when we were up there on the hills, the three of us, with the wind and the sunshine... where you couldn't see Glome or the Palace. Do you remember? The colour and the smell, and looking across at the Grey Mountain in the distance? And because it was so beautiful, it set me longing, always longing. Somewhere else there must be more if it. Everything seemed to be saying, Psyche come! But I couldn't (not yet) come and I didn't know where I was to come to. It almost hurt me. I felt like a bird in a cage when the other birds of its kind are flying home. (TF 74)

This longing of Psyche reiterates Lewis fascination with another world beyond the present one—one which is unexplainable but the desire to go there lingers deep within the souls of men. Orual cannot comprehend this sort of longing and she responds

in anger, revealing her selfish love for Psyche: “Oh cruel, cruel!” I [Orual] wailed. “Is it nothing to you that you leave me here alone? Psyche; did you ever love me at all” (TF 73). Orual cannot see past her own pain or her need for Psyche to remain in Glome. Rather than fear for Psyche who must face the Brute, she is consumed with her own fears and loss. She relies on Psyche to fulfill her in many ways, which makes the loss of Psyche indispensable. This is only the beginning of the bitterness that Orual harbors toward not only the gods for taking her sister away, but also toward the sole object of her affection, Psyche. The time comes for Psyche to be tied to a tree and left on the mountain for the gods to take her away. Much different than the expected horror, a god rescues Psyche from the mountain and takes her to his beautiful palace.

Weeks later, Orual steals away from Glome in search of Psyche and eventually sees her on the other side of a river on the mountain. Psyche delights in seeing Orual and helps her cross over the river. Here Psyche tells Orual the story of how she was rescued and taken to a palace, where an invisible god took her in as his bride; he only comes at night, because she cannot gaze upon his face. When Orual asks where this Palace actually is, terror falls upon her when Psyche states that they are presently standing in it. Orual experiences utter confusion, because she cannot see the Palace and therefore concludes that her sister is mad, yet she cannot deny that Psyche looks healthier and happier than ever. As she leaves, Orual glances back to the place where the sisters conversed and “there stood the palace; grey, as all things were gray in that hour and place, but solid and motionless, wall within wall, pillar and arch and architrave, acres of it, a labyrinth of beauty”. When she looks again the palace has vanished, provoking heart to more confusion and despair.

After returning to Glome, Orual decides that she must save her sister from loneliness and the torture of madness, for “I was indeed her mother and her father, too (all she had of either), that my love must be grave and provident, not slipshod and indulgent, that there is a time for love to be stern. After all, what was she but a child? If the present case were beyond my understanding, how much more must it be beyond hers?” she says, “I knew now what (which of two things) I must do” (TF 152). She returns to the mountains with her servant Bardia, a lamp, bandages, and a dagger. Orual stabs her own arm, trying to convince Psyche that her husband is a monster or a felon; she coerces Psyche into looking at her husband while he is asleep. She puts Psyche in a dilemma that demonstrates her selfishness rather than love. Rather than delighting in Psyche’s happiness with her new husband, Orual convinces herself that Psyche is actually miserable. She is jealous of Psyche’s husband wanting all the love of Psyche for herself. What she does not understand is that Psyche now is able to love Orual better because she has experienced true love from her husband. “You do not think I have left off loving you because I now have a husband to love as well?” Psyche says, “If you would understand it, that makes me love you—why, it makes me love everyone and everything—more” (TF 158-159).

But Orual cannot understand, and therefore uses the logical reasoning that Fox taught the girls to use to discover truth, and she persuades Psyche to mistrust her husband. According to Fox and Greek tradition, “nothing that’s beautiful hides its face. Nothing that’s honest hides its name. No, no listen. In your heart you must see the truth, however you try to brazen it out with words. Think. Whose bride were you called? The Brute’s. And think again. If it’s not the Brute, who else dwells in these mountains?” (TF

160). Since Orual cannot fathom Psyche's form of reasoning, she assumes that she is mad. In this instance, Lewis' incorporation of the myth world with the real world causes friction between the sisters. Orual makes Psyche choose between her and the husband. She cannot see the world in which Psyche now lives concluding that this 'invisible' world is all a lie.

Psyche sadly admits,

You are indeed teaching me about kinds of love I did not know...
It is like looking into a deep pit. I am not sure whether I like your
kind better than hatred. Oh Orual- to take my love for you... and
then to make of it a tool, a weapon, a thing of policy and mastery,
an instrument of torture... I begin to think I never knew you.
Whatever that comes after, something that was between us dies
here. (TF 165)

Psyche eventually concedes to Orual's request, but not out of agreement with her sister or mistrust of her husband, but rather "because I think better of him than you. He cannot be cruel like you. I'll not believe it. He will know how I was tortured into my disobedience. He will forgive me" (TF 166). Nonetheless, Psyche compromises and takes the dagger from Orual to kill her 'monster' husband. Psyche condemns Orual and herself by giving in, acknowledging that "I am betraying the best of lovers, and that perhaps, before sunrise, all my happiness may be destroyed forever, This is the price you have put upon your life. Well, I must pay it," and with her final words she orders Orual to "Go. You have saved your life; go and live it as you can" (TF 166-167). Psyche uncovers Orual's selfish, jealous love with her final command; not only does she expose Orual's distorted love, but she reveals the core identity of her sister.

Lewis draws similar comparison with himself and Orual who is "a 'case' of human affection in its natural condition: true, tender, suffering, but in the long run,

tyrannically possessive and ready to turn to hatred when the beloved ceases to be its possession” (Hooper 249). Lewis had sympathy for Orual, who mistakenly thought she loved her sister deeply, but actually wounded Psyche through selfish love. Just as Lewis before he converted to Christianity, Orual’s priorities of love were out of order. She depended on Psyche for satisfaction having already concluded that the gods merely wanted to torture her. Likewise, Lewis misplaced his longings on the trivial things in the world, and then blamed God for his discontentment. This misplacement of love acts as a catalyst to Orual’s turmoil throughout the book as she blames the gods for their betrayal and her own misery. Lewis’ own struggle with these questions allowed him to “have a good deal of sympathy with these jealous, puzzled, suffering, people (for they do suffer, and out of their suffering much of the bitterness against religion arises)” (Hooper 249).

After Psyche follows Orual’s orders to discover that her husband was a beautiful god, Cupid visits Orual to reveal her folly and hatred. The god spoke to Orual, issuing a decree to both her and Psyche which unfolds throughout the rest of the book:

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. (TF 174)

With this decree, Orual hides from those around her and ultimately from herself. She decides to wear a physical veil over her face in hopes to hide her true identity. “I had worn a veil because I wished to be secret. I now determined that I would go always veiled” for “It is a sort of treaty made with my ugliness” (TF 180). Lewis introduces the idea of identity within this judgment on the two sisters. The god pronounces that Orual will know herself fully, and ironically this is when she begins to cover herself up both

physically with a veil and psychologically by lying to Fox, Bardia, and herself about what she knows to be true concerning Psyche, the gods, and her own self.

The thought of Psyche torments Orual more after seeing her on the mountain. That which she thought would satisfy her and bring Psyche's love back actually drew them further away from each other leaving Orual in despair. Her so-called love for Psyche proved not only detrimental to both of them, but also false. Rather than confront her fears and bitterness toward Psyche, Orual attempts to break the 'curse' of the god's sentence. She refuses to know herself and uses her inheritance of a queen to lose more of her old self even more; on the day that her father dies, she exclaims, "I am Queen; I'll kill Orual too" (TF 225). As a Queen any weakness that she exposes is a sign of Orual, a real woman, the person whom she wants to destroy. When commanded to slaughter a pig out of ritualistic practices, "I saw in a flash that if I shrank from this there would be less Queen and more Orual in me," (TF 207) admitting, "My aim was to build up more and more that strength, hard and joyless, which had come to me when I heard the god's sentence; by learning, fighting, and laboring, to drive all the woman out of me" (TF 184). The rest of this book Orual devotes her efforts to forget her painful past and form an unbreakable spirit, while harboring more bitterness and hatred toward the gods that made her the way she is. Throughout this time, Orual writes her accusations against the gods in a journal in hopes that the world will know that, "they [gods] have no answer? (TF 250)"

In Book II, Orual presents her accusations against the gods hoping to find some sort of reconciliation for her pain and circumstances. The gods answer exposes the reality to which Orual was blind for all her previous years. Not only do the gods command to

“uncover her” physically from her veil and “every rag” (289), but they also demand her complaints to be read aloud. Orual looks down at her scroll:

I saw at once that it was not the book I had written. It couldn't be, it was far too small. And too old—a little shabby, crumpled thing, nothing like my great book that I had worked on all day, day after day, while Bardia was dying. I thought I would fling it down and trample on it. I'd tell them someone had stolen my complaint and slipped this thing into my hand instead. Yet I found myself unrolling it. It was written all over inside, but the hand was not like mine. It was all a vile scribble—each stroke mean and yet savage, like the snarl in my father's voice, like the ruinous faces one could make out in the Ungit stone. (TF 290)

Orual is adamant against reading her complaint aloud, but before she can restrain her voice, she hears herself speaking the words from the paper. Some of her complaints were as follows:

But to steal her [Psyche] love from me! Can it be that you really don't understand? Do you think we mortals will find it easier to bear if you're beautiful? ...For then (I know what beauty does) you'll lure and entice. You'll leave us with nothing; nothing that's worth our keeping or your taking. Those we love best—whoever's most worth loving—those are the very ones you'll pick out.

We'd rather you drank their blood than stole their hearts. We'd rather they were ours and dead than yours and made immortal. But to steal her love from me, to make her see things I couldn't see...That's why I say it makes no difference whether you're fair or foul. That there should be gods at all, there's our misery and bitter wrong. There's no room for you and us in the same world. You're a tree in whose shadow we can't thrive. We want to be our own. (TF 292)

Not until Orual reads her complaints aloud does she realize the weight and falsity of her accusations. Her accusations against the gods uncover her own faults, and as she listens to her voice read the harsh words to the gods “there was given to me a certainty that this, at last, was my real voice” (TF 292). With this realization the gods never utter a word, but Orual still receives an answer. The uncovering of her real voice and thoughts

illuminates her to the truth for which she had been searching all those years—“the complaint was the answer. To have heard myself making it was to be answered” (294). Orual’s own complaint illuminates her to her self-deceptions, and once she hears her *real* voice, she then can take steps toward becoming beautiful.

Along with hearing her complaint, Orual also sees a mural on the wall of her past with Psyche. She sees different scenes of Psyche toiling in her labor as a result of obeying Orual’s command to look at her husband. The most painful of these pictures for Orual was the last one in which she pleads with Psyche to return to Glome, accusing Psyche of selfishness. Orual hears a voice, “Oh Psyche” it wailed. “Oh my own child, my only love. Come back. Come back. Back to the old world where we were happy together. Come back to Maia” (TF 304). Her pleas for Psyche to come back only reveal her own selfishness, jealousy, and distorted love. Through these pictures, Orual discovers that Psyche had

no more dangerous enemies than us[Orual and Fox]. And in that far distant day when the gods become wholly beautiful, or we at last are shown how beautiful they always were, this will happen more and more. For mortals, as you said, will become more and more jealous. And mother and wife and child and friend will all be in league to keep a soul from being united with the Divine Nature. (TF 304)

The veil over Orual’s eyes lifts as she stands in the overwhelming presence of the gods. She sees the reality of herself, the gods, and Psyche. The gods command from long ago to “die before you die. There is no chance after” becomes a reality to Orual. She dies to her own self—the self of jealousy, hardness, and hatred by admitting, “I never wished you [Psyche] well, never had one selfless thought of you. I was a craver” (TF 305). Ironically, through her realization of her ugliness, she then becomes more beautiful, and

closer to the *true* Orual. She was “being unmade” (TF 307). In all of her attempts to become the impenetrable queen she only strayed farther from her true identity. In the final pages of the book, Orual comes face to face with herself and for the first time the God declares, “You are also Psyche” (TF 308). Orual assumes the qualities of a beautiful goddess only when she recognizes her innate ugliness. Lewis does not refer to her physical defects, but her spiritual and emotional inadequacies. Once Orual recognizes her selfishness and distortion of love, she then transforms into a creature able to love unselfishly; she loses the embittered, de-womanized Queen Orual to become a more beautiful version of her former self. On this concept of identity Walter Hooper comments:

The idea was that a human being must become real before it can expect to receive any message from the superhuman; that is, it must be speaking with its own voice (not one of its borrowed voices), expressing its actual desires (not what it imagines it desires), being for good or ill itself, not any mask, veil or *persona*. (Hooper 252)

In the *Narnian*, Jacobs concludes that “one of the most powerfully recurrent themes in Lewis’s work is the evil of love gone wrong—love become possessive, voracious, even consuming” (257). Jacob later suggests that the

most powerful exposition of this theme is *Till We Have Faces*—indeed, the single purpose of that powerful book is to reveal such passion for what it is. There the misbegotten “love” is revealed to the person consumed by it, and by that revelation she is redeemed and transformed. (Jacobs 258)

Till We Have Faces travels closer to presenting the honest and angry pleas toward God for the pain and suffering in the world than the *Problem of Pain*. Orual cries out against the gods with honest and an almost blasphemous tone, yet her accusations parallel the authenticity of her feelings. She cannot withhold her anger and confusion with the

brutal methods of the gods. Her pleas are Job-like in their honesty and questioning, referring to the gods as “Divine surgeons” who “had tied me down and were at work” (TF 266). I have already mentioned some of Orual’s complaints at the trial with the gods, but throughout the entire novel she references the brutal forces of these gods—one of the most powerful:

Now, you who read, judge between the gods and me. They gave me nothing in the world to love but Psyche and then took her from me. But that was not enough. They then brought me to her at such a place and time that it hung on my word whether she should continue in bliss and be cast out into misery. They would not tell me whether she was the bride of a god, or mad, or a brute’s or villain’s spoil. They would give no clear sign, though I begged for it. I had to guess. And because I guessed wrong they punished me—what’s worse, punished me through her. And even that was not enough; 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...

For they will neither (which would be best of all) go away and leave us to live our own short days to ourselves, nor will they show themselves openly and tell us what they would have us do. For that too would be endurable. But to hint and to hover, to draw near us in dreams and oracles, or in a waking vision that vanishes as soon as seen, to be dead silent when we question them and then glide back and whisper (words we cannot understand) in our ears when we most wish to be free of them, and to show to one what they hide from another; what is all this but cat-and-mouse play, blind man’s bluff, and mere jugglery? Why must holy places be dark places? ... It may well be that, instead of answering, they’ll [the gods] 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? (TF 249-250)

In Lewis depiction of Orual’s complaint against the gods, he plunges to the depths of his own and other’s questions toward God. Lewis’ desire to expose his hidden fears, anger, and misunderstanding within his own life emerge through the character of Orual who “reveals to us the limits of language, and argument when we are confronted with the mysteries of divinity, and she embodies the tyrannical, consumptive perversion of love

with which Lewis seems to have been deeply concerned” (Jacobs 261). But not only does Lewis uncover his own perversions of love, he also solidifies his belief of the redemption and promises that come from suffering by giving Orual “the gift of insight, the gift of getting outside her obsessions and seeing them for what they really are, the gift of forgiveness (granted and received)” (Jacobs 262). Orual’s last words verify Lewis’ convictions:

I ended my first book with the words no answer. I know now,
Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer.
Before your face questions die away. What other answer would
suffice? Only words, words; to be led out to battle against other
words. Long did I hate you, long did I fear you. (TF 308)

In *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis confronts the egotism of his own desires juxtaposed with God’s selfless love, and the journey which comes from that exposure of one’s self and the realization of true reality, identity, and love.

Chapter 4: The Real Jack Steps Forward

“...He [Lewis] too fell head long into the vortex of whirling thoughts and feelings and dizzily groped for support and guidance deep in the dark chasm of grief” (Intro xxxi).

Unlike any of his other works, *A Grief Observed* delves into the personal soul of Lewis without any inhibitions in presenting his emotions, doubts, and anger. Previous to this book, Lewis focused on theological issues and had written various fiction, including children’s, scientific, and mythology. Finding his true love at the age of fifty, the grief Lewis experienced at her loss proved unbearable in many ways. With the loss of his mother and the unfulfilled longing for earthly love from a woman all those years, to only have a few years with Joy accentuates his grief. *A Grief Observed* was not written with an intentional audience for intentional purposes; rather this book is the cry of one of the most respected intellectual and theological scholars in Britain during the mid 1900’s. The book is a journal or diary rather than a written story. The main difference being that his writings from day to day were without direction or specific intentions. Just as Lewis wrote for scholarly and financial reasons, he turned to writing as a means to purge his most vulnerable and anguished thoughts. He wrote merely to discover the feelings that he was not able to articulately express. For all that Lewis knew he could not wrap his logical mind around the pain that accompanied the great loss of his wife. Lewis, known for his eloquent expressions and logical reasoning, came to a standstill in his words with Joy’s death.

Lewis never intended for his personal thoughts concerning the death of his wife to be published for the entire world to see. His words were written directly after Joy’s death in July. One of his close friends and a biographer of Lewis, Roger Lancelyn Green,

visited him in the early fall after Joy's death, when he discovered Lewis' personal thoughts on manuscript. Green mentioned the idea of publication only after Lewis' journal was completely written. Lewis consented to this idea with the exception that the work be published under a pen name. Lewis first submitted the work under the name Dimidius, "Latin for 'Halved', a revealing statement of the unity of two people which his marriage has meant to him" (Hooper 194). T.S. Eliot was currently a director at the publishing agency and suggested a more attractive pen name, to which Lewis agreed. The work finally was published under the name of N.W. Clerk, "thus combining a pen name he had used before, Nat Whilik (Anglo-Saxon for I know not whom) and Clerk meaning scholar or writer" (Hooper 195).

Before I attempt to address the issues within the book itself, I find it necessary to describe the relationship of Jack and Joy to fully comprehend the extent of his loss. As mentioned in the first chapter, Joy was a Native American from the Bronx of New York. She could not have been more different from Lewis except in regards to her impressive intellect, ability to remember, and her Christian beliefs. Her first marriage failed with her husband Bill's unstable job, religious inconsistencies, alcoholism, and relationships with other women. During this time, Joy discovered Chad Walsh's *C.S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics* (1949) and began corresponding with Walsh and Lewis (Hooper 59). One of the few surviving letters from Joy to Walsh reveals her first impression of Lewis as a writer:

Just got a letter from Lewis in the mail. I think I told you I'd raised an argument or two on some points? Lord, he knocked my props out from under me inerringly... And what's more, I've seldom enjoyed anything more. Being disposed of so neatly by a master of debate all fair and square—it seems to be on the great pleasures of life though I'd never suspected it in my arrogant youth. I suppose its *unfair* tricks of argument that leave wounds. But after the sort

of thing that Lewis does, what I feel is a craftsman's joy at the sight of a superior performance. (Hooper 60)

Joy's remarks to Walsh reveal her deep respect and regard for Lewis' thoughts and methods of expression. Though the two initially met via correspondence, Joy set out for England in August of 1952 to stay with a friend in London. The two women invited Lewis for lunch, and Lewis soon after followed his visit with an invitation to them in Magdalen along with George Sayer. From this occasion Sayer described Joy:

Joy was of medium height, with a good figure, dark hair, and rather sharp features. She was an amusingly abrasive New Yorker, and Jack was delighted by her bluntness and her anti-American views. Everything she saw in England seemed to her far better than what she had left behind...She was anti-urban and talked vividly about the inhumanity of skyscraper and of the new technology ad of life in New York City...She attacked modern literature. (Hooper 60)

A few more luncheons followed this one leading to a lasting friendship between Joy and Lewis. In December of 1952, he invited Joy to the Kilns for Christmas since she was away from her home on the holidays. She and her boys stayed at the Kilns for over a fortnight. Their friendship strengthened through these encounters, but there was no trace of a romantic relationship. Lewis also grew fond of her two sons during their stay, whether taking them on hikes or teaching them chess. During this time she was still married and wrote letters to her husband about her daily activities, giving no evidence of adulteress behavior. What is clear through their correspondence is that Joy and Jack thoroughly enjoyed each other's conversation, company, and the intellectual challenges that the other presented.

Joy returned to the States with her boys only to discover her husband's blatant affair with one of her friend's. Bill Gresham's lover finally divorced her husband and he

filed for a divorce with Joy. In August of 1954, Bill Gresham received his divorce from Joy and married Renee Pierce, his lover. With this news, Joy decided to stay permanently in England. In August of 1955, Joy and her boys moved to a house a mile or so away from the Kilns, where Lewis soon began to visit daily. In Joy soon learned that she could not stay in England legally and Lewis entertained the idea of a civil marriage so she would not have to return to the states. Lewis told few people, such as Arthur Greeves and George Sayer, so they would know his intentions, but he knew many would oppose this idea or not give him their full support. Apparently Jack concluded that there was nothing wrong with civil marriage with Joy to allow her to remain in England. Sayer questioned and even raised objections to Lewis' intentions:

A civil marriage with Joy could not possibly be a formality, I said, but would, in fact, make him legally responsible for maintaining the boys if Joy were unable to earn enough to do so. And what if Joy wanted to contract a real marriage with someone else? Jack answered that, in the eyes of the Church, she could not marry anyone else, since she was already marriage...he [Lewis] did not agree with my view of marriage, and he contended that the civil marriage would make no difference at all to his relationship with Joy. (Sayer 19)

Lewis did not tell Tolkein of his actions concerning Joy, which added to the continued strain of their friendship. Warnie felt similar apprehensions to Sayer, along with his memory of Jack's past situation with Mrs. Moore. In his diary Warnie wrote,

J. assured me that Joy would continue to occupy her own house as 'Mrs. Gresham', and that the marriage was a pure formality designed to give Joy the right to go on living in England: and I saw the uselessness of disabusing him. Joy, whose intentions were obvious from the outset, soon began to press for her rights, pointing out with perfect truth that her reputation was suffering from J's being in her house every day, often stopping until eleven at night; and all the arrangements had been made for the

installation of the family at The Kilns, when disaster [referring to the discovery of Joy's cancer] overtook us. (Hooper 79)

Lewis and Joy were civilly married on Monday, April 23 1956. After this marriage there is some disagreement as to Lewis' feelings for Joy. Warnie, in his diary account above, apparently could sense Jack drawing closer to Joy. Though Hooper and Green take Lewis' words as honest remarks toward his feelings for Joy, Jacobs in *The Narnian* confesses otherwise noting, "A man does not visit a woman every single day he is in the same town with her, and a woman does not tolerate such a constant presence unless she is in love with him... In any case, for whatever reasons, Lewis was in denial, but Warnie was not, nor was Douglas Gresham, and there is no reason for Lewis's biographers to be less acute than his brother and his stepson" (Jacobs 275). Hooper and Green insist that Lewis did not fall in love with Joy until she was diagnosed with cancer. They argue that Lewis felt pity for Joy who was dying from a deadly disease without any immediate family near to care for her. This argument seems less credible considering Lewis was planning on Joy moving into the Kilns *before* she was diagnosed with cancer. Though there is some ambiguity to Lewis' feelings for Joy, we do know that he greatly wished to be joined with Joy in a Christian marriage. According to Warnie's diary, he found, "Joy's eagerness for the pitiable consolation of dying under the same roof as J: though to feel pity for any one so magnificently brave as Joy is almost an insult" (Jacobs 277).

Lewis encountered one crucial obstacle in his desire to marry Joy. Since she was previously married, the Church of England would not grant the rights for their marriage. Lewis tried to convince the Bishop of Oxford, Harry Carpenter that since Bill Gresham

had been married before Joy, his marriage to her was not legal according to the church which would allow Joy to marry Jack. The Bishop insisted that every marriage was legal even if it did not abide by the specific laws of the church. Though Jack would never agree with the Bishop, he did tell Dorothy Sayers that the bishop was technically correct. With this refusal, he turned to a young priest and former student, Peter Bide, and asked if he would marry them. Under the rules of Canon law, Bide did not have the right to marry them unless they were in his own diocese with the permission of his own bishop. But according to his actions, Bide did not believe that canon law was the ultimate authority. “Instead, he asked himself what Jesus would do, and believing on reflection that the answer was obvious, on the twenty first of March 1957 he married Lewis and Joy in her hospital room” (Jacobs 278). Not only did he marry them, but after the ceremony, Bide laid his hands on Joy praying for her body to heal.

Shortly after the wedding, Lewis had lunch with Nevill Coghill, a friend from undergraduate school; as they talked Lewis watched Joy across the college quadrangle, Lewis commented quietly, “I never expected to have, in my sixties, the happiness that passed me by in my twenties” (Jacobs 279). Not only does this quote reveal the extent of his happiness with Joy, but it also serves as a direct reference to Jack’s relationship with Mrs. Moore. This comment from Lewis is one of the only glimpses that we see of how much his relationship with Mrs. Moore fell short of his ideal of love.

Three months after the marriage, Lewis wrote to Dorothy Sayers expressing how “my feelings have changed” since his previous letter had denied any romantic feelings for Joy. He continued, “They say a rival often turns a friend into a lover. Thanatos [Death], certainly (they say) approaching, but at an uncertain speed, is a most efficient rival for

this purpose. We soon learn to love what we know we must lose” (Jacobs 278-279). His remarks to Sayers reveal that he did indeed have romantic and erotic love for Joy. Though biographers disagree on when Lewis fell in love with Joy, I believe that Lewis loved Joy before her diagnosis, but might not have realized how much he cared for her until he realized that she was dying. People often either ignore their feelings or are blind to them, especially a man such as Lewis who had been a bachelor all of his life. Surely he was not expecting to fall in love in his sixties. Besides his ambiguous relationship with Mrs. Moore, he did not engage in any other relationships with women except on a scholarly level. Lewis had deep fellowship with the men in his life, evident in his weekly meetings with the Inklings and his relationship with his brother and childhood friend, Arthur Greeves. It almost seems as though he assumed he was to be a bachelor all of his life. This could be a result of his past relationship with Mrs. Moore, the loss of his mother as a child, his time-consuming job, or simply that he did not find a suitable woman. With this background, his denial of feelings for Joy is not incredible.

After their Christian marriage, Jack brought Joy home to the Kilns to die, but miraculously she did not die. Not only had Peter Bide prayed for Joy’s healing, but Jack began to pray that God would transfer Joy’s suffering to his body, having in mind Charles’ Williams idea of co-inherence, “the ability of Christians, through the unifying power of the Holy Spirit that Christ had sent to his disciples, to dwell fully with each other and in one another’s lives” (Jacobs 284). Williams believed that Christians could and were commanded by Christ to “bear each other’s burdens.” On these grounds, Lewis prayed to bear Joy’s burden and soon Joy’s bones began to strengthen while Lewis’ weakened having developed osteoporosis. Though he was happy to relieve some of Joy’s

pain, he wrote to Dorothy Sayers, “Indeed the situation is not easy to describe. My heart is breaking and I was never so happy before; at any rate there is more in life than I knew about” (Jacobs 285).

After Joy gained strength, the two planned a belated honeymoon to Greece with Roger Lancelyn Green and his wife. Though the trip tired both Jack and Joy, Green claimed, “This brief halcyon period was perhaps the happiest time of Lewis’ life” (Jacobs 286). Warnie’s comments on the marriage are significant not only because he lived at The Kilns with them, but also due to his loathing of Jack’s previous relationship with Mrs. Moore. Warnie was hesitant at first of Jack’s marriage and the change in their home, but “decided to give the new regime a try,” soon claiming, “All my fears were dispelled. For me, Jack’s marriage meant that our home was enriched and enlivened by the presence of a witty, broadminded, well-read, and tolerant Christian, whom I had rarely heard equaled as a conversationalist and whose company was a never-ending source of enjoyment” (Jacobs 286). This comment highlights the significant difference between his feelings toward Mrs. Moore and Joy. He blatantly disapproved of Mrs. Moore, while Joy positively contributed to his own life. His other remarks toward Joy reveal that she helped Jack become a better person both spiritually and intellectually.

After Jack’s second marriage to Joy was the only time that he openly talked of his own experience with Eros. He had written about it in various works such as *Four Loves* and *The Allegory of Love*, but had never alluded to his own encounter with Eros. But apparently he learned of Eros with Joy during her brief months of improvement. “For those few years,” he wrote after her death, “[Joy] and I feasted on love, every mode of it... solemn and merry, romantic and realistic, sometimes as dramatic as a thunderstorm,

sometimes as comfortable and unemphatic as putting on your soft-slippers. No cranny of heart or body remained unsatisfied” (GO 7). Lewis felt that his erotic relationship with Joy was not only wonderful, but also a necessary part of their marriage and love.

But on October 13, 1959 came the devastating news from doctor that Joy’s cancer had metastasized throughout her skeleton. With this news, Jack and Joy were too devastated to hope for healing this time. They had been so sure that her body would continue healing. The couple still took their planned trip to Greece the following spring though Joy was very weak. Neither regretted taking the trip with Lewis claiming, “she came back in a *nunc dimittis* frame of mind, having realized, beyond hope, her greatest, lifelong, this-worldly desire” (Jacobs 288). Though the trip mentally renewed Joy, her muscles overworked during the trip leading to greater physical weakness. After their return from Greece, Joy only had three more months to live. During these months, Lewis reverted to his role as a caretaker and nurse. In mid-June Lewis was sure that she was dying and they took her to the hospital, but she rallied and returned to the Kilns two weeks later. On July 13, she awoke screaming with pain. The doctor informed Jack that she had only a few hours to live. Jack later told Warnie that “she agreed with him that it was the best news they could now get” (Jacobs 290). She died that evening and was cremated on the eighteenth. Lewis revised one of Joy’s favorite poems of his “Epitaph” and had it engraved on a plaque, which was placed at the Headington Crematorium in her memory:

Here the whole world (stars, water, air,
And field, and forest, as they were
Reflected in a single mind)
Like cast off clothes was left behind
In ashes, yet with hope that she,
Re-born from holy poverty,

In Lenten lands, hereafter may
Resume them on her Easter Day.

This background of Jack and Joy is crucial when reading his remarks about himself, Joy, and God in *A Grief Observed*. Though Lewis did not want Joy to suffer any more on earth, he did not realize the implications of this wish and the consequences of her loss in his own life. As I mentioned earlier, this book was unlike any of his others in that it was personal journal. Lewis did not have an audience in his journal entries; his words were a dialogue with his soul trying to find comfort from his greatest loss in life thus far. His writing is not theological, but rather an aimless wandering that changed from day to day, or even hour to hour. Lewis' account of grief reveals his authentic emotions and the questions that follow a personal encountering with suffering that he did not address in *Problem of Pain*.

Lewis' thoughts resemble Job in the Old Testament, who began with a strong faith in God but began to question God when everything was taken away from him. At the initial loss of his home and family, Job said, "naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21). But as Job endures other devastating losses along with the emotional effects of these tragedies, he questions God's intentions:

Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands while you smile on the schemes of the wicked? Do you have eyes of flesh? Do you see as a mortal sees? Are your days like those of a mortal or your years like those of a man, that you must search out my faults and probe after my sin—though you know that I am not guilty and that no one can rescue me from your hand? Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? (Job 10: 3-8)

Job does not withhold his honest feelings from God, but emphatically states, “Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul” (Job 7). Ironically, God does not condemn Job for his authentic expressions but appreciates his honesty and rebukes his pious friends who claim that Job’s suffering is solely a result of sin; they believe that simply stating ‘God is good’ is sufficient hope and encouragement for Job. God deems Jobs friends as having an immature view on suffering, because they do not involve the vulnerable and honest pleas that come with human nature. Job’s friends pretend to fully understand the ways of God, judging Job for his response to suffering. Job’s authentic coping allows for a more personal and genuine relationship with God and a greater faith in the end.

Lewis travels a similar path to Job in his journey of grieving the death of Joy. Jack not only pleads with God, but also makes somewhat blasphemous claims against the same God that he deemed as perfect and holy. The book begins with Jack’s description of the feelings that encompass grief. “No one ever told me” he says, “that grief felt so much like fear...the same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness” (GO 3). Jack continues, “There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me... and no one ever told me about the laziness of grief” (GO 5). The simplest tasks such as shaving or reading are too much for Lewis to handle. While trying to describe his feeling of grief in his journal, he suddenly asks,

Meanwhile where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing him, so happy that you are tempted to feel His claims upon you as an interruption, if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be--or so it feels--welcomed with open arms. But go to him when your need is desperate, when all other help is in vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double

bolting on the inside. After that, silence... Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble (GO5-6).

Lewis' emotional expressions in this passage contradict his well reasoned theology in *Problem of Pain*. In Chapter one not only does he question why God cannot allow men to be happy, but he claims that God willingly deserts his people when that pain does occur. He begs God for consolation and the assurance that H. still exists somewhere, but God seems to give him no answer. The first chapter consists of Lewis' confused and angry thoughts on why this happened, and how a good God could let it be.

In the second chapter, Lewis still questions God's motives, but also realizes that he really might never understand the ways of God. He includes hope in this chapter, which shows his slow progress away from complete bitterness and anger. One of his harshest statements toward God is calling Him the "Cosmic Vivisector." Since his childhood, Lewis had been avid against vivisection, so for him to claim that God was using Joy as an experiment "within Lewis' own moral vocabulary he could scarcely have written anything angrier or more damning" (Jacobs 291). The morning after writing these 'damning' words, Lewis notes, "It was a yell rather than a thought" (GO 30).

Lewis goes on to question the goodness of God, which he emphatically believes in *Problem of Pain*. He presents the same dilemma as in *Problem of Pain*, but this time his worlds are filled with personal emotion in seeking a comforting answer: "If God's goodness is consistent with hurting us, then either God is not good or there is no God: for in the only life we know He hurts us beyond our worst fears and beyond all we can imagine. If it is consistent with hurting us, then He may hurt us after death as unendurably as before it" (GO 27-28). His consolation for pain from a theological

perspective was the hope of full redemption in another world. Jack's emotions prohibit him from momentarily believing that this hope is true or enough to console his loss. Lewis recognizes that "all these notes are the senseless writings of a man who won't accept the fact that there is nothing we can do with suffering except to suffer it...it doesn't really matter whether you grip the arms of the dentist's chair or let your hands lie in your lap. The drill drills on" (GO 33). And so for a moment he seems to become Orual, one of his own characters in *Till We Have Faces*, who viewed the gods as 'divine surgeons' with no pity or compassion.

Lewis does admit his own impersonal dealings with pain in a worldly sense. He recognizes that "if I had really cared, as I thought I did, about the sorrows of the world, I should not have been so overwhelmed when my own sorrow came" (GO 37). His third chapter (which was not originally written as chapters) continues to show the process of dealing with grief and how his blasphemous statements toward God ease and begin to reconcile with his rational mind. "Nothing less will shake a man--or at any rate a man like me--out of his merely verbal thinking and his merely rational beliefs" he continues, "He has to be knocked silly before he comes to his senses. Only torture will bring out the truth. Only under torture does he discover it himself" (GO 38). Lewis echoes his statements in *Problem of Pain* concerning the necessity of pain to reveal the truth which you might never see otherwise. It is in this chapter that Lewis realizes his hold on the things of the world and not that his love for Joy was a bad thing, but he was trying to love and hold on to her more than God. Even in his personal journal, the priorities of love, true reality, and the search for his true identity emerge. Lewis knew that "if there is a good God, then these tortures are necessary. For no even moderately good Being could

possibly inflict or permit them if they weren't" (GO 43). But with this belief he adds a cry that we did not here in his past theological statements, "But oh God, tenderly, tenderly" (GO 42).

Lewis wants to take on H.'s suffering, but comes to terms with the fact that only Christ could fully bear the weight of other's suffering. Lewis finds hope in this remembrance of Christ's vicarious work for him. In the midst of Christ's work, Lewis concludes: "Perhaps your own reiterated cried deafen you to the voice you hoped to hear...After all, you must, have a capacity to receive, or even omnipotence can't give. Perhaps your own passion temporarily destroys the capacity" (GO 46). Lewis comes to a hopeful conclusion within the third chapter that "This [his marriage] had reached its proper perfection. This had become what it had in it to be. Therefore of course it would not be prolonged" (GO 49). Not only does he come to this realization, but he also makes a different conclusion toward God and himself:

God has not been trying an experiment on my faith or love in order to find out their quality. He knew it already. It was I who didn't. In this trial He makes us occupy the dock, the witness box, and the bench all at once. He always knew that my temple was a house of cards. His only way of making me realize the fact was to knock it down. (GO 52)

Lewis finally arrives at a place where he can begin to fuse his theological beliefs with his personal anguish. He sees that his own beliefs were not authentic until God illumined him to his own unbelief and holds on worldly things.

But the most moving parts of this book are his own realizations of truth followed by a slide back into the depths of grief. Unlike a linear book, Lewis writes from his heart which can never follow a precise outline. Even though he knew the truth of himself and God, his grief became a barrier to his understanding. Lewis ends the third chapter

consumed with his grief, but he does not possess the anger that emerges in his previous chapters:

Tonight all the hells of young grief have opened again; the mad words, the bitter resentment, the fluttering in the stomach, the nightmare unreality, the wallowed-in tears. For in grief nothing 'stays put.' One keeps on emerging from a phase, but it always recurs...How often--will it be for always?--how often will the vast emptiness astonish me like a complete novelty and make me say, 'I never realized my loss till this moment'?... They say, 'The coward dies many times'; so does the beloved. Didn't the eagle find a fresh liver to tear in Prometheus every time it dined? (GO 56-57)

Though his never-ending anguish on his loss of Joy never leaves his writing, Lewis finds meaningful hope as he continues to write. At the beginning of the book, he claimed that God double bolted the door, but in Chapter four, "my mind no longer meets the locked door" (GO 61). Though he does not understand the methods of God, his belief in the character of God resumes to his theological stance.

When I lay these questions before God I get no answer. But a rather special sort of 'No answer.' It is not the locked door. It is more like a silent, certainly not uncompassionate, gaze. As though He shook His head not in refusal but waiving the question. Like, 'Peace, child; you don't understand.' (GO 69)

He further comments on his skewed priorities of love: "The notes have been about myself, and about H., and about God. In that order. The order and the proportions exactly what they ought not to have been" (GO 62). The end of his book fuses his theological beliefs, which he seemed to neglect at the beginning of his entries, with the still present emotions of grief. His statements toward pain now seem much more comprehensible since he writes them in the midst of suffering. His expressions and even cries to God are genuine, which in turn allows for a more authentic understanding of his belief in God and continual suffering in the world. Like Job, Lewis yelled at God for allowing such tragedy,

and then reached a place in his journey of admitting his inability to comprehend. Lewis ends his book with the authentic fusing of his mind with his grieving heart:

But I mustn't because I have come to understand a little less completely what a pure intelligence might be, lean over too far. There is also, whatever it means, the resurrection of the body. We cannot understand. The best is perhaps what we understand the least.

Didn't people dispute once whether the final vision of God was more an act of intelligence or of love? That is probably another of the nonsense questions.

How wicked it would be if we could call the dead back! She [Joy] said not to me but to the Chaplain, 'I am at peace with God.' She smiled, but not at me. (GO75-76)

Unlike *Problem of Pain*, Lewis is not able to rationalize every argument, nor does he desire to do so in *A Grief Observed*. The synthesis of theology with faith becomes his only authentic mode of true belief. His hope lies not in his circumstances but in his knowledge of God, the Scripture, and himself. *A Grief Observed* reveals the true heart of Lewis and the real man that many of his other works had not fully displayed. In the words of Lewis himself, "Only a real risk tests the reality of belief" (GO 23). Lewis was presented with a real risk, the loss of his wife, and he traveled through the journey of grief which enabled him to develop a more authentic belief in God. Some time after the death of Joy, Jack wrote a poem in the midst of his grief describing his newfound realization of God and himself. This poem surmises Lewis' final conclusions regarding his own sufferings:

"As the Ruin Falls" (Poems pp.109-110) pub. 1964

All this is flashy rhetoric about loving you.
I never had a selfless thought since I was born.
I am mercenary and self-seeking through and through:
I want God, you [Joy], all friends, to merely serve my turn.

Peace, reassurance, pleasure, are the goals I seek,
I cannot crawl one inch outside my proper skin:
I talk of love—a scholar's parrot may talk Greek—
But, self-imprisoned, always end where I begin.

Only that now you have taught me (but how late) my lack
I see the chasm. And everything you are was making
My heart into a bridge by which I might get back
From exile, and grow man. And now the bridge is breaking.

For this I bless you as the ruin falls. The pains
You give me are more precious than all other gains.

Conclusion

“They used my own pen to probe my wound”

I began this project in hopes that I might affect those that read my thoughts on suffering and redemption in their own life. But as I progressed in my project it became increasingly clear that Lewis' works forced me to confront my own shallow belief. It became clear that I really did not believe but a portion of the things I held true concerning love and suffering. I recognized that through various bouts of my own suffering, I ignorantly concluded that I had handled these trials correctly. Before writing this paper I had never truly challenged my assumptions about human anguish which Lewis discusses in *Problem of Pain*. It became clear that my thoughts were merely an uncritical theological view which was frightened to confront the reality of suffering. It is easier to remain in the comfort of untested theology and thought, than to dare to walk through the doors of personal pain where our hearts are fully exposed. During these times of abandonment it seems that God willingly tortures his people. Similar to Job, who began with a steadfast belief and then questioned his own foundation when life seemed unbearable, I questioned my own beliefs of God's character, his role in my life, and my own significance when grief entered my life.

Not until I began my chapters on *Till We Have Faces* and *A Grief Observed* did I recognize and confront my own sufferings. It is one thing to say God is ultimately good, humanity suffers from sin, and the world is universally broken, but it is quite another to live that experience. I know God is good, but how do I address his goodness when the pain in my own life overshadows my prior theological views. Everyone experiences suffering. Not only is everyone's suffering different, but it is also immeasurable; no one

can say “mine hurts worse than yours”, for there is no normative standard of suffering. In the last three years I have had to cope with physical ailments, the death of loved ones, and broken relationships.

Last summer I broke off a six year relationship with my boyfriend. Two years ago John developed a debilitating case of bipolar disease. In the course of watching John suffer and become a person that neither he, nor I, could identify, my belief in God’s goodness was unable to provide me solace for a host of questions. Questions that I had never dared to ask forced themselves through my lips, often translating themselves into cries of anger and confusion. Questions such as: How could you allow him to develop this disorder when he did nothing to deserve this? Why did you allow me to think that I would spend the rest of my life with John? How is John being bipolar somehow more glorifying to You than if he were to remain ‘normal’? John was young and innocent. How could a good God allow these things to happen? These unanswerable questions plagued me along with feelings of guilt for having asked them.

Working through *A Grief Observed*, I saw that these questions are not wrong to ask, and indeed necessary if I was ever to have a mature belief in the God of the Bible and live a productive life in a world where innocent suffering is a commonplace. My belief first had to endure a radical skepticism and doubt if I ever hoped to acquire an authentic belief. In reading Lewis’ honest inquiry into suffering, I was able to be honest with myself and begin the effort to reconcile suffering with my theology. John and his disease became both the protagonist and antagonist of my thoughts. Theological reflection, although never absent, took a backseat to my daily coping with events I could not control. I began to arrive at a realization similar to that of Lewis: “When I lay these

questions before God I get no answer. But a rather special sort of 'No answer.' It is not the locked door. It is more like a silent, certainly not uncompassionate, gaze. As though He shook His head not in refusal but waiving the question. Like 'Peace, child; you don't understand'", and thus I concluded that my understanding was limited. Could my definition of goodness be that different from my God's? I did not want to give up my hold on John, because I wanted him for myself. In the first book of the Narnia series, *The Magician's Nephew*, Digory pleads with Aslan to heal his sick mother, not understanding why the lion would torture him so by not helping. Lewis' description of this scene echoes the own imagery I saw God dealing with me:

But please, please—won't you—can't you give me something that will cure Mother?" Up till then he had been looking at the Lion's great front feet and the huge claws on them; now, in his despair, he looked up at its face. What he saw surprised him as much as anything in his whole life. For the tawny face was bent down near his own and (wonder of wonders) great shining tears stood in the Lion's eyes. They were such big, bright tears compared with Digory's own that for a moment he felt as though the Lion must really be sorrier about his Mother than he was himself.

I could not comprehend that my pain was perhaps grieving God equally, if not more, than me, or that he could allow pain to enter my life knowing it was producing a greater good that I could not foresee.

Just as Orual in *Till We Have Faces* selfishly clung to Psyche, I blindly thought I loved John more than anyone else. My greed to have him for myself was hidden from me. I would rather have him stay in Glome than travel to a beautiful palace that my eyes cannot see right now. Just as Orual could not understand the need for Psyche to leave, I cannot fathom why John must leave me and himself. Yet if I truly love him in the ways that the 'gods' demand then I should give him up. Not until I surrender him to God can

he become the full person he was intended to be. I thought that I could love him more than God, and therefore tenaciously held on to him. Both of us were withholding each other from 'Psyche's Palace' through our jealous, insecure love for one another. Through my own reading and writing on *Till We Have Faces*, I saw myself as Orual—an ugly brute disillusioned in my love for another. I did not have the ability to see my real face. Lewis' story brought me face to face with my real self instead of what I had pretended and wanted to see for so long.

But the story cannot and will not end there—for Orual becomes Psyche after coming face to face with her own self. I wanted to end my story by merely bearing through the suffering, hoping I would come out even on the other end. But Lewis does not allow his characters in his stories or himself in *A Grief Observed* to merely endure the pain and move on. He interweaves joy and redemption through the suffering as he follows the example of Christ's view of suffering on the cross and the redemption that comes through Christ's resurrection. We learn little about anguish if we merely indite the world as a broken and cruel place. Regardless of his own weakness, Lewis knew he must move beyond himself and his pain to enter the eternal perspective of glory and full redemption in another world. He saw these trials as not only breaking his hold on the earthly world, but also as better preparing him for the world to come.

As Lewis endured the different phases of suffering, he led me to enter my own world of grief. Not only did Lewis prove my own need for suffering—to break my clenching grip on a passionate desire for this world and the objects that inhabit it, but he also led me to a deeper reality, an authentic understanding of the words of Peter in the New Testament:

⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:6-9)

It was the search for a mature theology that allowed me to begin to see a glimmer of the truth of God. God was gracious enough to unveil the dark shadow over my eyes.

The personal tragedies in Lewis' life caused him to reevaluate his thoughts on suffering. His grieving heart confronted his brilliant mind, which initially challenged his beliefs but eventually culminated in a more authentic belief in God and a deeper self-knowledge. Similar to Job, Lewis began with a firm stance toward God and suffering, but his stance grew weaker as tragedy invaded his life. As Job pleaded with God for an answer, Lewis uttered similar cries, but eventually returned to the humble place of Job, who concludes in the midst of his suffering:

I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear now and I will speak; I will ask Thee, and do Thou instruct me. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eyes *see* Thee; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:2-6)

Simone Weil, a French Christian philosopher of the 20th century says, "There are only two things that pierce the human soul—beauty and affliction." When those two qualities fuse together, they weave a painful, yet colorful and authentic tapestry of fullness, redemption, and ultimate glory. Lewis, in his rational mind, knew that his

definition of reality and his own identity needed reform along with his priorities of love. Not until he underwent the weight of that reformation did he come to a fuller and deeper understanding of suffering. Lewis' personal experience of grief sanctioned a way for more genuine theological belief. After his afflicted heart challenged his intellectual convictions, Lewis realized that authentic belief depends on the synthesis of theological reasoning and sincere emotional anguish. Lewis' evolution of thought concerning suffering paralleled with his personal experiences of pain, with him concluding that suffering is a journey toward redemption. Confidence in this ultimate redemption allows for beauty and joy to emerge in the midst of suffering.

It was through writing my own observations of Lewis's take on love, suffering, and redemption that God literally used "my own pen to probe my wound", just as the gods did with Orual. The probing, however, was essential for Him to begin helping me mature in my understanding; it came as a gift that I initially saw as torture—but his goodness has percolated through each painful stitch to restore my soul. Lewis' words concerning joy and longing for a true reality, identity, and love helped illumine my understanding of the presence of pain in human life:

The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not *in* them, it only came *through* them, and what came through them was longing. These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself, they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited. (*Weight of Glory* 30)

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