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Innocence Revisited: Nineteenth-Century Literature in the Works of C. S. Lewis

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Innocence Revisited: Nineteenth-Century Literature in the Works of C. S. Lewis

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Degree
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DEDICATION

To Dave

For five years you have embraced my dreams with tender constancy, even—and especially—when I struggled to do so myself. I cannot imagine a better friend or partner to walk with me through all manner of circumstance, personal and professional. You have taught me to trust deeply, to work joyfully, to live fully.

"It brought to life and light my whole nature: in his presence I thoroughly lived; and he lived in mine." – *Jane Eyre*

And to Jane

Providence has seen fit that as I finish one chapter another should begin. Little one, you are the sweetest turn my story has yet taken. I cannot wait to read further.

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ABSTRACT

Influence has long been a focus of scholarly work on C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), but this scholarly conversation largely neglects the nineteenth-century. In this project I will establish the profound influence of nineteenth-century texts, authors, and ideas on Lewis's thought and work, arguing that the Romantic metanarrative—which traces the individual's progression through innocence, experience, and higher innocence—provides the foundation for Lewis's self-construction as well as his fictional work.

While the Romantics provide the initial concepts to Lewis, it is Victorian iterations of the Romantic metanarrative that Lewis most heavily revises. In his 2013 biography of Lewis, Alister McGrath suggests that Lewis views the middle ages through "Victorian spectacles" because of his affinity for Victorian Medievalist, William Morris; I propose that these "Victorian spectacles" apply more broadly and influence not only Lewis's interpretations of past texts, but also his entire worldview—literary, intellectual, spiritual and otherwise. Lewis's fiction presents Romantic metanarrative as seen through his unique nineteenth-century (re)vision and adapted by his Christian imagination.

The scope of the study will include works from the long nineteenth century—from William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1795) to Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911)—as well as Lewis's full writings, including his poetry, fiction, prose, diary, letters, autobiography, apologetics, criticism, and marginalia. My chapters will focus on 1) *Surprised by Joy* as romantic autobiography, 2) *Till We Have Faces* as neo-Victorian *Bildungsroman*, 3) *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength* as neo-Victorian genre fiction, and 4) *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a revision of Golden Age children's literature. In each case, I will demonstrate how the Romantic metanarrative shapes both the original nineteenth-century texts as well as Lewis's revisions of those texts.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HHB – The Horse and His Boy

LB – The Last Battle

LWW – The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe

MN – The Magician's Nephew

OSP – Out of the Silent Planet

PC – Prince Caspian

SBJ – Surprised by Joy

SC – The Silver Chair

THS – That Hideous Strength

TWHF – Till We Have Faces

VDT – The Voyage of the Dawn Treader

INTRODUCTION

"My own prolonged cold, having lasted out the term, worked up into a sore throat and temperature and a few days in bed […] and was not unpleasant. It gave me the excuse to be idle and the chance to re-read some old favourites," wrote a cheerful C. S. Lewis (1898-1963) in a 1929 letter to his father, Albert (*Collected Letters: Vol I* 795). A similar letter to his older brother Warnie mentions that these "old favourites" were "*The Antiquary*, *Sense and Sensibility,* and *Pickwick*" (792), three hefty nineteenth-century novels. These family letters reveal Lewis's famous passion for reading. William Empson once called Lewis "the best read man of his generation, one who read everything and remembered everything he read" (qtd. in Downing, *Planets* 121). Empson—who disliked and disputed Lewis's scholarly views—did not exaggerate; Lewis's personal letters and diaries document his extensive, impressive, and sometimes eccentric reading habits. Perhaps most interesting in this correspondence is Lewis's choice of pleasure reading material: in these particular letters (as in many others) his selections are exclusively from the nineteenth-century. This dissertation analyzes Lewis's relationship with such nineteenth century texts.

Influence has long been a focus of scholarly work on Lewis, but the scholarly conversation largely neglects nineteenth-century authors, texts, and ideas. In this project I will demonstrate the profound influence of the nineteenth century on Lewis's thought and work, arguing that nineteenth-century conceptions of the individual's progression through a Blakean psychic journey of innocence, experience, and higher innocence provide a primary narrative for both Lewis's self-construction and his fictional work. The scope of the study will include works from the long nineteenth century—from William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1795) to Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911)—as well as works from across

Lewis's *oeuvre*, including his poetry, short and long fiction, prose, diary, letters, autobiography, apologetics, and criticism.[1] Because his first literary publication (*Spirits in Bondage*) appeared in 1919, Lewis serves as a transitional figure from the long nineteenth century into Modernism, and he revises and reinterprets Romantic and Victorian texts in conversation with a growing sense of futility in twentieth-century art and culture. Instead of indulging in burgeoning Modernist schools—such as high Modernism, the Avant Garde, Futurism, Symbolism, Surrealism, Primitivism, Expressionism, Imagism, or Vorticism—Lewis looked to the past, using older manifestations of genre, style, and content to develop his own literary work. Alister McGrath suggests that Lewis viewed the middle ages through "Victorian spectacles" because of his love for William Morris (2990). I will expand McGrath's rather offhand comment into a larger concept and propose that these "Victorian spectacles" influence not only Lewis's interpretations of past texts, but his entire worldview—literary, intellectual, spiritual and otherwise. Most significantly, nineteenth-century literature and thought provided Lewis with the Romantic metanarrative, a model for individual development that he reinterpreted in his autobiography and in every one of his major fictional works. While the Romantics provide these initial concepts to Lewis, it is Victorian iterations of the Romantic metanarrative that Lewis most heavily revises, so that his fiction presents Romantic metanarrative as seen through Lewis's own, unique "Victorian spectacles."

[1] Lewis's literary publications span from *Spirits in Bondage* in 1919, to *The Last Battle* and *Till We Have Faces* in 1956; however, his published letters and journals begin as early as 1905 and his final theological book, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, was published in 1964, a year after Lewis's death. Additionally, Walter Hooper (literary executor of the Lewis estate) has continued to posthumously publish new collections of Lewis's lectures, essays, and other writings, the most recent, *Image and Imagination*, being published in 2013.

Lewis in Context

Scholars continually compare Lewis's work to older texts and authors because of his anti-Modernism.[2] Despite his historical moment, Lewis did not fit into the typical mold of the Modernist author and even represented an antithesis to the overall philosophy of Modernism, characterized by "the banner of the New" (Levenson 9).[3] At a moment when artists and thinkers were casting off old ways of knowing, Lewis struck an anachronistic chord. Stolid, traditional Lewis was converted to Christianity by aesthetic, spiritual experience and traditional reasoning; his commitment to older traditions, texts and ideas did not fit well into the Modernist discourse of literature, philosophy, science or theology. In particular, Lewis separated himself from two key Modernist concepts: myth and evolutionism. First, Modernism, most characteristically the overly-intellectual and enigmatic High Modernism of Joyce, Eliot, and other canonized authors

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[2] In his article "Modern Man and His Categories of Thought" Lewis attests, "In the last hundred years the public mind has been radically altered" (643). The idea of Lewis as a traditional opponent of Modernism is widely accepted in the scholarship, although rarely discussed in detail. See Gilchrist's *The Anti-Modernism of C. S. Lewis*, as well as Barfield, Downing, Duriez and Porter, Green and Hooper, West, and Wilson, among others. While Gilchrist's is a specific treatment of Lewis's reaction against Modernism, the rest largely imply this opposition as a part of their various arguments and biographical treatments.

[3] Scholars largely disagree on an exact definition of Modernism. Some, in line with Peter Nicholls's *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*, suggest that it is impossible to characterize the many literary movements of the early twentieth century under a single term. Others, however, treat the various "isms" of the first half of the twentieth century as related, though distinct. Astradur Eysteinsson describes Modernism as a characteristically "*oppositional* aesthetic" (4), and explains, "There is a rapidly spreading agreement that 'Modernism' is a legitimate concept broadly signifying a paradigmatic shift, a major revolt, beginning in the mid- and late nineteenth century, against the prevalent literary and aesthetic traditions of the Western world" (2). Similarly, Michael Levenson suggests that "the decisive event was the emergence of an oppositional culture," (8) and, "[t]he ideology of Modernism[…] was an ideology of radical novelty, perpetually self-surpassing" (48). In using the term "Modernism," therefore, I reference not only High Modernist art, but a sweeping cultural movement away from older traditions of thought and form and towards the ever-evolving "New." While scholars trace the origins of this movement back into the nineteenth century, I propose that Modernism does not reach full maturity until the second decade of the twentieth century; Fin de siècle and Edwardian era literature retain a certain Victorian sensibility that evaporates amidst World War I, at which time Modernism comes into full swing. One reason I have defined Modernism on this timeline is that I believe it is how Lewis would have defined it. K. J. Gilchrist explains in *A Morning After War*, "That the war is tied in Lewis's mind directly to the Modern reveals that his reaction against Modernism was decidedly more than, as Humphrey Carpenter called it, a 'profound dislike.' Rather, his reaction to Modernism had far more to do with his fears and with his means of self-preservation […] than it had to do with matters of taste" (50).

of the period, used a new manifestation of myth, rather than a traditional one. Modernist myth was no longer an explanation for the meaning of reality, but rather a constructed meaning used to give order, albeit arbitrary, to a chaotic (or meaningless) reality.[4] Lewis, on the other hand, perceived myth as metanarrative, as story that encapsulated the overarching meaning of reality. Secondly, Lewis separated himself from evolutionism, which he called "scientism," in modern society.[5] For many in the twentieth century, a faith in technological and scientific (fueled by evolutionary) progress effectively replaced religious faith, yet Lewis opposed the idea of what he calls "chronological snobbery" (*Surprised By Joy* 207), and his writing recommends that sometimes looking backwards is the best way to move forward.[6]

The centrality of myth in Lewis's philosophy makes it particularly important to distinguish Lewis's perspective on the concept from that of canonical Modernist authors. In *The Loss and the Silence* (2011), Margaret Hiley attempts to associate Lewis and his fellow Inklings with Modernism, focusing on the influence of war, silence, loss and myth in their writing.[7] While Hiley's analysis of modern texts and her attention to the undervalued influence of World War I on Tolkien and Lewis is insightful, she neglects a central divide between Inkling and Modernist

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[4] Peter Nicholls argues against the characterization of Modernism "primarily by its commitment to reactionary 'grand narratives' of social and psychic order," calling it a "caricature" of the complex and diverse movement (vii). Nonetheless, other scholars tend to agree that this new mythology was an aspect of much Modernist thought. Maurice Beebe identifies the "use of myth as a structuring device" as one of the four main characteristics of Modernism (Eysteinsson 10). Similarly, Bradbury and McFarlane identify Modernism as "the one art that responds to the scenario of our chaos" (27), and recommend that it is "less a style than a search for a style in a highly individual sense" (29), as though each distinct manifestation of Modernism were its own unique search for order.

[5] Extensive scholarship exists on this topic. See Downing, West, Purtill, Schwartz, Shumaker, or any analytical treatment of Lewis's space trilogy. The topic of scientism interests me not only as proof of Lewis's anti-Modernism, but also in distinction from Lewis's feelings about actual science. Many argue for a Lewis who aligns with conservative Christian anti-science. I propose a more moderate and nuanced Lewis, who values science and seeks to integrate his scientific and spiritual understandings into a cohesive and holistic worldview.

[6] The concept of progress as a sort of religion existed not only in the soft and hard sciences, but also in the literary arts, particularly Futurism. Michael Levenson explains, "That the past was inferior to the future was the cultural axiom of Futurism" (46).

[7] The term "Inklings" denotes a group of like-minded, Oxford-associated writers, which includes C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Owen Barfield, Charles Williams, and others. Inklings studies is a well-established scholarly genre, focused largely on mythopoeia and Christian thematics in the literature of this group.

employments of myth. Although Lewis (along with his close friends and fellow-writers) heavily employed mythological structures and themes in his writing, his conception of myth was fundamentally different from that of many notable Modernists. For a number of Modernists, myth provides a catalyst for enforcing order on a chaotic world through artistic interpretation; myth serves the Modernist as a frame to impose meaning on the meaninglessness of reality. This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in T. S. Eliot's glowing review of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1918-20), published in *The Dial* in November, 1923. Eliot states:

> In using the myth […] Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. [….] It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. [….]Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art, toward […] order and form […]. And only those who have won their own discipline in secret and without aid, in a world which offers very little assistance to that end, can be of any use in furthering this advance.

While these Modernist authors considered themselves to be imposing order on a chaotic reality, Lewis perceived the world to be inherently full of order and meaning. Furthermore, he believed spiritual and physical reality to be inescapably mingled, most profoundly in the incarnate figure of Christ—a "myth become fact." In his essay "Myth Became Fact" (1944), Lewis outlines his entire philosophy concerning myth—its impact and its relation to the Christian story. He confirms the existence of the Christian story as that of the "true myth," suggesting that it is just like any and every other myth, with the single, compelling distinction that it is true and thereby the source of all mythology:

> Now as myth transcends thought, Incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, *without ceasing to be myth*, comes down from the Heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. ("Myth" 66)

For Lewis, therefore, not only does reality represent a true, meaningful mythology, but mythology in general becomes a route through which to approach truth. Lewis states, "I suspect that men have sometimes derived more spiritual sustenance from myths they did not believe than from the religion they professed" (67), and concludes that because God—the origin and creator (or poet) of the universe—is "mythopoeic," humanity must therefore be "mythopathic" (67). Human mythology therefore inherits its order and meaning through mimesis of God's original, orderly creational work. Myth, by Lewis's estimation, is the most fundamental medium for the revelation of actual truth, in contrast to Modernist myth as a substitute for non-existent truth.

The second most important way in which Lewis diverged from popular thought of his day, choosing instead to build on nineteenth-century thought, was in his perspective on science, evolution, and human progress. While Modernist authors were using myth to make sense of what they perceived to be a chaotic or meaningless existence, scientists and philosophers of the day were undergoing a similar paradigm shift.[8] In contrast to the popular mid-Victorian perspective—which saw science, and specifically evolution, as an explanation and exploration of an orderly and complex world[9]—twentieth-century intellectuals characterized evolution as a

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[8] James Herrick attests that "it was not scientific research that concerned Lewis but Modernist philosophical convictions scientists had adopted to guide their work" (243).

[9] This is perhaps nowhere more clear than in mid-Victorian writers' employments of evolutionary ideas and structures as a means of narrative organization. Gillian Beers states:

> Evolutionary ideas proved crucial to the novel during that century not only at the level of theme but at the level of organisation. At first evolutionism tended to offer a new authority to orderings of narrative which emphasised cause and effect, then, descent and kin. Later again, its eschewing of fore-ordained design (its dysteleology) allowed chance to figure as the only sure determinant. On the other side, the organisation of The Origin of Species seems to owe a good deal to the example of one of Darwin's most frequently read authors, Charles Dickens, with its apparently unruly superfluity of material gradually and retrospectively revealing itself as order, its superfecundity of instance serving an argument which can reveal itself only through instance and relations (6).

Although it could be argued that Darwin eventually came to see his own theories as proof of chaos, Victorian literature suggests that the spirit of the age characterized evolution in terms of order. Only with the slow development of proto-modernism and naturalism did evolutionary ideas become a source of narrative disorder.

chaotic power that humanity must harness and control for its own species' sake.[10] Furthermore, twentieth-century thinkers completed the work of their Enlightenment and Victorian precursors by ruling out any semblance of the spiritual or supernatural. The result was a reverence, even worship, of progress itself, correspondent with the "Make it new!" enthusiasm of the Modernist movement.[11] Philosophically, this societal shift resulted in a casting off of past ideologies, and a commitment to the forward progress of humanity as the highest evolutionary advancement. Some, like Modernist founder Ezra Pound, supported eugenics and selective breeding movements, even to the extremes taken by the Nazi regime.[12] For Lewis, however, such scientism represented a perversion of true science and a dangerous step towards humankind's destruction, as he argues in *The Abolition of Man* (1943).

Addressing the Modernist disavowal of an inherent value system, Lewis characterizes moderns as "Men Without Chests" in *The Abolition of Man*. He states: "Until quite modern times all teachers and even all men believed the universe to be such that certain emotional reactions on our part could be either congruous or incongruous to it—believed, in fact, that objects did not merely receive, but could *merit*, our approval or disapproval, our reverence, or our contempt" (25). This universal idea of value and meaning Lewis characterizes as "the *Tao*" (29), and suggests that,

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[10] J. B. S. Haldane in *Possible Worlds* (1928), describes humans as "a super-organism with no limits to its possible progress," and argues for "no theoretical limit to man's material progress but the subjugation to complete conscious control of every atom and every quantum of radiation in the universe" (qtd. in Herrick 248). Lewis wrote his space trilogy in response to the asserted ideology of Haldane (among others), and Haldane published an open critique of the series, titled "Auld Hornie, F. R. S." (1946).

[11] Bradbury and McFarlane encapsulate the rupture from the old and pursuit of progress associated with Modernism thus: "overwhelming dislocations, those cataclysmic upheavals of culture, those fundamental convulsions of the creative human spirit that seem to *topple even the most solid and substantial of our beliefs and assumptions*, leave great areas of the past in ruins[…], question an entire civilization or culture, and stimulate *frenzied rebuilding*" (19; emphasis added).

[12] I do not suggest that all authors, or all "Modernists," in the early twentieth century supported eugenics or facism, but merely that some notable and influential figures within the Modernist movement (both literary and scientific) did so. In fact, Michael Levenson points out that "Modernism was a heterogeneous episode in the history of culture. It depended as much on its enemies as on its proponents" (8). The very existence of the Modernist movement as we now perceive it, was therefore also dependent on more traditional, opposing voices, like that of Lewis.

> If you will not obey the *Tao*, or else commit suicide, obedience to impulse (and therefore, in the long run, to mere 'nature') is the only course left open.
> At the moment, then, of Man's victory over Nature, we find the whole human race subjected to some individual men, and those individuals subjected to that in themselves which is purely 'natural'—to their irrational impulses. (79-80)

To Lewis, twentieth-century scientism—which embraced theories of emergent evolution, and ultimately eugenics—was deeply rooted in the Modernist loss of value and therefore of a greater meaning. Just as Eliot and Joyce were employing myth to simulate, rather than elucidate, meaning, so popular Modernist thought wished to use science as a tool with which to impose structure artificially on the chaos of nature, rather than implementing science as a vehicle for the discovery of pre-existing truth.[13]

Because of his resistance to the forward-focused ethos of the time, Lewis necessarily embraced non-modern ideas, values, and ways of thinking, or "habits of thought" ("World's Last Night" 101). Rather than applying his faith and imagination to Modernist sensibilities, Lewis adopts older notions of reality, revising and refining them in a progressive yet respectful manner; hence one of the oldest practices in Lewis scholarship: influence studies. Because Lewis was not only a literary academic, but also a voracious reader, scholars have rightly focused on the way his reading influenced his thought and work. Furthermore, such research has tended to categorize Lewis as characteristic of various literary periods or movements. Among these studies, three categories emerge most popular: Medieval, Renaissance, and Inklings studies.

In recent years, scholars have made compelling arguments for the influence of medieval texts on Lewis, and suggested that he was first and foremost a medieval thinker and systematist. Michael Ward's *Planet Narnia* (2008) became instantly authoritative in the field, suggesting that Lewis was a "medievally-minded writer" and that his work, the "Narniad" specifically, is therefore marked by a heretofore unacknowledged intricacy, rather than its seeming

[13] *The Magician's Twin*, edited by John West, addresses Lewis's views on science and scientism.

disorganization (11). Ward makes a powerful argument for viewing the medieval conception of the cosmos as the overarching structure of the Narnia series and of Lewis's thought more generally. Robert Boenig also argues for a fundamentally medieval Lewis in *C. S. Lewis and the Middle Ages* (2012), suggesting that not only the medieval idea of the cosmos, but also ideas of "chivalry, love, and spirituality" saturate his writing (4). Boenig positions the medieval practice of "constructing […] imaginative narratives […] as dialogues with prior texts" in the center of Lewis's creative process (3). Similarly, scholars focus widely on the literature of the Renaissance, with which Lewis engaged on a deep, scholarly level.[14] Elizabeth Baird Hardy's *Milton, Spenser and The Chronicles of Narnia* (2007) emphasizes the centrality of *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost* on both the Narnia series and the space trilogy, suggesting that Lewis was most deeply influenced by his scholarly work, in contrast to his incessant pleasure reading. Robert Downing has also written on the influence of *Paradise Lost* on Lewis's space trilogy in his book *Planets in Peril* (1992).

Perhaps the most popular influence studies of C. S. Lewis are those concerned with his group of scholarly and creative friends, the Inklings. Shelves of books have been written on the group (which, most notably, included Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Owen Barfield), on the mutual influence between all of the members, and on the relationships between single members of the group. While Humphrey Carpenter's *The Inklings* (1979) is still considered the authoritative biography of the group, criticism of the authors in conversation includes the work of Diana Glyer, Colin Manlove, James T. Como, Colin Duriez, Candace

[14] The connection to Medieval and Renaissance texts is particularly easy to make as Lewis held the Chair in Medieval and Renaissance English at Cambridge University, and published multiple scholarly treatments of Medieval and Renaissance literature: *The Allegory of Love* (1936), *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942), *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (1944), *The Discarded Image* (1964), *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1966), and *Spenser's Images of Life* (1967). Incidentally, Lewis would find this distinction between Medieval and Renaissance literature irksome, as one of his greatest scholarly breakthroughs was the radical suggestion that the Renaissance never happened in English literature.

Fredrick and Sam McBride, Martha C. Sammons, and Clyde S. Kilby, among others. The most recent biography of the Inklings, *The Fellowship: The Literary Lives of the Inklings* (2015), is by Philip and Carol Zaleski. Furthermore, this area of interest has sparked a variety of scholarly journals focused on the group, including the *Journal of Inklings Studies*, *Mythlore*, and *VII*. Inklings studies focus on various aspects of the relationships between their subjects, yet all agree on the central premise of artistic conversation amongst the group. Inklings studies focus on the shared philosophical, literary, and religious values of the group, particularly in reaction to their mid-twentieth century moment.

An era that has not received exhaustive attention, and into which this study plunges, is that of nineteenth-century British literature. While scholars have spent some time analyzing Lewis's relationship with the Romantics, my project aims to offer a new perspective, focusing on a metanarrative that originates in Romanticism, passes through the Victorians, and is transfigured in Lewis's own worldview and writing. Robert Reilly's *Romantic Religion* (1971) is a study of Lewis, Tolkien, and Barfield in which Reilly explores the Romantic roots of their theology. Lewis, Reilly contends, is a Christian romantic because his theology focuses on "not an idea but a happening, or a series of happenings" (6). Reilly's study establishes an important foundation for this particular area of study, although he stops short of deep textual analysis and explores largely on philosophical and theological concepts. Prothero and Williams have written the most recent book on Lewis and Romanticism, entitled *Gaining a Face: The Romanticism of C. S. Lewis* (2013), which focuses on his relation to William Wordsworth. Prothero and Williams posit—like several scholars before them—that Lewis shared characteristics and values with Wordsworth.[15]

[15] For other sources on Lewis and Romanticism, see also Carnell, Sandner, Carter, and Rice.

While scholars have acknowledged a romantic Lewis, criticism has barely begun to recognize the massive neo-Victorian strain in Lewis's fiction. In her article "Kidnapped Romance: From Walter Scott to C. S. Lewis" (2013) Elsie Michie argues that Lewis appropriates and revises a Victorian theme of kidnapping in children's literature. While Michie's study is a very specific examination of individual texts from Scott, Stevenson, and Lewis, it is an important foray into mixing nineteenth-century studies with Lewis studies. First, Michie opens the door to further discussions of Lewis as a neo-Victorian, or nineteenth-century reviser. Second, she infers Lewis's place within a decidedly nineteenth-century tradition of children's literature. In short, the current criticism on Lewis in a nineteenth-century context is limited and centered primarily on the influence of Romantic texts. Scholarship needs to expound on Lewis's investment in larger nineteenth-century ideas. For this reason, my study will emphasize the way in which the Romantic metanarrative—established by the Romantics and adapted by the Victorians—influenced Lewis's work.

Scholarly Contributions

In the field of Lewis scholarship, my work contextualizes Lewis not only in his own day, but along a historical continuum that begins in the nineteenth century. By understanding Lewis's connection with the nineteenth century, we can better understand whence his thought springs, and where it is tending, effectively inscribing him in his proper literary genealogy.

As the first study to analyze Lewis's revisions of the Romantic metanarrative, my work not only establishes a connection with nineteenth-century influences, but also challenges previously held suppositions about Lewis's worldview and writing. Scholars and popular readers alike have long considered Lewis the quintessential Christian author and have therefore assumed his works to be written along biblical narrative lines. Specifically, readers have hitherto

considered Lewis's fiction to follow the biblical metanarrative of creation, fall, and redemption. While my research shares this supposition—after all, Lewis is writing deliberately Christian fiction—it also offers an important qualification. Although Lewis became eventually enthralled by the Biblical metanarrative, the Romantic one first captured his heart. Before he reconverted to Christianity he gave himself over to romantic experience and literature, and only through that romanticism did he eventually find his way back to Christianity. Because of this, the Romantic metanarrative of innocence, experience, and higher innocence is irrevocably written across Lewis's work, even as he mingles it with the Biblical metanarrative.

My work also challenges another long-standing notion in Lewisiana: that Lewis despised Victorian culture, ideas, and authors.[16] This supposition, which is attached to a similarly narrow characterization of the Victorian era, assumes that because science encroached on religion and order gave way to disorder in the Victorian era, Lewis had no appreciation for the literature of the epoch, with the exception of Victorian Romantics like George MacDonald and William Morris. On the contrary, my research demonstrates Lewis's appreciation for many Victorian authors and ideas, spanning from authors of the realist novel to science fiction and fantasy to children's writing. By demonstrating Lewis's investment in Victorian texts, I am putting pressure on recent trends in Lewis scholarship that posit Lewis as a "systematist." While critics like Ward and Durie insist that Lewis's investment in Medievalism made him a strict, methodical thinker, writer, and apologist, I argue that Lewis was slightly messier in his ideas and opinions. Lewis was famously attracted to dialectic, and I believe he found a heady space for debate and

[16] For the clearest example of this attitude, see Durie. The assumption that Lewis disliked the Victorians, however, is implicit in most scholarship. Even McGrath's assertion about "Victorian spectacles" is attached only to William Morris, who is, in many ways, seen as an exception to the Victorian norm, being highly romantic in his ideas and aesthetics.

conversation with the Victorians. He was also changeable in his opinions, as his personal correspondence reveals, and highly impressionable, as his many literary relationships attest.

Another contribution this study offers to Lewis scholarship is a more in-depth look at Lewis's nineteenth-century related marginalia than has yet been attempted by other scholar. My work provides the most comprehensive look at Lewis's reading of nineteenth-century texts that has yet been accomplished. In so doing, I have noticed certain patterns in Lewis's reading habits. Readers will find that as the dissertation progresses the depth of marginal evidence provided in each chapter will decrease. From this fact, I would risk a conjecture about the way Lewis read and annotated texts. Because the study proceeds chronologically through the nineteenth century, it would appear that Lewis took the most extensive notes, did the most extensive underlining and indexing, on early nineteenth century works—such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Burke, Austen, and Lamb. One may assume that Lewis wrote more extensively in these texts because they were considered a part of the literary canon at Oxford in Lewis's day.[17] For this reason, Lewis probably made less marginal notation in his Victorian novels, genre fiction, and children's books because all of these texts shared the distinction of pleasure reading, rather than career-related reading. This disparity in marginal detail does not reflect Lewis's interest (or lack thereof) in these texts, or even how deeply they influenced him, but only that he did not rely on these texts in his scholarly and pedagogical endeavors. Lewis is known to have written the kind of fiction he longed to read, and these Victorian texts, while lacking extensive marginalia, certainly evidence multiple readings based on their physical wear, as well as Lewis's reports of reading and re-

[17] The Oxford English faculty in Lewis's time taught only texts published before 1830 (Heck 9). Heck has a forthcoming book on the intellectual climate of Lewis's Oxford. The fact that Lewis, with Tolkien, actually fought to keep this date the same, thus barring the Victorians from University study, has caused many to speculate about Lewis's distaste for the Victorians; however, a cursory look at Lewis's correspondence will discredit the notion that he disliked the Victorians. One suspects that he merely considered Victorian literature too new to be of serious scholarly interest—and even this supposition does not detract from either his potential pleasure in the Victorians, nor his potential revision of those Victorians in his own fiction.

reading in his letters, essays, and diary. In other words, my research in Lewis's marginalia suggests that he, like most of us, engaged in different styles of reading distinguished by work and pleasure.

Finally, as a scholar of the nineteenth century, my work not only promotes greater understanding and appreciation for Lewis, but sheds light back upon the nineteenth-century texts I address. While it is easy to trace nineteenth-century realism through naturalist and proto-modern style into Modernism, I believe that understanding Lewis as a nineteenth-century reviser will effectively acknowledge a branch of modern literature that is equally related to its nineteenth-century ancestors; while Modernism typically represents a materialism descended from the evolutionary and naturalistic Victorians, Lewis's brand of literature descends from a more amphibious, and indeed quite common, Victorian tradition—one that integrated advancing scientific knowledge into a traditional, faith-based worldview. By understanding Lewis's interpretations and applications of nineteenth-century ideas, we may turn back and re-interpret or re-interrogate those sources themselves. For instance, Lewis's conception of Victorian religious doubt as an important struggle or dialogue, rather than the slow death depicted in much popular scholarship, casts new light on the Victorian crisis of faith, and one that coincides well with recent scholarship.[18] Similarly, understanding Lewis's use of the Romantic metanarrative illuminates the lasting, widespread, and evolving impact of the nineteenth-century child. It amplifies our understanding of the Romantic metanarrative in Victorian high realism, genre fiction, and Golden Age children's literature. My goal in this project is not simply to use nineteenth-century texts as a microscope for Lewis, nor to use Lewis to reinterpret nineteenth-

[18] See LaPorte, Blair, and Kreuger. All three authors have made attempts to revitalize scholarly interest in religion and spirituality as they relate to the Victorians.

century texts; instead, I hope to shine a mutually reflective light on both, illuminating twentieth-century texts *and* the Romantic and Victorian ones that inspired them.

Methodology

As previously mentioned, my research has relied heavily on Lewis's marginalia as it relates to nineteenth-century topics and authors. Over the course of research, I cataloged references to nineteenth-century texts and authors in Lewis's collected letters and diary. I spent considerable time with Lewis's Library at the Marion E. Wade Center in Wheaton, Illinois, combing through Lewis's copies of nineteenth-century books to examine his underlining and marginal comments. Taylor University in Upland, Indiana also graciously allowed me to see some of Arthur Greeves's copies of George MacDonald's work, which contained Lewis's handwritten annotations. Finally, I travelled to the Bodleian Library and the Magdelen College archives in Oxford, England to examine Lewis's notebooks, manuscripts, and various newspaper clippings. Although many scholars have spent time with portions of these collections, this study will provide a more comprehensive view of Lewis as a reader of the nineteenth century than has any previous work, and my argument and analysis rely, where possible, on Lewis's first-hand reactions to the texts in question.

Influence studies on Lewis are, as previously discussed, extremely common. Like many other scholars in this field, my aim is to establish the prominent influence that a certain type of text had on Lewis and his work. Nonetheless, it is necessary to defend this approach against some strong reticence in Lewis scholarship. In a recent essay collection, *C. S. Lewis's Perelandra* (2013), Walter Hooper contributed an essay on "C. S. Lewis and the Anthropological Approach." Hooper contends that influence studies on Lewis are too fraught and dangerous to undertake, based on his own experience writing about Lewis and on Lewis's writing about what

he called the "anthropological approach." The anthropological approach, as Hooper has it, is a form of criticism that not only posits potential sources for a given work, but also demystifies that work by dissecting its various elements into mere reanimations of older ideas or images. Hooper recounts having written a book on Lewis's influences as a young man, only to meet Lewis and, upon explaining the work to its subject, have his suppositions systematically obliterated. He claims that upon hearing each of his proposed influencers Lewis "boomed out, 'Anthropological approach!,'" and sometimes added, "I have never even heard of that story" (Hooper, "C. S. Lewis and the Anthropological Approach" 9). In essence, Hooper wishes to protect the meaning and power of Lewis's work, encouraging criticism to look less at "influences" and focus more on "thoughtful read[ings]" that elucidate our understanding of the text.

I share Hooper's interest in readings that illuminate, rather than dissect, Lewis's writing. In fact, each chapter in this dissertation seeks to provide not only a potential source for Lewis's work, but to do so in a way that enriches our understanding of the literary and theological implications of that work. Just as Hooper admits that Lewis himself wrote pieces on literary influence that "illuminated both" the older and the newer text (7), my project offers new readings of both Lewis and the nineteenth-century texts with which he interacts. My interpretive methods places Lewis's texts in productive conversation with their nineteenth-century forbears, rather than vivisecting Lewis's dynamic works into static, worn-out building blocks.

One must take exception with Hooper's wish to protect Lewis to the exclusion of significant scholarly contribution. While Hooper's view is colored by a personal relationship with Lewis, who disliked having his work compared to that of others, it does not discount the reality that Lewis was deeply influenced and inspired by a variety of literary sources. Michael Ward has answered this objection well in *Planet Narnia* by observing that Lewis often

deliberately obscured or hid the real meanings and sources of his fiction from friends and correspondents. Indeed, Ward quotes from one of Lewis's letters to schoolchildren in which he states, "you must not believe all that authors tell you about how they wrote their books. […] This is not because they mean to tell lies. It is because a man writing a story is too excited about the story itself to sit back and notice how he is doing it" (qtd. in Ward 14). Perhaps it is safest, in the pursuit of sound scholarship, to dismiss some of Hooper's—and by extension, Lewis's—concerns about the sacred originality of the text.

In *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) Bloom asserts that "self-appropriation involves the immense anxieties of indebtedness" (5). Lewis (and now Hooper) no doubt suffered from this anxiety, often wishing to distance himself from the texts that inspired him in order to protect his own originality and to safeguard the emotional impact of his work. For this reason, Lewis admits to little direct connection between any of the works I will compare in this study; however, by reading carefully in the texts themselves, and in Lewis's various marginal writings, the connections become quite clear. Furthermore, it becomes clear that Lewis is not merely borrowing ideas from the Romantics and Victorians, but that he is engaged in a conscious intertextual dialogue. In fact, Lewis is practicing what Bloom's taxonomy would identify as "Tessera," a "completion and antithesis" of his nineteenth-century precursors (14). Lewis revises these earlier authors as if their works were incomplete and required a final, further step, which his fiction provides. Specifically, his object is a further spiritualization of the Romantic metanarrative.[19] This makes particular sense within the frame of romantic experience, for Lewis's various revisions of Romantic metanarrative imply that the Romantics struggled to understand transcendent experience, that the Victorians further explored it, and that Lewis finally

[19] In this central assertion, I acknowledge a similarity to Prothero and Williams, who argue that Lewis saw himself as completing Wordsworth's vision through Christianization, specifically working in the same strain as George MacDonald.

understood it in the light of Christian theological belief. In other words, I do not propose that Lewis merely recycles Romantic or Victorian texts, but that he takes already meaningful narratives and further develops them through revision, expanding their significance and imaginative appeal.

In addition to influence study, my methodology depends heavily upon the analysis of literary forms. Formalism has fallen out of vogue, yet Lewis was certainly invested in the textual unity that formalism emphasized, as it not only echoed the Coleridgean polarity he loved (which I will define in chapter one), but also because it emphasized, by inference, the supposedly perfect union of God's ultimate creative act, which Lewis believed, via Tolkien's ideas on subcreation, all human work aspires to emulate. Because Lewis was so invested in forms—calling his creative idea "an image longing for a form"—I sometimes highlight the (attempted) formal unity of his works, and my readings especially emphasize his play with various forms. My attention to formal polarity in Lewis's work, particularly in chapters three and four, resonates with a resurgent interest in forms, namely that of Caroline Levine. In *Forms* (2015), Levine describes "literary texts" as "inevitably plural in their forms—bringing together multiple ordering principles, both social and literary, in ways that do not and cannot repress their differences" (40). Along these lines, I find in Lewis collisions between Romantic metanarrative, Biblical metanarrative, realist forms, fantasy forms, science fiction forms, etc.; these collisions—I argue—do not fight for dominance in the texts, but co-exist in polarity, they are distinct, yet wedded, held in paradoxical tension and union in Lewis's texts.

As a final methodological note, it is necessary to explain some of the terminology I have chosen to employ in this project. For the purposes of this study, I will use the word "romanticism" in two senses. The first, "Romanticism," refers to the nineteenth-century British

literary movement, spanning from roughly 1789 to 1850, or the start of the French Revolution to the death of William Wordsworth. Authors who lived and wrote within this movement I will refer to as the "Romantics." The second sense in which I use the term, "romanticism," refers merely to surviving ideas and philosophies from that historically bound movement. When I refer to C. S. Lewis as a "romantic," I am therefore suggesting that he shares many ideas with the historical Romantics, but not that he was a part of that particular movement. When scholars discuss Lewis's "romanticism," they typically refer to Lewis's affinity with the experiential, emotional, and aesthetic ideals of that particular literary movement. Similarly, when discussing Lewis's relation to Victorian texts and authors, I will employ the term "neo-Victorian." This term, as defined by Heilmann and Llewellyn, has become popular in nineteenth-century studies and thereby useful for my purposes. While it is somewhat common for authors to refer to Lewis and his ideas as "romantic," it is not common practice to refer to a person or text as "Victorian" unless they fall into the historical timeframe of Victorian England (roughly 1937 to 1901, corresponding with Queen Victoria's reign). For this reason, I will refer to aspects of Lewis's texts or textual practices that revise or reflect Victorian texts/practices as "neo-Victorian."

Chapters

I organize chapters by nineteenth-century chronology and genre. The Romantic metanarrative that is so central to Lewis's work originates with the Romantic poets, and therefore my study begins with a chapter in which I establish that metanarrative within the Romantics, then demonstrate Lewis's internalization of that same narrative in his autobiography. Next, I move further into the nineteenth century, examining the way in which realist novelists took up the Romantic metanarrative via *bildungsroman*, and suggesting that Lewis revised not only the Romantic metanarrative turned coming-of-age tale, but also the realist approaches of

Brontë and Dickens in *Till We Have Faces*. Progressing on to late nineteenth-century genre writing, I will then analyze the manner in which Lewis blends Victorian fantasy and science fiction to embody the Romantic metanarrative in his space trilogy. Finally, I will examine the tradition of Golden Age children's literature in relation to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, employing the Romantic metanarrative one final time to illustrate how Lewis revises and builds on the turn-of-the-century view of innocence, experience, and higher innocence.

Chapter one, "Lewis's Metanarrative: *Surprised by Joy* as Romantic Autobiography," establishes the foundations upon which the rest of the dissertation build. Looking specifically at Lewis's readings and revisions of William Blake, John Keats, Percy Shelley, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, this chapter will define what the Romantic metanarrative is and how Lewis adapts it in his own self-construction, as expressed in *Surprised by Joy*. Having established both the Romantic and the Lewisian conceptions of innocence and experience, I will spend an extended amount of time defining higher innocence as the Romantics imagined it and as Lewis re-imagines it. Specifically, Lewis rejects the higher innocence offered in Keats and Shelley, turning instead to Wordsworth's *Prelude* as a model for *Surprised by Joy*. Yet, even in Wordsworth Lewis finds a lack that requires completion. Ultimately it is in Coleridge's conception of polarity that Lewis finds the best image for higher innocence, probably borrowing the term "Joy" from Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode." These concepts attached to the Romantic metanarrative—of innocence, experience, higher innocence, and especially of higher innocence as Coleridgean polarity—will reappear in each preceding chapter.

In chapter two, "'I might—': Spiritualizing the Neo-Victorian *Bildungsroman* in *Till We Have Faces*," the focus will shift from the Romantics to early Victorian realism. I will argue that Lewis employs the realist practice of *bildungsroman*, specifically as undertaken by Charles

Dickens in *Bleak House* and Charlotte Brontë in *Jane Eyre*, to shape Orual's first person narrative in *Till We Have Faces*. Having established a connection between the Romantic metanarrative and the *bildungsroman*, I will argue that, like Dickens and Brontë before him, Lewis uses the psychological realism of the first person female narrator to achieve a formal polarity between realism and romance in his novel. Lewis depicts Orual on a similar path of personal growth to that of Esther Summerson and Jane Eyre, yet he also revises or lengthens that path. While Esther's and Jane's narratives rely on matrimony for resolution, Orual's narrative conclusion is centered on a spiritual experience of divine, rather than human, union.

Having explored Lewis's employment of formal polarity in *Till We Have Faces*, chapter three, "'Science Fantasy' as Higher Innocence: Neo-Victorian Genre Blending in The Space Trilogy," will focus on a similar formal innovation in *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*. By examining the influence that George MacDonald's fantasy and H. G. Wells's science fiction exert on the Ransom stories, I will demonstrate how Lewis is deliberately engaging in Victorian ideas about spirituality and science. In particular, Lewis undertakes a neo-Victorian approach of genre- and narrative-blending by writing what he calls "Science Fantasy." Lewis borrows on two types of Victorian narrative, one focused on spiritual progress, and the other on evolutionary progress, combining these diverging narratives in another instance of formal polarity. Furthermore, Lewis mirrors this formal polarity within the Romantic metanarrative of the trilogy, bringing the entire series to its climax with an instance of "myth become fact," and thereby emphasizing higher innocence as a polar logic between reality and myth, in the same manner that he views Christ's incarnation as the ultimate polarity between the natural and supernatural.

Chapter four, "Romantic Metanarrative in *The Chronicles of Narnia*: How Lewis Empowers the Nineteenth-Century Child," will trace the Romantic metanarrative through Golden Age children's stories and into *The Chronicles of Narnia*. I will argue that the nineteenth-century concepts of the secret garden, the talking animal, the dead—or static—child, and the agelessness of higher innocence all make their way into Lewis's writing for children via the Romantic metanarrative. While Golden Age depictions of the innocent child tend to disenfranchise the child reader and character, I suggest that Lewis deliberately empowers the child by providing her a real rather than an imagined fantasy world, allowing her to make mistakes, refusing to hold her in eternal innocence, and emphasizing higher innocence over innocence. Again I will demonstrate the central image of the Incarnation as a model for polarity, or higher innocence, in the Chronicles, this time emphasizing the image of God becoming a human as the ultimate empowerment of the child.

Finally, I will conclude by tracing the lineage of Romantic metanarrative, with all its implications, forward from Lewis into two twenty-first-century authors: Neil Gaiman and Lev Grossman. Gaiman and Grossman both continue the tradition of Lewis, and the Victorians and Romantics before him, utilizing Lewis's depictions of the Romantic metanarrative in *The Chronicles of Narnia* to inspire their own fantasy worlds in *Coraline* and *The Magicians Trilogy*. Both of these authors perform a similar revision on Lewis as Lewis does on his nineteenth-century precursors. Gaiman and Grossman launch Lewis's fantasy into a postmodern setting, putting pressure on Lewis's fictional strivings for higher innocence, and instead questioning whether such a state can be achieved in the fantasy world. Both offer a less spiritual and more humanistic vision of higher innocence. Gaiman and Grossman confirm my argument about the tradition of the Romantic metanarrative, which originates in the Romantics, flows through the

Victorians, is transfigured and spiritualized by Lewis, and finally revised by his literary descendants. Gaiman's and Grossman's revisions of Lewis are a testament to Lewisian intertextuality, and a confirmation that Lewis not only brought Romantic and Victorian dialogue into the twentieth century, but did so in a manner compelling enough to capture twenty-first-century attention.

CHAPTER ONE: Lewis's Romantic Metanarrative: *Surprised by Joy* as Romantic Autobiography

"If I am a romantic my parents bear no responsibility for it," says C. S. Lewis at the beginning of *Surprised by Joy* (5). He goes on to explain that "There was no copy either of Keats or Shelley in the house, and the copy of Coleridge was never […] opened," yet these were "the kind of literature to which my allegiance was given the moment I could choose books for myself" (5). That Lewis was, indeed, a romantic, has never been a subject for debate. Almost as soon as *Surprised by Joy* (1955) was published, reviewers were calling it "the conversion of a pure romantic" (Fremantle qtd. in Hooper, *A Companion and Guide* 193).[20] Because Lewis admits his own romanticism in *Surprised by Joy, The Pilgrim's Regress*, and elsewhere, scholars have spent a great deal of time detailing various romantic notions in Lewis's theology, philosophy and art.[21] What has not been duly explored is the intricate role romanticism plays in his autobiography, and thus in Lewis's self-construction. *Surprised by Joy* is a conversion narrative, and Lewis might appropriately have employed the *Confessions* of Augustine, or Newman's *Apologia* as models for the work; yet Lewis chose to base his spiritual autobiography on a romantic model, not merely in content, but in structure. *Surprised by Joy* is, at heart, romantic autobiography, detailing Lewis's movement through a Romantic metanarrative. This chapter will define that Romantic metanarrative (a term of my own coining, which will become the key to understanding Lewis's relationship with nineteenth century authors, texts, and ideas) and demonstrate its role as the central structuring agent of Lewis' self-construction in *Surprised*

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[20] *Commonweal*, February 3, 1956.

[21] Lewis found romanticism, hand-in-hand with Christianity, to be a necessary rebellion against the growing materialist and nihilist ideology of his own day. He reveals this attitude in a review of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, exclaiming, "This book is like lightning from a clear sky; as sharply different, as unpredictable in our age as *Songs of Innocence* were in theirs. […] in it heroic romance, gorgeous, eloquent, and unashamed, has suddenly returned at a period almost pathological in its anti-romanticism" ("The Gods Return to Earth" 99). For more on Lewis's anti-modernism, see Gilchrist.

by Joy. In understanding the Romantic metanarrative, which consists of the stages of innocence, experience, and higher innocence (known to some as the Blakean paradigm), it will be necessary to explain each component in detail, particularly focusing on higher innocence. It is in higher innocence that Lewis is most interested, and most innovative. Numerous scholars have hinted at the connection between the Romantic sublime and Lewis's Joy. In *Surprised by Joy* Lewis describes Joy as a sensation of "enormous bliss," "desire," and "longing," which made "everything else that had ever happened […] insignificant in comparison" (16). It is no surprise that critics have examined this Joy as a late iteration of the sublime experiences of Wordsworth and other Romantics. What has not been duly examined, however, is first the influence that early textual theories of the sublime may have had on Lewis's conception of Joy, and second the relationship that Joy has not only to the sublime, but also to the Romantic ideal of higher innocence, specifically via Coleridge's concept of polarity.

This chapter will trace the direct influence of William Blake, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge on C. S. Lewis's autobiographical self-construction. While Blake provides the basic narrative trajectory of innocence, experience, and higher innocence, Lewis relies on the other Romantics to fill out this narrative. Keats and Shelley provide Lewis with his earliest examples of the sublime and inform his early pursuit of Joy. Eventually, however, Lewis rejects the younger Romantics, finding their sublime too strongly materialistic and abortive. He then turns to Wordsworth, whose *Prelude* provides the primary model for *Surprised by Joy*, and Coleridge, whose concept of polarity shapes, perhaps even names, Lewis's sublime concept of higher innocence as Joy.

Lewis did not publish his autobiography until March 1955, after the majority of his major fiction had already been written (with the notable exception of *Till We Have Faces* [1956]). This

fact raises a hen-and-egg question about the romantic structures in Lewis's fiction: does the autobiography owe its structure to his previous fictional work, or do the fictional works owe their structure to Lewis's actual romantic life experience. This is a question without a clear answer. On the one hand, *Surprised by Joy* is famously inaccurate. Scholars have illustrated Lewis's many chronological mistakes (such as incorrectly dating his conversion), as well as his selective omission of indiscretions (such as the relationship with Janie Moore) and of people who played a significant role in his life (such as J. R. R. Tolkien). These inaccuracies suggest a level of artifice in the book and could support the argument that Lewis is simply writing another piece of fiction, using the romantic elements to spice up the narrative as he is wont to do. On the other hand, Lewis's letters reveal the truth of much of *Surprised by Joy*. Lewis expresses a self-awareness of Joy early in his letters to Arthur Greeves, and Lewis's letters and diary frequently document the sort of romantic experiences that the autobiography describes. Ultimately, one can conclude that the romantic autobiographical structure (or Romantic metanarrative) was so ingrained in Lewis's psyche as to inform his own self-construction and drive his fictional endeavors. While the fictional outworking of this internal romantic narrative will be explored in later chapters, it is the work of this chapter to illustrate whence this metanarrative originates, and how Lewis employs it in his own story.

William Blake: Romantic Metanarrative and the Argument from Desire

Many treatments of literary Romanticism begin with William Blake, and Lewis's own romanticism certainly originates with this visionary. But exploring the relationship between Lewis and Blake is difficult. First, very few scholars have investigated the links between these authors. Second, Lewis makes little open reference to Blake. However, in contrast to the current critical consensus (or, rather, critical silence) on Lewis and Blake, this chapter will demonstrate

that Lewis was not only deeply familiar with Blake's work, but that he was deeply indebted to Blake for his own romantic self-understanding, particularly in relation to his conversion to Christianity. Most importantly, Blake gave Lewis an initial understanding of innocence, experience, and the longing for higher innocence.

Until now the only critically recognized connection between Lewis and Blake is that asserted in the Preface of Lewis's *The Great Divorce* (1945), which begins thus: "Blake wrote the Marriage of Heaven and Hell. […] I have written of their Divorce (viii). This prefatory comment has led critics to suppose that *The Great Divorce* is Lewis's platform upon which to reject Blake.[22] Yet Lewis is not a Blake scholar, and in this prefatory comment he openly admits both the difficulty of Blake's writing, as well as his own interpretive uncertainty. Elsewhere he uses Blake as a standard of textual abstruseness, writing that Charles Williams's *Taliessin Through Logres* "will seem as difficult as Blake" ("Charles Williams" 138). Even in the Preface he admits that he does not consider himself "a fit antagonist for so great a genius, nor […] feel at all sure […] what he meant," suggesting that the only actual conversation between *The Great Divorce* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* may be their respective titles (vii).[23]

Lewis's only other direct Blakean references appear in his letters, and although they do not evince a passion for the poet, they do reveal a knowledge and enjoyment of Blake's work and genius. In a December 12, 1927, letter to Warnie, a young Lewis expresses a distinct lack of

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[22] For the most detailed treatment, see Manganiello.

[23] Intruigingly, Lewis seems to have gotten the title for *The Great Divorce* from a line in John Keats's 1820 letter to John Brown: "Land and sea, weakness and decline, are great separators, but death is the great divorcer for ever" (371). Lewis underlined this passage in his copy of Keats's letters, and was clearly familiar with it, thus having it ready to hand when naming his book. Most interesting for our purposes, however, is the fact that Keats's use of the phrase "great divorce," is not at all with the same intent as Lewis's, and Lewis surely understood that he was appropriating Keats's words in a completely new sense. While Keats refers to the separation death enforces between the living and the dead, Lewis is interested in the separation between Heaven and Hell, and finds the phrase a witty contrast to Blake's *Marriage*. This extraction and use of Keats's words outside of their true context implies that Lewis may be similarly extracting and responding to Blake's title without much interest in the actual content of the work.

interest in Blake, describing him as: "one of those unhappy authors whom we are bored with years before we read him" (*Collected Letters: Vol I* 740). Nonetheless, Lewis knows Blake's material well enough to reference various works and passages in his correspondence. In 1939 he jocularly quotes *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* to Owen Barfield (*Vol II* 249), and he similarly references *Songs of Experience* in a 1942 letter to Dorothy Sayers, in which he prepares her for her first reading of Milton, saying, "'Hear the voice of the Bard!'" (*Vol II* 534). Lewis's investment in Blake is most apparent through his friendship and regular correspondence with Kathleen Raine, a Cambridge colleague and Blake scholar. Lewis critiques, encourages and admires Raine's criticism in his correspondence with her. [24] The existing letters, which acknowledge the publication of Raine's pieces on Blake, are all dated from 1957 and 1958, two or three years after the publication of *Surprised by Joy*; however, Raine arrived in Cambridge as a research fellow in 1954 (Hooper, *Companion* 1705), and the fact that Lewis writes to her about her Blake-related publications suggests that she discussed her work with him beginning in 1954 and 1955, when Lewis would have been putting the finishing touches on *Surprised by Joy*. Indeed, in her contribution to *Light on C. S. Lewis*, Raine hints that Lewis's knowledge of Blake was actually quite impressive, "I remember conversation with him as delightful because even

[24] In May 12, 1958, he writes to Raine in response to her essay "The Little Girl Lost and Found and the Lapsed Soul": "This is an absolute stunner: one of the most important discoveries (of that kind) made in our times. [….]the first step is to know what it is about and you have got us up that" (Nov. 7, 1957; *Vol II* 893). Later, he congratulates her on another essay, saying, "There is a certain monotony in commenting on your *Blakiana*, for the best fact, namely that you are quite clearly right, makes the dullest proposition. Your case about *Tiriel* is really quite unanswerable" (*Vol III* 943-44; See Raine's "Some Sources of *Tiriel*" in *The Huntington Library Quarterly* [Nov. 1957]). He also provides support for her most important work, *Blake and Tradition*, which would not be published until after his own death: "When the Big Book finally appears I think all pre-Raine views of Blake will be obsolete forever" (Dec. 5, 1958; *Vol III* 994). The fact that Lewis so glowingly approves of Raine's work demonstrates not only a scholarly interest in Blake, but also a particular allegiance to Raine's school of "Blakiana," which establishes that "nearly every one of Blake's affirmations is essentially Platonic" (Raine, *Blake and Tradition* 102). In a review of Harold Bloom's *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (1962), Lewis criticizes Bloom for being "anxious to separate [Blake] from […] 'the swamp of Neoplatonism'" and therefore ignoring Raine's important contributions: "the names of Porphyry, Taylor, and Kathleen Raine do not appear in the index" ("Poetry and Exegesis" 313). In her work, Raine demonstrates not only that Blake was reading deeply in the Neo-Platonic work of Porphyry, but that he was also immersed in the writings of Thomas Taylor, who integrates Platonic thought into the *philosophia perennis*. See "The Little Girl Lost and Found and the Lapsed Soul."

though at the full extent of my own learning, beyond (and even within) the narrow field in which I had been working he was more than a match for me" ("From a Poet" 104). If Lewis possessed the necessary knowledge of Blake to engage with Raine, he certainly knew enough of Blake to be influenced by the poet's ideas from the *Songs* and elsewhere. Having established Lewis's familiarity with Blake, we can therefore argue for the most central concept in Lewis's self-comprehension: Blake's innocence, experience, and higher innocence. I will first build on Romantic scholarship to establish how Blake defines these concepts, then explain/demonstrate how Lewis revises them in *Surprised by Joy*.

Blake published his *Songs of Innocence* in 1789, presenting a revolutionary new vision of childhood innocence—one that was in opposition to the strict, Puritan standards of eighteenth-century England. Blake turned the concept of Original Sin on its head, suggesting that children are naturally innocent and sinless, echoing a Christian pre-lapsarian state. In Blake, innocence, or childhood, is a time in which a person experiences wholeness and unity with the world and with God.

The natural world of the *Songs of Innocence* is largely pastoral, peaceful and friendly, reflecting its union with the innocent child. Thus "The School Boy" reports his own harmony with the natural world, saying, "I love to rise in a summer morn / When the birds sing on every tree; / The distant huntsman winds his horn, / And the sky-lark sings with me" (37). Similarly, the "Nurse's Song" depicts a mingling between the sounds of children and the natural world: "the voices of children are heard on the green, / And laughing is heard on the hill" (39). This union is perhaps best shown in the "Laughing Song," where the laughter of the children is literally shared by nature: "the green woods laugh with the voice of joy, / And the dimpling stream runs laughing by" (40). The song is an invitation into the wholeness of innocence, saying,

"Come live & be merry, and join with me, / To sing the sweet chorus of 'Ha, Ha, He!'" (40). This universal chorus, however, is not simply a unity within nature, but a harmony between God and his creation.

Many of the *Songs of Innocence* express a simple and solid faith, characterized by a harmony between God and humankind. This is often depicted through a catechistic structure of question and answer. The poem "On Another's Sorrow" follows a sort of call and response in which the narrator asks questions and then answers them. First, it addresses the unity of humanity, asking "Can I see another's woe, / And not be in sorrow too?" (36). The answer is no. Next it moves through parental relationships, questioning whether mothers and fathers can view their children in distress without empathy. "No, no! never can it be!" is the answer, reaffirming the shared sympathy of human relationships (36). Finally, the question shifts to God, asking "And can he who smiles on all / Hear the wren with sorrows small, / Hear the small bird's grief & care, / Hear the woes that infants bear/ […] And not sit both night & day, / Wiping all our tears away?" (36-7). Again, the answer is "O! no, never can it be!" and the narrator expounds upon the deep empathy of God for humanity: "He doth give his joy to all; / He becomes an infant small; / He becomes a man of woe; He doth feel the sorrow too" (37). In Blakean innocence, therefore, the child experiences a firm and simple faith and a harmonious relationship with both God and the world.

Unfortunately, innocence is also vulnerable. Figures like the Shepherd and the Nurse represent protection and adult nurturing within the songs, so that the child may remain "in peace" (35). In "The Divine Image" God is a "father dear" who takes care of "Man, his child and care" (44). The child in "A Dream" has an "Angel-guarded bed" (44), and the child of "A Cradle Song" is protected not only by its mother's presence, but by the "Sweet dreams" that "form a

shade / O'er my lovely infant's head" (50-1). All of this protection suggests that innocence is not only vulnerable, but short lived. In "Night" innocence is seen to be fleeting, as the day gives way to night, and one must say "Farewell, green field and happy groves" hearing instead the "wolves and tygers howl for prey" (54-5). Blake makes it clear that innocence will ultimately give way to a fall—experience.

Five years after *Songs of Innocence*, Blake published *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794), with the subtitle, "Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul" (*Songs of Experience* i). This new volume introduced the *Songs of Experience* and placed the two poem collections side by side, thereby contrasting the states of innocence and experience. The *Songs of Innocence* are light-hearted, naïve, but happy, simple, complete. They offer a vision of a unified world from a child's perspective, not yet tainted. On the other hand, the *Songs of Experience* are cynical, pained, and disillusioned. They ask unanswerable questions about the world and express an incompleteness and lack.

In contrast to the unity of innocence, experience is disunity, chaos, a lack of meaning. While the innocent "On Another's Sorrow" emphasized unity between humanity and God through a question and answer format, the experience poem "The Clod & the Pebble" utilizes a similar format in order to depict contradiction and disunity on both a natural and spiritual level. The poem presents a parallel structure in which the clod makes an orthodox statement—"Love seeketh not Itself to please"—and the pebble replies by directly contradicting it—"Love seeketh only Self to please" (28). In this way, nature itself is seen in discord, and the simple Christian maxims of innocence are carelessly shoved aside for wicked, experienced ones. In "The Fly" humanity no longer lives in harmony with nature, but destroys it, saying, "Thy summers play, / My thoughtless hand / Has brush'd away" (33). Additionally, the recognition of death as "some

blind hand" that "Shall brush my wing" is present in "The Fly," and in "The Sick Rose" where an "invisible worm […] Does thy life destroy" (33). This death is not only present, but blind, and seemingly indiscriminate, emphasizing the lack of unity or meaning in experience.

By contrasting the companion poems in *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* it is possible to further emphasize the characteristics Blake assigns to these opposing states. One such instance is "The Lamb" and "The Tyger." The narrator of "The Lamb" poses the question, "Little Lamb, who made thee?" and then suggests, "Little Lamb, I'll tell thee" (53). This catechistic question and response once again suggests innocence's sense of completion and surety, as well as its delight with the world ("Making all the vales rejoice") (53). "The Tyger," on the other hand is a stream of questions without answers, like, "Tyger […] What immortal hand or eye / Could frame they fearful symmetry," "What dread hand? & what dread feet," and "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" (34-35). Kathleen Raine notes that "*The Tyger* is, from beginning to end, an unanswered question" (*Blake and Tradition* 20). By ending the poem with a repetition of the first stanza's question, yet altered to "What immortal hand or eye / *Dare* frame they fearful symmetry," Blake emphasizes that experience is a state of unanswered questions, disillusionment, awareness of sin and anger at the powers (or lack thereof) that allow wickedness (35).

Although the basic movement from innocence to experience seems an inevitable and tragic cycle, Blake offers a glimpse of hope. Both volumes of *Songs* hint at a hope for future innocence, a higher innocence that lies beyond experience. The "voice of the Bard" in the "Introduction" to *Songs of Experience* expresses a longing for "fallen light renew" and exclaims, "O Earth, O Earth return!" (27). This longing anticipates higher innocence as a renewal of nature and humankind via resurrection, since "Mercy changd death into sleep" ("To Tirzah" 41). The

"Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence* depicts the poet in interaction with an innocent child, suggesting that poetry itself may be a vehicle for achieving higher innocence, for as U. C. Knoepflmacher recalls, the creative process involved in literature about children requires "an adult reactivation of childhood selves" (xiv). The child enjoys the poet's song and asks him to "write […] a book" (Blake, "Introduction" 35). The creation of this art entails a necessary corruption of innocence, as the poet must whittle a reed into a "rural pen" and "stain[…] water" in order to write his "happy songs," yet this experience is the necessary means towards higher innocence, as the poems will invoke "joy to hear," thereby recovering the unity of innocence. In this manner Blake hints to the reader about something beyond, a reality higher and better than innocence, a Heavenly reality.

Lewis was indisputably impacted by Blake's *Songs*. He writes of the *Songs* as charming, alluring, enchanting. In an August 10, 1946, letter to Ruth Pitter he describes Blake's poetry as a "frolic" that has "dropped out of the sky" and has "the same charm as a child dancing in the waves," suggesting that he finds Blake both other-worldly and delightful (*Vol II* 734). He also recognizes Blake's songs, which are like "Heavenly music" and "lightening from a clear sky" (*Vol III* 897; "Gods Return to Earth" 99), to be visionary in their own right, and his revision of Blake's states in *Surprised by Joy* suggests that he found the concepts directly applicable to his own experience.

If one thing is true of *Surprised by Joy*, it is Lewis's internalization of these romantic ideas about the child's spiritual succession through innocence, experience and higher innocence. The book is a story of Lewis's conversion to Christianity, and we could easily place that story within the Biblical framework of creation, fall and redemption; however, while Lewis certainly

intends to evoke the Biblical metanarrative, he does so in romantic terms, exploring this framework in terms of romantic innocence and experience.

Lewis describes his "childhood" (a word with which he typically denotes life until his mother's death in 1908) in terms highly resonant with Blake's version of innocence. The child Lewis is like Blake's naïve, happy lamb, living in "a period of humdrum, prosaic happiness" (*SBJ* 8). He repeatedly refers to the time as one of "general happiness," and "settled happiness" (*SBJ* 8)—the type of happiness enjoyed by Blake's joyful innocents, ignorant of the evils of the world around them. This naïveté Lewis emphasizes by explaining that, "Like other children, we had no standard of comparison" (*SBJ* 30), that he and Warnie were "humble and childlike and self-forgetful" (*SBJ* 68), and that children are typically innocent of the sinful motives necessary to actual sin: "Adults often accuse a child of vanity without pausing to discover on what points children in general, or that child in particular, are likely to be vain. [….] I was being accused of an offense which I lacked resources to commit" (*SBJ* 49). This Blakean innocence, however, cannot continue indefinitely.

Flora Lewis's death serves as the one, major marker of the transition from innocence to experience. Along with Flora's death comes a complete rupture of "settled happiness," the unity that Lewis perceives in his earlier life. As Flora dies of cancer, experience, with all its characteristic evils, creeps into the Lewis household. The first image of experience that Lewis offers the reader is decidedly Blakean: "There came a night when I was ill and crying both with headache and toothache and distressed because my mother did not come to me" (*SBJ* 18). Just as parental protection—the image of the mother bending over the cradle in "Infant Joy" or "Cradle Song"—is a hallmark of innocence, so parental neglect characterizes experience. Furthermore, the trope of the unanswered question or plea typifies Blake's description of experience, just as

Lewis's mother fails to answer him in his distress. One protector figure having failed, Lewis turns to God himself and makes a fervent attempt at prayer. When Flora is known to be sick, he offers "prayers for her recovery," but they go unanswered and "nevertheless she die[s]" (*SBJ* 20). Again, this echoes not only the parental neglect of Blake's experience, but the fact of God, Priest and King making "a Heaven" of the child's distress, as in Blake's "Chimney Sweeper" (*Experience* 32). It is a failure to answer the sorts of questions about parental and divine empathy that are raised in "On Another's Sorrow." The result is disunity in Lewis's world, and an alienation not only from parental nurturing, but from the physical world as well. In an echo of the transition from the familiar laughter of innocent nature to the darkness and woe of experienced nature in "Night," Lewis reports a sudden transformation in his own home, writing, "our whole existence changed into something alien and menacing, as the house become full of strange smells and midnight noises and sinister whispered conversations. [….] It divided us from our father as well as our mother" (*SBJ* 19). Additionally, sin and deceit begin to grow in the boys with the onset of experience and they are alienated from the father to whom "we […] were already learning to lie" (*SBJ* 19). Lewis describes himself and Warren at this point in a particularly Blakean image, as "two frightened urchins huddled for warmth in a bleak world" (*SBJ* 19), and makes a final statement of the disunity of experience, saying, "With my mother's death all settled happiness, all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life. [….] no more of the old security. It was sea and islands now; the great continent had sunk like Atlantis" (*SBJ* 21).

Not only is this final image significant for its demonstration of disunity, alienation, and lack of security, but the reference to Atlantis has a potentially Blakean origin. Raine attests that, for Blake, "The lost Atlantis is yet another version of the myth of the lost paradise" (*Blake and*

Tradition vol. 1 339), and Atlantis appears significantly in *America* and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* as well as other places in Blake's mythology (Holley 109). Raine further explains that "The Biblical story of the expulsion from Eden and the closing of the gate, and that of the Deluge, are, of course, quite distinct; but to Blake they are, in symbolic terms, the same story, and he therefore does not scruple to combine them" in the symbol of the sunken Atlantis (*Blake and Tradition*, vol. II 268). Whether Lewis absorbed this image from his own reading of Blake, or from conversations with Raine, he once again evokes a Blakean symbol of the fall from innocence with this reference to Atlantis.

Flora's death is the onset of experience in Lewis's self-construction, but certainly not its fulfillment; school also plays a distinct role in Lewis's loss of innocence. At the beginning of his chapter "Concentration Camp," Lewis again invokes what he believes to be another Blakean image, perhaps from "The School Boy," writing, "the putting on of the school clothes was, I well knew, the assumption of a prison uniform" (23). Blake's "School Boy" laments that "to go to school in a summer morn, / […] drives all joy away," for "Under a cruel eye outworn, / The little ones spend the day / In sighing and dismay" (37). In a November 1917 letter to Arthur Greeves, Lewis mentions "'The rules of our prison-house' as Blake called them" (*Vol I* 343). Lewis misattributes this phrase to Blake. In fact, "the rules of our prison-house" is a direct quote from a W. B. Yeats's introduction to Blake's poetry (xxxiv), which Lewis would certainly have read, being an avid Yeats fan. Strangely enough—it seems most likely that the phrase "the rules of our prison-house" occurred to Yeats as an echo of the "Shades of the prison-house" from Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode" (68). That both Yeats and Lewis should naturally associate this phrase with Blake, however, reveals how universally Blake is credited as the source of romantic innocence and experience. Even when Wordsworth employs these structures, he is leaning

heavily on Blake's foundational ideas—or so, at least, it seemed to Yeats and Lewis. Lewis depicts his loss of innocence, as an ongoing process, begun by his mother's death, which sent him to boarding school, where he loses his faith and becomes sexually corrupt, "a fop, a cad, and a snob" with a "vulgarize[d …] mind" (*SBJ* 68-69). This progression is highly reminiscent of the progression from innocence to experience that Wordsworth sets forth in the Intimations Ode, and wherein appears the famous "shades of the prison-house" line which Lewis misattributed to Blake. He describes his school days as the setting for "my loss of faith, of virtue, and of simplicity" (*SBJ* 70), evoking the image of Blake's "School Boy," wilting in his desk. The growth of literary pride he also describes as "a kind of Fall" (*SBJ* 104), saying that his simple enjoyment of literature was an "innocence" that "did not last" (103). Thus the boyhood of Lewis's school days is a Blakean one.

With adolescence, however, Lewis again borrows on Blake, this time invoking higher innocence through the reintroduction of Joy. Joy's reappearance represents his "personal Renaissance":

> […]this wonderful reawakening which comes to most of us when puberty is complete. It is properly called a rebirth not a birth, a reawakening not a wakening, because in many of us, besides being a new thing, it is also the recovery of things we had in childhood and lost when we become boys. [….] The dreams of childhood and those of adolescence may have much in common; between them, often, boyhood stretches like an alien territory in which everything (ourselves included) has been greedy, cruel, noisy, and prosaic, in which the imagination has slept and the most unideal senses and ambitions have been restlessly, even maniacally, awake. (*SBJ* 71)

This re-awakening paradoxically represents higher innocence, and yet only the longing for higher innocence, the anticipation of it. Just as Blake's songs merely hint at, anticipate, and long for higher innocence, so Lewis sees it as only paradoxically attainable in life, for it is ultimately a future, Heavenly reality. In this manner, Lewis borrows from Blake but revises him, giving

higher innocence a significantly larger portion of his attention than did Blake, who only hinted at it. Lewis suggests that higher innocence is paradoxically present, even while a longed-for, future reality, in a certain stage of experience. Simply by reading the title of *Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods*, Lewis catches and briefly attains a glimpse of higher innocence: "I at once had what I had now lacked for years, […] I was returning at last from exile and desert lands to my own country; […] a single unendurable sense of desire and loss [….]. And at once I knew (with fatal knowledge) that to 'have it again' was the supreme and only important object of my desire" (*SBJ* 73). The experience of Joy, therefore, represents simultaneously a taste of higher innocence and a longing for it. While Blake offers only hints of higher innocence within the stages of innocence and experience, Lewis's Joy is both a "having" and a "wanting," so that the longing for higher innocence (which he ultimately understands to be God and Heaven) is both a present attainment of that higher innocence and an anticipation of the future reality of higher innocence:

> a longing (yet it was also fruition) [….] I had tasted Heaven then. [….] True, it was desire, not possession. […] only possession in so far as that kind of desire is itself desirable, is the fullest possession we can know on earth; […] the very nature of Joy makes nonsense of our common distinction between having and wanting. There, to have is to want and to want is to have. (*SBJ* 166)

Surely Lewis's treatment of higher innocence as a present and future reality is influenced by the "already and not yet" inaugurated eschatology that was becoming theologically popular in the early 20th century, and rose to particular prominence around 1950[25]—when Lewis would have been writing *Surprised by Joy*; again, however, the original idea is rooted in Blake. Higher

[25] The concept of "already and not yet," or inaugural eschatology, supposes that the Kingdom of God both arrived with Christ's incarnation, and yet is still to come with Christ's second coming. While this concept is present in much theological writing, ranging back to Calvin and Luther, it was largely popularized by Geerhardus Vos. In *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church* (1903), Vos explains, "the kingdom might be present in one sense, and yet have to come in another" (46). George Eldon Ladd's *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (1959) brought inaugural eschatology into further prominence. In *The Presence of the Future* (2002), Ladd explains the central idea of inaugural eschatology in simplistic terms: "the Kingdom of God is in some sense both present and future" (3).

innocence for Blake is a hinted-at, future reality, but it is also accessible through the imagination, for:

> This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body. This World of Imagination is Infinite & Eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or Vegetation, is Finite & Temporal. ("*Vision of the Last Judgment*" 410)

The use of imagination for Blake, therefore, is much like Lewis's Joy. It is both an entrance into and a prophecy of Heaven. Although Lewis further Christianizes Blake's Neo-Platonic concept, he builds his higher innocence from Blake's.

Another characteristic of Lewis's higher innocence, which he inherits originally from Blake, is the idea that it is a higher state, yet childlike. Having rediscovered Joy in his adolescence, Lewis remarks, "My childhood is at unity with the rest of my life; my boyhood not so" (*SBJ* 71-2). Not only does this description signal back to the Blakean concept of innocence and higher innocence as states of unity, but it suggests that the child-like is a model for higher innocence, with all its themes of Paradise regained. This idea resurfaces in *The Great Divorce* when one of the spirits encourages an inhabitant of Hell, "Once you were a child. Once you knew what inquiry was for. There was a time when you asked questions because you wanted answers, and were glad when you had found them. Become that child again: even now" (41). Blake's innocent narrator in "The Lamb" asks questions that have answers, while the experienced narrator of "The Tyger" asks unanswered or unanswerable questions, but "Earth's Answer" suggests a potential answer to the questions of experience, longing for a time when it may "Break this heavy chain" (28). Higher innocence thus becomes an answer not to the easy questions of innocence, but a state in which the questions of experience become as easily and earnestly answerable as those of innocence. For Lewis, therefore, higher innocence does not suggest so much a "growing up" as a return to the best characteristics of childhood:

> "grown-up conversation" […] I had no taste for. In my experience it meant conversation about politics, money, deaths, and digestion. I assumed that a taste for it, as for eating mustard or reading newspapers, would develop in me when I grew older (so far, all three expectations have been disappointed). The only two kinds of talk I wanted were the almost purely imaginative and the almost purely rational. (*SBJ* 136)

Higher innocence here means a transcendence beyond being "grown up" and instead a childlike reveling in the adult capacity for imagination and reason. In other words, Lewis's conception of higher innocence represents a child-like pursuit of truth and beauty that gives no credence to the "rules of our prison-house"—the social laws of "grown-up" society. Again, he embraces a romantic rejection of oppressive society, just as Blake condemns the abusive power structures of his own day, whether the "mind-forg'd manacles" of social convention and the "blackning Church" ("London," *Songs of Experience* 37), or the "dark Satanic Mills" ("*Milton"* 238). Like Blake, therefore, Lewis describes higher innocence as a child-like state.[26]

Furthermore, Blake's concept of desire plays a key role in Lewis's understanding of higher innocence. Despite Lewis's repudiation of any attempt to "marry Heaven and Hell," both his autobiography and his own depiction of the afterlife in *The Great Divorce* corroborate Blake on the topic of desire. Both Blake and Lewis see evil as a negation, and good as a positive—evil

[26] One could easily argue that Lewis's embrace of the child-like in higher innocence owes as much to George MacDonald as it does to William Blake. Upon experiencing Joy through the "Holiness" of George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, Lewis reports, "For the first time the song of the sirens sounded like the voice of my mother or my nurse" (*SBJ* 179). Furthermore, many of Lewis's favorite MacDonald texts—such as the *Princess* books, and the stories in *Dealings with the Faeries*—display a higher innocence that is clearly linked with the child (as I will further discuss in chapter four). Prothero and Williams argue that "[i]f we can trace any clear influence of Lewis from Wordsworth or Coleridge, it most likely takes the form of indirect influence through the good offices of George MacDonald" (21-22). While I agree with Prothero and Williams, I would also temper this idea of transmission, for Lewis's love for MacDonald by no means over-rides his familiarity with the original Romantic texts. Nonetheless, Lewis very well may have acquired some of his Blakean imagery and ideas from MacDonald. MacDonald's biographer, Rolland Hein confirms that MacDonald owned a biography of Blake (Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*, 1863), and that, "The presence in MacDonald's writings of ideas very similar to Blake's is so noticeable that MacDonald must have had some early acquaintance with his work" (119-20). MacDonald's characters frequently, if not always, undergo a fall from innocence, and undertake a quest for higher innocence, which MacDonald doubtlessly inherits from Blake. Additionally, MacDonald's personal bookplate was designed after Blake's "Death's Door," which Blake illustrated for Robert Blair's poem *The Grave*. A copy of this bookplate is on display in the Marion E. Wade Center.

as non-existence, while good is more real than earthly existence. In his descriptive notes for *Vision of the Last Judgment*, Blake explains that judgment will be based upon whether an individual embraces or negates his/her passions:

> Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have curbed & governd their Passions, or have No Passions, but because they have Cultivated their Understandings. The Treasures of Heaven are not Negations of Passion, but Realities of Intellect, from which All the Passions Emanate Uncurbed in their Eternal Glory. [….] Those who are cast out are All those who having no Passions of their own because No Intellect, have spent their lives in Curbing & Governing other People's by the various arts of Poverty & Cruelty of all kinds. ("*Vision*" 415)

In this light, good is a cultivated passion, while evil is the absence or negation of passion. Additionally, this implies that evil exists only as a corruption or absence of good, while good exists freely outside of evil. Good, or Heaven, is therefore a true existence, while evil or Hell is a non-existence. Similarly, in *The Great Divorce* George MacDonald (Lewis's fictional tour guide to Heaven) tells the narrator, "Without self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened" (75). Through the character of MacDonald, Lewis suggests that the embrace of true desire means an embrace of Heaven, while the choice of Hell is a repression or negation of the individual's fundamental desire. This idea of good as existence and evil as non-existence also bleeds over into both men's presentation of Heaven as the Neo-Platonic ideal.

Blake asserts his Neo-plantonic view of reality and the imagination in his *Vision of the Last Judgment*:

> This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body. This World of Imagination is Infinite & Eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or Vegetation, is Finite & Temporal. There Exist in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature. ("*Vision of the Last Judgment*" 410)

By this description, the physical world (which is as close to a literal Hell as Blake gets) is merely a shadow or "reflect[ion]" of the Eternal, ideal world. Lewis's Heaven in *The Great Divorce* is similarly Neo-Plantonic, for it appears to represent the ideal forms, of which earthly and hellish objects are merely shadows. Thus the narrator notes that the bus of visitors "were as they had always been; as all the men I had known had been perhaps. It was the light, the grass, the trees that were different; made of some different substance, so much solider than things in our country that men were ghosts by comparison" (21). In contrast to the reality of Heaven, "The whole difficulty of understanding Hell is that the thing to be understood is so nearly Nothing" (*Great Divorce* 77). Like Blake, Lewis sees Heaven as ultimate reality and Hell as ultimate un-reality. And if Heaven is ultimate reality, it is also the ultimate answer to all human desire.

Because it is the central characteristic of Joy, desire is the driving force towards Lewis's higher innocence and Blake's own arguments about desire appear to be a definite foreshadowing of what Peter Kreeft has titled Lewis's "argument from desire." In *There is No Natural Religion* Blake rejects the idea that man can approach the divine through nature, instead asserting that "Man has no notion of moral fitness but from Education" (14). He then explores human desire, noting that "the desires & perceptions of man untaught by any thing but organs of sense, must be limited to objects of sense" (14). In other words, if man limits himself only to the material world and his senses, he will only experience desires that are attached to material things. However, if he is taught to use his imaginative perception, he will perceive things beyond the material world, "more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover" (15). With this expanded, or liberated, perception comes an unquenchable desire: "More! More! is the cry of a mistaken soul; less than ALL cannot satisfy Man" (15). One must eventually confront the question of whether every desire has an object. Recognizing that "If any could desire what he is incapable of possessing,

despair must be his eternal lot," Blake determines that "The desire of Man being Infinite, the possession is Infinite, & himself Infinite" (15). In this way, Blake uses the materially unquenchable human desire as a proof of spiritual reality. For Blake, of course, this is a proof of man's divinity as much as it is a proof of God (with which Lewis takes strong exception), yet his argument from desire translates easily into Lewis's own philosophical journey to God.

In *Surprised by Joy* Lewis is haunted by Joy, which is itself both a form of higher innocence, and a longing or desire for higher innocence. Lewis reports that "I was sick with desire," yet recognizes that this was a pleasant state, a "sickness better than health" (*SBJ* 119). Ultimately, Joy leads Lewis from atheism through idealism and theism to Christianity in a similar train of thought to that of Blake. Lewis explains this argument from desire in a letter to Sheldon Vanauken in December, 1950:

> [a] point about *wishes*. A wish may lead to false beliefs, granted. But what does the existence of the wish suggest? At one time I was much impressed by Arnold's line 'Nor does the being hungry prove that we have bread.' But, surely, tho' it doesn't prove that one particular man will *get* food, it *does* prove that there is such a thing as food? i.e. if we were a species that didn't normally eat, wasn't designed to eat, wd. one feel hungry? You say the Materialist universe is 'ugly'. I wonder how you discovered that? If you are really a product of a materialistic universe, how is it you don't feel at home there? Do fish complain of the sea for being wet? Or if they did, would that fact itself not strongly suggest that they had not always been, or wd. not always be, purely aquatic creatures? Notice how we are perpetually *surprised* at Time. ('How time flies? Fancy John being grown-up & married? I can hardly believe it!') In Heaven's name, why? Unless, indeed, there is something in us which is *not* temporal" (*Vol III* 76).

Just as humanity's capacity for infinite desire proves to Blake that such an infinite reality exists, so Lewis believes that every desire has its ultimate object, and that the very existence of a desire for something outside of this world proves such otherworldly existence.

Blake again presents his argument from desire in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which Lewis is known to have read, and supposed to have rejected, yet Blake's platonic

Christianity again anticipates Lewis's own argument. The "Voice of the Devil," in which the Devil, we may assume, does not necessarily represent any actual devil so much as a revolutionary opponent of the established church, seeks to amend three incorrect ideas: 1) that man is divided into "a Body & a Soul," 2) that "Energy, calld Evil"—which we could also denote as desire, or the drive towards desire fulfillment—is bodily, while "Reason, calld Good" dwells in the soul, and 3) that God will punish humanity for "following his Energies," or desires (87). The truth, the Devil tells us is 1) that all of man is a soul, the body is only a portion of it, 2) that "Energy is the only life" and "Reason" is not its opponent, but its "outward circumference," and 3) that "Energy is Eternal Delight" (87). The first of these three assertions reappears in George MacDonald, and is particularly noted by Lewis. In a copy of MacDonald's *Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood* Lewis's marginal notes state that humans *are* souls and simply *possess* bodies; he also makes a marginal line to emphasize the following passage from the novel:

> And here let me interrupt the conversation to remark upon the great mistake of teaching children that they have souls. The consequence is, that they think of their souls as of something which is not themselves. For what a man *has* cannot be himself. Hence, when they are told that their souls go to Heaven, they think of their *selves* as lying in the grave. They ought to be taught that they have bodies; and that their bodies die; while they themselves live on. Then they will not think as old Mrs Tomkins did, that *they* will be laid in the grave. It is making altogether too much of the body, and is indicative of an evil tendency to materialism, that we talk as if we *possessed* souls, instead of *being* souls. We should teach our children to think no more of their bodies when dead than they do of their hair when it is cut off, or of their old clothes when they have done with them. (*Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood* 480)

This idea of the body as a possession of the soul, which Lewis clearly noted in MacDonald, resonates equally with the voice of Blake's Devil. Of even more importance, however, is that Devil's assertion that "Energy is Eternal Delight," for in this statement we find another important resonance between Blake and Lewis's conceptions of desire and Heaven. Just as Blake wishes to overturn the concept of energy (desire) as sin, so Lewis demonstrates the dynamic pursuit of

desire as central to the very delight of Heaven. MacDonald tells the narrator of *The Great Divorce*, "Every one of us lives only to journey further and further into the mountains" (74). The image of climbing or pursuing a mountain represents, for Lewis, the following of ultimate desire (of Joy), which is higher innocence—simultaneously the pursuit and enjoyment of Heaven.[27]

Also like Blake, Lewis consistently recognizes the divine source of desire, despite its ability to be corrupted by earthly sin. Blake emphasizes and celebrates unrepressed sexual desire throughout his poetry and visions, and in an essay on the work of Charles Williams Lewis appropriately attributes to Blake the "glorification of the body" and its sexual urges ("A Sacred Poem" 126). In discussing the pederasty at Malvern College, he recalls that, despite the sin in these actions, "Eros, turned upside down, blackened, distorted, and filthy, still bore the traces of his divinity" (*SBJ* 110). This is strikingly similar to Blake's words in *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, when he accusingly states that "The Modern Church crucifies Christ with the Head Downwards" (415). Blake recognizes in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that desire can become corrupted: "Those who restrain desire do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling. And being restrained it by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire" (87). In the same way Lewis (via his fictional George MacDonald) suggests that "the sensualist [….] prefers to joy the mere fondling of unappeasable lust" (72), and that "Lust is a poor, weak, whimpering, whispering thing compared with that richness and energy of desire which will arise when lust has been killed" (114). Dominic Manganiello cites these passages in order to contrast Blake's embrace of lust with Lewis's rejection of evil, yet it seems that Lewis and Blake are closer to each other on this point than Manganiello would like to admit. Both emphasize the difference

[27] The mountain climbing image also appears as the central plot of *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), and the culminating moment in *Perelandra* (1943) and *The Last Battle* (1956).

between the energy of a true desire, which leads to God, and that of a weak and therefore wrong desire. In fact, Blake's idea of desire versus its negation is unmistakably present in "The Weight of Glory." Here Lewis rebukes modern Christians for considering "Unselfishness," which is "a negative term," the highest virtue, rather than "Love," which is "a positive" (25). He suggests that it is wrong to think that "our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point" (25). Instead of recommending "abstinence," or the restraining of one's desires, Lewis asserts:

> Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. ("Weight of Glory" 26)

In this passage, we see Lewis revising Blake's arguments about desire, and about sin as a manipulation or negation of a God-given passion. Surely it is no coincidence that the source of Lewis's higher innocence would be similarly focused on the foundational role that desire plays in that highest state.

Like Blake, Lewis emphasizes desire. This desire, which Blake so champions, becomes for Lewis a "signpost" pointing towards eternal truth, and it is no surprise that, just as Blake revels in human desire, Lewis should choose a positive rather than a negative name for his own sublime experience of lack and longing: Joy. In this light, however, Lewis's famous closing to *Surprised by Joy* becomes potentially problematic. After more than a hundred pages about Joy and its pursuit, Lewis writes, "To tell you the truth, the subject has lost nearly all interest for me since I became a Christian" (238). He suggests that Joy is merely a "signpost" towards its true object and that "we shall not stop and stare, or not much; not on this road, though their pillars are of silver and their lettering of gold. 'We would be at Jerusalem'" (*SBJ* 238). On the one hand,

this seems a betrayal of the argument from desire that he inherits from Blake; but on the other hand, it is as much a celebration of that desire as ever, for it recognizes the deep longing to be "at Jerusalem"—a longing which Blake famously shares, though his work leaves it unresolved. While Lewis's final quote is from Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, written in the fourteenth century, it is also a well known scriptural image for Heaven—the new Jerusalem. For an Englishman who had fought in the first and lived through the second World War, however, Jerusalem would also have a strong Blakean association. Jerusalem is the subject of the prefatory poem, "And did those feet in ancient time," in Blake's *Milton*, which alludes to Jesus's reputed visit to England as a child in the care of his uncle, Joseph of Arimathea. Hurbert Parry set the poem to music in 1916 as an intended bolster for England's flagging morale in the Great War. The song became England's unofficial anthem, retitled simply "Jerusalem," and remains a cultural fixture.[28] Just as Lewis's parting comment in *Surprised by Joy* suggests a longing to reach higher innocence, as embodied in the coming of the Kingdom of God, so Blake's poem is an expression of the desire to usher the Kingdom into England. Thus Blake calls upon his "Arrows of desire" and attests that "I will not cease from Mental Fight, […] Till we have built Jerusalem, / In England's green & pleasant Land" (*Milton* 238). When Lewis chose Jerusalem as the image for Joy's ultimate object, and the closing image of *Surprised by Joy*, he was doubtless aware of the popular Blakean image, and the "arrows of desire" associated with that image. Ultimately, the Jerusalem image is simply one final instance of the Blakean influence that pervades *Surprised By Joy*, providing its overall structure of innocence, experience, and higher innocence, and shaping Lewis's relentless focus on Joy, or higher innocence, as desire.

[28] "Jerusalem" is still sung alongside the British national anthem as the official closing of the final Proms concert every year, and it also received international attention as a part of the Opening Ceremony for the London Olympics in 2012. It is quite commonplace to hear "Jerusalem" sung across England, from pubs, to churches, to street corners.

Blake laid the foundations for the Romantic metanarrative, which Lewis would take up in his autobiography; yet it was not Blake alone who influenced Lewis's understanding of his self and experience. The concept of Joy, so integral to Lewis's autobiography (and to all his fictional work, which we will discuss in chapters two, three, and four) is significantly shaped not only by Blake, but by various Romantic experiences and analyses of the sublime.

Joy and the Sublime

The Romanticists M. H. Abrams, Thomas Weiskel, and Frances Ferguson all illuminate the way in which the Romantics transform the sublime into a source of individual experience, transcendence and empowerment. David Sandner builds on this work to develop the concept of the fantastic sublime, which is important for understanding Lewis's Joy. On Lewis and Joy, Walter Hooper and Roger Lancelyn Green, Peter Kreeft, Clyde S. Kilby, and major Lewis biographers offer extensive and thoughtful comments. Each treatment of Lewis's experience of longing provides further insight and depth to an understanding of that experience, and what it meant for Lewis's personal and professional life. Finally, Margaret Carter, John Lawlor, Robert Rice, Andrew Lazo, Daniel K. Kuhn and David Sandner analyze Joy as a romantic phenomenon, whether sehnsucht, the sublime, or both.

Joy and the sublime are such popular topics that Prothero and Williams feel the need to disclaim: "That fact [of Joy as romantic experience] has been already well-documented and will not be the focus of this study. What we wish to do here is to focus on the entirety of Lewis's Romanticism" (xi). This chapter will by no means labor over ground that has been previously explored. In fact, Joy and its relation to the sublime only matter to this particular study insomuch as they function within the Romantic construction of the child and its development. In other

words, Joy is useful for our purposes, and indeed for Lewis, only insofar as it partakes in the Romantic metanarrative by pointing towards higher innocence.

As previously discussed in comparison of Blake and Lewis, Joy represents for Lewis a sort of momentary higher innocence, a flash of unity that leaves him longing for such unity in the future. This experience, of course, has been linked to the romantic sublime; however, to say that Joy is the sublime could have an obscuring rather than a clarifying effect on the concept, for the substance and significance of the sublime have undergone incessant debate since the dawn of the Romantic movement. In *Surprised by Joy* Lewis makes it clear that understanding the true substance of Joy—as a "signpost" towards higher innocence—was the final essential step in his journey back to Christianity, and therefore the most important question surrounding any conversation of Joy or the sublime. However, this realization came only after a long, drawn-out exploration of Joy, and that exploration consisted of much experimentation with various versions of romantic sublimity. It will be useful, therefore, to trace important nineteenth-century thought on the sublime through Lewis's descriptions of Joy, and then to examine his relationship to the romantic figures who inspired the various steps in his journey towards higher innocence.

In *The Critique of Judgment* (1790) Immanuel Kant says that the Sublime may be defined as "what is absolutely great" (94). It is "a pleasure that only arises indirectly, being brought about by the feeling of a momentary check to the vital forces followed at once by a discharge all the more powerful, and so it is an emotion that seems to be no sport, but dead earnest in the affairs of the imagination" (91). This pleasure Kant describes as a "negative pleasure" (91), because it is more akin to a sudden cessation of pain, than to an actual, positive pleasure. Indeed, Lewis's description of the experience of Joy aligns well with Kant's, both in terms of the actual

process, and its corresponding emotions and thoughts. Lewis describes his first experience of Joy thus:

> 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 […]. 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? Not, certainly, for a biscuit tin filled with moss, nor even (though that came into it) for my past. ["Oh, I desire too much"]—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 in time; and in a certain sense everything else that had ever happened to me was insignificant in comparison. (*SBJ* 16)

Lewis's assertion that the memory arose from "centuries," and that there are not "words strong enough" to describe the feeling, as well as his use and following re-emphasis of the word "enormous," certainly indicate Kant's sense of the "absolutely great." Additionally, Kant's description of the sublime as "no sport, but dead earnest" aligns with Lewis's sense of the experience's deep significance. Not only are the corresponding emotions similar, however, but Lewis describes his experience of Joy in a very traditional structure. From Kant to Weiskel, every critical description of the sublime seems to understand the sublime as a basic threefold process: 1) Familiar experience of an object, 2) Defamiliarization, causing the individual to be overwhelmed by a recognition of the infinite, which the finite mind cannot fully comprehend, and 3) Refamiliarization, but with added significance and a recognition of loss. Clearly, Lewis's experience (or at least his description of the experience) aligns with this common narrative. He was 1) having a completely familiar experience with a currant bush, when 2) the bush suddenly awoke a memory of limitless proportion and significance, which he had striven towards but not quite grasped when 3) "the world turned commonplace again," although still "stirred by a longing" (16).

In addition to Kant, one must also look to Edmund Burke as a nineteenth-century authority on the sublime. Although Lewis is known to have read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, there is no copy of the *Critique of Judgment* in his existing library. We may assume that he was familiar with the work, as he frequently references Kant's theories, particularly in his "Great War" letters with Owen Barfield, but it seems likely that Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756) influenced Lewis more directly. Lewis owned a multivolume collection of Burke's works, and of the volume in which "An Essay On the Sublime and the Beautiful" appears, only the pages of that particular essay have been cut to allow for reading. In the essay, Lewis marks several passages in which Burke admits the pleasure associated with the sublime. He makes a marginal line next to the phrase "but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are, <u>delightful</u>, as we every day experience" (72), underlining the single word "delightful." He also underlines a passage describing the "<u>delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect and truest test of the sublime</u>" (101), as well as the proposition that "<u>terror is a passion which always produces delight when it does not press too closely</u>" (80). Finally, he places a marginal line next to Burke's comment that "if the sublime is built on terror, or some passion like it, which has pain for its object, it is previously proper to inquire how any species of delight can be derived from a cause so apparently contrary to it. I say *delight*, because, as I have often remarked, it is very evidently different in its cause, and in its own nature, from actual and positive pleasure" (147). Clearly Lewis had Burke's essay in mind when compiling his descriptions of early Joy, particularly focusing on the idea of its delight. Lewis's statement that Joy is "sharply distinguished both from Happiness and from Pleasure. [….] it might almost equally well be called a particular kind of unhappiness or grief. But then it is a kind we want" (*SBJ* 18), is too similar to Burke's

"delightful horror" as distinguished from "positive pleasure" to be coincidental. Lewis seems to have had Burke's theory in mind.

Burke also emphasizes that the sublime as shocking or astonishing, based upon momentary inspiration, rather than careful construction: "by no art can we cause such a shock by the same means when we expect and prepare for it" (Burke 158; Lewis's underlining). This is exactly the language Lewis uses about *Squirrel Nutkin*: "it administered the shock, it was a trouble" (*SBJ* 16). Again, Lewis seems to borrow from Burke the idea that Joy is a "shock" and that is it desirable, yet not "ordinary pleasure."

Finally, Burke introduces to the sublime the concept of loss, and Lewis shows attention to this detail by marginally lining the following passage: "if you listen to the complaints of a forsaken lover, you observe that he insists largely on the pleasures which he enjoyed, or hoped to enjoy, and on the perfection of the object of his desires; it is the *loss* which is always uppermost in his mind" (Burke 72). Just as the "*loss* […] is always uppermost" in Burke's forsaken lover, "a longing for the longing" is the only recognizable residue of Lewis's Joy (*SBJ* 16). Furthermore, Lewis notes in Burke a sense of loss in reference to childhood, placing a marginal line next to the following passage:

> In the morning of our days, when the senses are unworn and tender, when the whole man is awake in every part, and the gloss of novelty fresh upon all the objects that surround us, how lively at that time are our sensations, but how false and inaccurate the judgments we form of things? I despair of ever receiving the same degree of pleasure from the most excellent performances of genius which I felt at that age from pieces which my present judgment regards as trifling and contemptible. (Burke 65-66)

Burke insists that particular people are more sensitive to the sublime, and that the child is naturally more sensitive than the adult, because of its lack of education and refined judgment. Lewis corroborates this idea by demonstrating his own ability to experience Joy even in the

"absence of beauty" that characterized his childhood, confirming that his "earliest aesthetic experiences […] were already incurably romantic" (*SBJ* 6-7). In addition, the objects with which his childhood Joy associates are notably humble: a "biscuit tin filled with moss," *Squirrel Nutkin*, even *Tegner's Drapa* is encountered only through "idly turned […]pages" (17). In this way, Lewis, like Burke, locates the source of the sublime within his own capacity of perception, and particularly in his child self, thus associating himself with the romantic child, and thereby placing himself on the trajectory through innocence, experience, and higher innocence.[29]

Yet, just as important as the Romantic ideas Lewis embraces are those he rejects. Lewis interacts with and enacts romanticism in a variety of ways as he moves from innocence, through experience, towards higher innocence. Early on in *Surprised by Joy* the first Romantics mentioned as those winning Lewis's "allegiance" are Keats and Shelley. Having (re)discovered Joy, after the barren landscape of boyhood experience, Lewis was hungry for any literary experience that might reawaken it, and quickly discovered the passionate and otherworldly poetry of the second generation Romantics.[30] Lewis was first attracted to these younger

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[29] Having established the use Lewis makes of Kant and Burke's definitions and descriptions of the sublime, one cannot help but question *why* Lewis turned to romantic theories of the sublime to describe his own experience. Two possibilities arise. In the first case, Lewis may have legitimately believed his own experiences to be manifestations of the romantic sublime and therefore found Kant and Burke's theories the best descriptions ready to hand. A second, more skeptical reading of *Surprised by Joy* (which has become increasingly popular) might suppose that Lewis deliberately chooses to align himself with romantic thought in order to achieve some rhetorical or apologetic strategy. This is further compounded by the fact that Lewis does not openly identify Joy with the sublime, nor does he make any mention of Kant or Burke. One explanation could suppose that Lewis found these past ideas helpful, but wished to assert his own experience as new, unique and different. Another might speculate that he hoped to avoid the dense philosophical baggage of Romanticism, which could make his text less accessible for the common reader. Still another explanation could be that Lewis hopes to achieve a sort of spontaneous credibility, presenting his experience as if he were largely ignorant of past descriptions and ideas, yet deliberately providing the dots for an intelligent reader to connect. This would assume some sort of authorial sprezzatura on Lewis's part that would not be altogether alien to his accustomed style, so renowned for making the complex accessible. There is, no doubt, truth to each of these assertions, for Lewis truly identified with romanticism and therefore employed its language, but he also constructs a deliberate persona within the autobiography—one that willingly extracts authority from the romantic tradition, while refusing to be subsumed by it.

[30] In dividing Wordsworth and Coleridge from the "younger romantics," I am referring to the fact that Wordsworth and Coleridge are largely perceived as having abandoned their youthful revolutionary passions, and instead turning to a settled Christian conservatism in their later lives. Keats and Shelley were a part of a second generation of romantics who felt that Wordsworth and Coleridge had hypocritically abandoned much of their early fervor. The

Romantics, rather than Coleridge and Wordsworth, and particularly associated himself with Keats and Shelley.[31] The first evidence of Lewis's reading the younger romantics appears in a Dec. 22, 1914 letter to Warren: "There are also several new books, but most of them are not in your line: the only two you might care for are the works of Shelley and Keats" (*Vol I* 98). If we are to trust Lewis's timeline, this would be roughly three years after his adolescent "Rennaissance," which we could identify as his reawakening to a hope and desire for higher innocence. At a time of particular literary hunger, therefore, Lewis discovers Shelley and Keats, poets who seem to share his longing and to express their desires in joy-invoking poetry. At this time in his life, Lewis is studying with W. T. Kirkpatrick and is a decided atheist, a devoted follower of "It"—his early term for Joy—and a close friend and correspondent to Arthur Greeves. The friendship with Greeves begins only months before Lewis discovers Keats and Shelley, and the two find an instant connection in their love for "It," quickly realizing that they share a similar aesthetic taste and experience. In this period, therefore, Lewis and Greeves correspond frequently, discussing what they are reading and recommending books to each other. Additionally, Lewis uses these letters to document his various episodes with Joy and to discuss his own poetic ambitions. In essence, Lewis was ripe to fall under the spell of the second generation Romantics. In his yearnings to pursue and capture Joy, Lewis found in Keats and Shelley a mirror for his desires, his poetic ambitions, and his aversion to Christianity.

In *Surprised by Joy* Lewis reports his young self amazed to discover "the dangerous secret that others had, like me, found [in literature] 'enourmous bliss' and been maddened by

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fact that both Keats and Shelley died in their twenties only served to immortalize their respective poetic reputations as young, ardent and subversive. This distinction between the younger and older (or the first and second generation) of Romantics was well known to Lewis.

[31] Lewis never developed much of a taste for Byron. His most significant comment on Byron may be the note he inscribed at the end of his copy of *Don Juan*: "Never again!" (Marginal Notes, Wade Center). He recalls this reading experience, quoting his exasperated endnote, in *Surprised by Joy*.

beauty" (103), and we see him quickly applying the words of Keats and Shelley to his own experiences of Joy. For example, eighteen-year-old Lewis writes to Greeves in 1916, "I well remember the glorious walk of which you speak, how we lay drenched with sunshine on the 'moss' and were for a short time perfectly happy—which is a rare enough condition, God knows. As Keats says 'Rarely, rarely comest thou, spirit of Delight'" (*Vol I* 171). This happens not to be a quote from Keats, but instead from Shelley's "Song" (1821). Nonetheless, the significance for Lewis in his current state is clear. Shelley's poem is a hymn to sublime joy, begging this "spirit" to return, and avowing that "I love Love […] / But above all other things, / Spirit, I love thee— / Thou art love and life! Oh, come, / Make once more my heart thy home" (43-48). Just as Shelley's poem sets about to worship the passions as a god, so Lewis admits that as his own religion faded his "attitude towards [Joy] contained elements which my religion ought to have contained and did not" (*SBJ* 76). For Lewis, Joy becomes a sort of devotional life in which "the sense ached. I was sick with desire; that sickness better than health" (*SBJ* 118-19). Yet the feeling was elusive for Lewis as for Shelley, and he seems to have identified with the young Romantics in their Promethean quest for ecstasy amidst agony. In Keats's letters Lewis underlines that poet's lamentation, "<u>I assure you I sometimes feel not the influence of a passion or affection during a whole Week</u>" (*Letters of Keats* 43). Similarly, we see him associating Shelley with his own imaginative life in a 1917 letter to Greeves. Lewis describes University College, Oxford, where he is currently living and preparing for Responsions:

> The only other thing I can think of that may interest you—in that way—is the Shelley memorial which you would love. I pass it every morning on the way to my bath. On a slab of black marble, carved underneath with weeping muses, lies in white stone the nude figure of Shelley, as he was cast up by the sea—all tossed into curious attitudes with lovely ripples of muscle and strained limbs. He is lovely. <(No—not since I came back. Somehow I haven't even thought of it.)> (*Vol I* 298)

Surely it is no coincidence that Lewis moves from an almost worshipful description of Shelley's monument into a parenthetical update on Joy ("it"). Clearly the adolescent Lewis found in Keats and Shelley a model for his own pursuit of higher innocence.

Additionally, the young Lewis was an aspiring poet, and he seemingly identified himself more with the Romantics than with the sort of war poetry that was popular in his own time.[32] The lyric cycle *Spirits in Bondage*, which Lewis began as early as 1915, was not published until 1919, after he returned from the Great War. Naturally, many of the lyrics include war imagery and are doubtlessly akin to the horrific images Lewis witnessed on the battlefield and they reflect his corresponding philosophical despair. Yet, while K. J. Gilchrist maintains that *Spirits in Bondage* "remains centrally a book of war poetry, a record of the trauma of Lewis's war" (5), Alister McGrath objects, "it is questionable whether *Spirits in Bondage* can properly be classified as war poetry. […]over half of the poems in this collection were written before Lewis actually went to France and saw active service" (63). I would add to McGrath's argument by pointing to Lewis's romantic associations and the obvious shadow that Keats and Shelley cast over his early poetic endeavors. Lewis's letters reveal comparisons between his own writing and that of Keats in particular. Of a certain poetic project he writes to Greeves in 1919, "It […] is rather indebted to 'St Agnes'" (*Vol I* 466). Particularly in the time leading up to his participation in the war, Lewis seems to have had a sense of his own place in a romantic tradition of young, tragic poets who, like Keats and Shelley, were extinguished before their time. *Spirits in Bondage* may have seemed like his own *Endymion* to the young Lewis, preparing for the front. He writes to Greeves on June 10, 1917:

> I am in a strangely productive mood at present and spend my few moments of spare time in scribbling verse. When my 4 months course in the cadet battalion is at an end, I shall, supposing I get a commission alright, have a 4 weeks leave

[32] Such as that of Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon.

> before joining my regiment. During it I propose to get together all the stuff I have perpetrated and see if any kind publisher would like to take it. After that, if the fates decide to kill me at the front, I shall enjoy a 9 days immortality while friends who know nothing about poetry imagine that I must have been a genius. (*Vol I* 321)

One cannot help but imagine that Lewis is here thinking of John Keats's assertion, "I think I shall be among the English poets after my death" (*Letters of Keats* 171), which Lewis underlines in his personal copy.

In fact, perhaps more than anything, Lewis's self-construction as a romantic poet reveals itself in his letters, where he consciously seeks to construct his own philosophy of poetry, and apparently emulates Keats's famous epistolary style. In an October 1926 letter to Owen Barfield, Lewis quips, "How tiresome about the letter [getting lost in the mail]. I had trusted to acquire fame by it." (*Vol III* 1505). While this comment is clearly meant in jest, it still indicates that Lewis was aware of a potential audience for his letters beyond the recipient. No doubt a younger, more poetically ambitious Lewis wrote his letters to Arthur Greeves imagining how they might be read after his death, when he was a great poet, for, as McGrath observes, "Lewis wanted to be remembered as a poet, and believed that he had the talent necessary to achieve this calling" (64).

Another possible insight in this matter is Lewis's personal copy of Keats's *Letters*. Lewis's underlining in the text suggests an empathy with the anxieties of a young, aspiring poet. One such passage reads:

> "<u>I have asked myself so often why I should be a poet more than other men, seeing how great a thing it is</u>[….] <u>When I consider that so many of these pin-points go to form a bodkin-point (God send I end not my life with a bare bodkin, in its modern sense!), and that it requires a thousand bodkins to make a spear bright enough to throw any light to posterity, I see nothing but continual uphill journeying. Now is there anything more unpleasant</u>[…]<u>than to be so journeying and to miss the goal at last</u>?" (*Letters of Keats* 12; Lewis's underlining).

Lewis certainly understood these types of questions, and they simmer below the surface of his correspondence with Greeves. He would also have been familiar with the discouragement of being "in such a state of Mind as to read over my Lines and hate them" (13; Lewis's underlining), the elation of "flatter[ing] oneself into an idea of being a great Poet" (16; Lewis's underlining), and the longing for a "temple of fame" (34; Lewis's underlining).

In order to more fully comprehend Lewis's self-construction as a romantic poet, we must return again to *Spirits in Bondage*, the poem cycle that he hoped would immortalize his poetic reputation in the event of his early death. This work owes a great debt to the influence of Shelley, particularly in the Promethean figure. Lex McMillan proposes that Lewis deliberately constructs himself as a "Christian Prometheus" in *Surprised by Joy*, turning the romantic persona on its head as a reaction to modern skepticism. While McMillan's argument is compelling, perhaps its biggest weakness is its failure to recognize Lewis's deep associations with Shelley's *Prometheus*. For, indeed, before he ever dreams of being a "Christian Prometheus," Lewis certainly considers himself a Promethean figure in Shelley's vein.

When Lewis first reads *Prometheus Unbound* in October of 1916,[33] he reports to Greeves, "It is an amazing work. I don't know how to describe it to you; it is more wild & out of the world than any poem I ever read, and contains some wonderful descriptions. Shelley had a great genius" (*Vol I* 232). At this moment in 1916, Lewis had already begun some of the poems that would later appear in *Spirits in Bondage* (1919), and the influence of Shelley's Promethean figure is clear in the final work.

Obviously, the very name of *Spirits in Bondage* has a Promethean overtone, but the lyrics themselves also betray a similar language to Shelley's play. Shelley's Prometheus shakes a

[33] According to his letters, Lewis rereads *Prometheus Unbound* at least twice more before 1922. April 2, 1920, to Greeves: " I am now on […] 'Prometheus Unbound'" (*Vol I* 478). Feb. 25, 1921, to Leo Baker: "I have been reading Prometheus Unbound" (*Vol I* 521).

rebellious fist at the sky, making his own "[s]corn and despair [… an empire m]ore glorious than" God's whole creation (I.i.15-17). Likewise, Lewis's lyrics echo this tone of caustic triumph, palpably communicating and repudiating the hateful rage of God. He writes in "De Profundis," "Laugh then and slay. Shatter all things of worth, / Heap torment still on torment for thy mirth— / Thou art not Lord while there are Men on earth" (21). In *Prometheus Unbound* Shelley promotes the sublime imagination as the answer to God's tyranny, saying, "To defy Power, which seems omnipotent; / […] This […] is to be / Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free" (IV.i.572-77). Similarly again, Lewis posits that the imagination—particularly as manifested in the pursuit of Joy, which is "fantasy's new-born treason" ("Satan Speaks" 3) and "frett[ing] desire" ("In Praise of Solid People" 44)—is the only defense and escape for humanity. Just as Shelley's "hope" can "create" a better reality, so Lewis suggests that "men's yearning" can "build" "A place of vision and of loosening chains, / A refuge of the elect, a tower of dreams," an eternal fortress against the hate of God ("Oxford" 57). In addition to the resonances between *Prometheus* and *Spirits*, Lewis also acknowledges Shelley's potential influence in *Surprised by Joy,* recalling how he was "hurling Promethean […] defiances at" a god he did not even believe in (204-05). Both Shelley and the young Lewis attempt to achieve higher innocence through the imaginative embrace of desire, and the parallels between them only confirm that Lewis was, at this time, trying to follow Shelley's particular path to sublimity. The result, however, was a failure both in terms of philosophy and ambition: *Spirits in Bondage* was only sparsely reviewed and sold very few copies.[34]

[34] In another echo of the Promethean theme, Lewis found identity with the young romantics in their rebellion against established religion. In *Surprised by Joy* Lewis describes his religious attitude of the time: "one had to look out on a meaningless dance of atoms[…] to realize that all the apparent beauty was a subjective phosphorescence, and to relegate everything one valued to the world of mirage. That price I tried loyally to pay. [….] I exulted with youthful and vulgar pride in what I thought my enlightenment" (*SBJ* 172-73). With this "exultation" in the midst of godlessness, the idea of the Promethean figure—so associated with Shelley—again creeps into Lewis's self-description. It also bears a resemblance to Keats's idea of Negative Capability, for this was a time at which Lewis

More than anything Lewis adored Keats and Shelley for their pursuit of the sublime. They awakened longing in Lewis, and he felt that he shared in their romantic questing. While he would later reject this as a false Joy, or a misappropriated sublime, the sensuality of Keats and Shelley seemed, to the young materialist Lewis, a perfect object for Joy. In a 1917 letter to Greeves he attests that Keats "is one of my gods" (*Vol I* 288), and characterizes that poet as "voluptuous" (*Vol I* 290). Clearly the voluptuousness that Lewis found in Keats was an object of desire, and Lewis thus attempted to find the answer for Joy in the sensual pleasures that Keats embraced as sublimity. In *Endymion* Keats acknowledges the search for sublime transcendence, making Endymion say:

> […]my higher hope
> Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope,
> to fret at myriads of earthly wrecks.
> Wherein lies happiness? In that which backs
> Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
> A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
> Full alchemized, and free of space. Behold
> The clear religion of Heaven! (I.774-781)

Just a few lines later Endymion notes the hoped-for unity of higher innocence, towards which the sublime reaches: "that moment have we stepped / Into a sort of oneness, and our state / Is like a floating spirit's" (I.795-7). These passages are marked in Lewis's copy of *Endymion* and

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essentially worshipped Joy, yet did not "believe" in it. Keats describes the concept in his letters: "I mean *Negative Capability*, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." (*Letters of Keats* 48; Lewis's underlining). Surely Lewis would have considered the disconnect between his real and imaginary lives at this time to be held in a sort of Negative Capability, for he refused to let the dissonance between his love of faerie and his strict materialism disturb him. On February 15, 1917 he writes to Greeves, "I am sorry Obadiah Walker should have been at Univ! However, Shelley & I going there should make up for it" (*Vol I* 277). Obadiah Walker was head of University College in the seventeenth century and a devout Catholic. Most likely Walker's loyalty to the deposed James II, along with his Catholicism, would have made him a local embarrassment, yet Lewis seems to single him out purely for his religious devotion, identifying himself with Shelley and, therefore, the atheism for which Shelley was kicked out of the college after publishing *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811). One can only imagine the pleasure this young Lewis felt in identifying himself with that great poet. Similarly, Lewis underlines Keats's frustrations with Christianity in his letters: "and do Christians shudder at the same thing in a newspaper which they attribute to their God in its most aggravated form?" (*Letters of John Keats* 10). At a time when Lewis was young, an aspiring poet, and a growing atheist, he doubtless found these second generation Romantics an inspiration and a comfort.

obviously interested him as an expression of Joy's longing.[35] Endymion's answer to this "higher hope," however, is ultimately material. At the pinnacle of human existence, he says:

> hangs by unseen film, an orbed drop
> Of light, and that is love: its influence,
> Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,
> At which we start and fret; till in the end,
> Melting into its radiance, we gland,
> Mingle, and so become a part of it (I.806-11)

Love, therefore, is the object of longing, and the door to higher innocence. The ascent of love is described by Keats as a movement from innocence, to experience, to higher innocence, as expressed in another passage marked by Lewis: "First Heaven, then hell, and then forgotten clear, / Vanished in elemental passion" (II.374-75). But the union between Cynthia and Endymion does not feel transcendent. Try as he might, Keats cannot convince us that this is a spiritual experience, so much as a material sex act.

In *Surprised by Joy* Lewis reports being increasingly unfulfilled by the sensuality he found in Keats, and admits that he was trying to force an enjoyment of it:

> I was in the midst of the Romantics now. [….] Some poems I could not enjoy as well as others. It never occurred to me that these might be the inferior ones; I merely thought that I was getting tired of my author or was not in the right mood. The *longueurs* of Endymion I attributed wholly to myself. The 'swoony' element in Keats' sensuality […] I tried hard to like, and failed. (*SBJ* 163)

In a 1916 letter to Greeves he recommends *Endymion* but admits that is it "somewhat 'sticky,'" then recommends, "If you get an edition of Keats perhaps you would like 'St. Agnes Eve'—it is shorter than Endymion, written in Spenser's metre, and very romantic—though perhaps rather 'sticky' also" (*Vol I* 220-21). Lewis's admission of the "stickiness" of the sensuality in both pieces marks his dawning recognition that this depiction of physical pleasure is not a plausible object for otherworldly desire.

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[35] Lewis placed dashes next to lines 777, 781 and 797 (Marginal Notes: *The Complete Poetical Works of John Keats*).

Lewis's own experience of Joy eventually convinced him that sex was only a weak and transitory answer for his longing. He came to associate his ensnarement in Keats's poetry with an abuse of Joy via the attempt to reach the sublime through sensuality. The hold of Keats, in particular, Lewis began to associate with a lust, or an unhealthy possession. He writes in his journal in 1923, "I am a bit scared of Keats for he could resume complete dominion over me with very little trouble" (*All My Road* 228), and admits in *Surprised by Joy*, "I came to know by experience that it [Joy] is not a disguise of sexual desire. [….] Joy is not a substitute for sex; sex is very often a substitute for Joy. I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not substitutes for Joy" (*SBJ* 170). Having been exorcised of his Keats possession, Lewis was able to read *Endymion* more objectively and offers Arthur a detailed critique of its attempted sensual sublime in a 1931 letter:

> [One] fault is the lack of spiritual experience. [Keats] knows about the hunting for 'it' and longing and wandering: but he has, as yet, no real idea of what it wd. be if you found it. Hence […] his actual meetings with Cynthia are (to me) failures: not because they are erotic but because they are erotic in a rather commonplace way—all gasps and exclamations and a sort of suburban flirtatious air. (*Vol II* 11-13)

Clearly, an older Lewis understood that it was Joy, or the search for higher innocence, that first drew him to Keats. He also attributes the folly of imagining sex as the object of Joy, or even a ladder towards transcendence, to Keats's youth, as he does to his own.

In *Dymer* (1926) Lewis explores this particular folly more deeply, and actually borrows a scene from *Endymion* to drive his point home. In Keats's poem, Endymion lays down to rest from his quest and finds himself suddenly visited in the utter darkness by the naked form of his lover:

> […]he found
> The smoothest mossy bed and deepest, where
> He threw himself, and just into the air

> Stretching his indolent arms, he took—O bliss!—
> A naked waist[…] (II.709-13)

Keats presents this consummation is a sublime experience, Endymion later attesting, "Now that I have tasted her sweet soul to the core / All other depths are shallow" (II.904-5). For Dymer, on the other hand, the result of such sexual experience is not an apotheosis, but destruction. In a nearly direct echo of Keats, Dymer has a seemingly sublime encounter in the dark:

> […] he went on: then, stooping, found
> A knee-depth of warm pillows on the ground.
>
> [….] He opened wide
> His arms. The breathing body of a girl slid into them. (*Narrative Poems* 24)

With the onset of day, and light, however, Dymer is not confronted with a goddess lover, but a "wrinkled," "puckered," "gnarled," and "uncleanly […] likeness of a woman" (29). This union of "Mortal with her immortal" results in the begetting of the very monster that kills Dymer (86). Thus, Lewis translates the sensuality through which Keats hoped to attain the sublime into a horror, leading only to his hero laying "dead among the flowers and pinned beneath / The brute" (91).

Dymer represents one step in Lewis's realization of the false, or deceptive, sublime offered by Keats and Shelley. Although Lewis had not yet converted to Christianity when he wrote and published *Dymer*, he had already begun to move beyond the younger Romantics in his pursuit of higher innocence. After becoming a Christian, we see a further step for Lewis. In contrast to the self-absorbed, aspiring poet his letters reveal in the young Romantic era of his experience, the Christian Lewis seems to take a different approach to his own art, recognizing

that poetic fame may not be his destiny, and that such fame might not fulfill his lust anyway. Within months of his conversion[36] he writes to Greeves:

> Nobody knows what the result of your writing, or mine, […] will be. [….] The situation may be just the reverse of the nightingale in *Endymion*, who
>
> *'Sings but to her mate, nor e'er conceives*
> *How tiptoe night holds back her dark grey hood.'*
>
> Unsuccessful writers like us thought that night would stand tiptoe to hear us: perhaps we really are singing to some mysterious mate within. [….]Beauty descends from God into nature: but there it would perish and does except when a Man appreciates it with worship and thus as it were *sends it back* to God: so that through his consciousness what descended ascends again and the perfect circle is made (*Vol I* 933).

At this point Lewis becomes less focused on his own poetic identity and success. A God-believing Lewis has come to understand that Joy was leading him towards the higher innocence of faith in Heavenly realities, rather than sexual pleasure, or poetic fame. This is the Lewis on whom Keats and Shelley have lost their grip and Wordsworth and Coleridge now take prominence.

Lewis and Wordsworth

There is no lack of criticism linking C. S. Lewis and William Wordsworth. R. J. Reilly's *Romantic Religion: A Study of Barfield, Lewis, Williams, and Tolkien* established Lewis's place within the larger romantic tradition, and James Prothero and Donald T. Williams's recent book, *Gaining a Face: The Romanticism of C.S. Lewis*, focuses more exclusively on both Lewis and Wordsworth, arguing that Lewis was responsible for "refining and finishing" Wordsworth's vision (34). Obviously, the focus of this study is slightly broader, as it contends that Lewis's self-

[36] While Lewis claims in *Surprised by Joy* that he converted to Theism in Trinity term of 1929, Andrew Lazo has demonstrated that it was more likely the next year—1930—based upon the evidence of Lewis's letters, as well as an early prose attempt at an autobiographical conversion story, dubbed "Early Prose Joy." McGrath similarly locates Lewis's initial conversion to Theism "possibly as early as March 1930, but more likely in the Trinity Term of that year" (185). I therefore feel confident in asserting that the above letter to Greeves (from August, 1930) was written as little as three months following Lewis's conversion.

construction does not borrow simply a Wordsworthian narrative, but the larger Romantic metanarrative. Nonetheless, Wordsworth plays an important role in the development and establishment of that narrative. The "Intimations Ode." "Tintern Abbey," and *The Prelude* all describe Wordsworth's spiritual and poetic development, employing Romantic paradigms of innocence, experience, and higher innocence. Lewis naturally borrows from these narratives, as they assist him in constructing his own romantic autobiography.

Before suggesting Wordsworth's influence on *Surprised by Joy*, we must confront the fact that Lewis is often openly condescending, even hostile, to Wordsworth in his letters and prose.[37] At sixteen years old, Lewis writes of "the complete works of Wordsworth" as a "nightmare" that enjoys a "deluding longevity" (*Vol I* 154). Lewis also tends to write negatively of Wordsworth in his more mature prose. He accuses Wordsworth of worshipping nature in *The Four Loves*, and in *Surprised by Joy* he is careful to emphasize the sense of loss in Wordsworth, twice referencing the line "wither is fled the visionary gleam" from the Intimations Ode. Yet, there is a wide scholarly consensus to show that Lewis was deeply influenced by Wordsworth, as well as the fact that Lewis lists *The Prelude* as one of the ten books that "did most to shape my

[37] Prothero and Williams explain this difficulty by suggesting that much of what Lewis gleaned from Wordsworth is actually filtered through the fiction and prose of George MacDonald. This is certainly true. Lewis's very romanticism could be said to be a neo-Victorian romanticism, heavily influenced by his reading of *Phantastes*. Yet, Lewis is too obviously aware of Wordsworth's work to subconsciously absorb him only through a Wordsworthian strain in MacDonald. In fact, the very language he uses in describing the impact of MacDonald is Wordsworthian. Lewis recalls that upon reading *Phantastes*, "my imagination was, in a certain sense, baptized" (*SBJ* 181). This phrase is apparently borrowed from Wordsworth's "The Cuckoo at Laverna," which reads: "the power, the faith, / Of a baptized imagination" (71). Another reason we might see Lewis attempting to distance himself from Wordsworth—despite any depth of interest and influence—is because Lewis is himself "a failed poet who found greatness in other spheres of writing" (McGrath 64). Poor readership forced him to redirect his energies from poetry to prose fantasy, more akin to that of MacDonald. Lewis may identify more closely with MacDonald (at least seemingly) because he wishes to emphasize his own successes in prose fantasy, rather than his poetic failures. Don King, in *C. S. Lewis, Poet*, confirms that despite his transition from long narrative poetry to fiction in the mid-1930s, "Lewis's penchant to be 'enamoured of metrical subtleties,' his lusting 'after a metre as a man might lust after a woman,' his ache to turn a verse and 'be "with poem" again,' was lifelong" (King 15; the quotations within are from Lewis's letters). In this light, Wordsworth would fall into the same category of poetic ambition as Keats and Shelley, and it is only natural that Lewis—who may have carried a life-long sensitivity about his failed poetic attempts—would demure from associating himself with the most famous English poet of the 19th century.

vocational attitude and my philosophy of life" in the *Christian Century* ("Top Ten Books"). Careful attention to Lewis's letters and diary suggests a simple solution to the Lewis/Wordsworth problem: Lewis's appreciation for Wordsworth grows over time. Wordsworth is the logical next step from Keats and Shelley, for his exploration of the passions is tempered with a rationality and level-headedness that the younger men lacked. In Lewis's letters and journal we see a growing interest not merely in Wordsworth and Coleridge, but in these two authors *in contrast* to Keats and Shelley. In January of 1927—less than a year after he had published *Dymer*, his fictional rebuke to the younger Romantics—Lewis records in his journal: "Decided to work up the whole doctrine of Imagination in Coleridge as soon as I had time—and the thought of Wordsworth was somehow very re-assuring. That's the real imagination, no bogies, no Karmas, no gurus, no damned psychism there. I have been astray among second rate ideas too long…" (*All My Road* 432). Obviously Lewis is not referencing Keats and Shelley as the sole purveyors of these "second rate ideas," but in turning away from their particular version of transcendence, Lewis turns away from material sensuality masquerading as transcendence—certainly a bogey. Similarly, in 1940 he writes to Warren that he has just finished reading Robert Southey's letters and that the experience has convinced him, "How much *nicer people*, tho' worse writers, the Tory romantics were than the other crew—the Shelleys […]and even Keats" (*Vol II* 421). As Lewis's love for the younger Romantics wanes, therefore, we see a greater respect for and interest in Wordsworth and Coleridge.

In particular, Lewis develops a special admiration for *The Prelude.* He reports having read *The Prelude* for the first time in September 1919, writing to Greeves:

> You will perhaps be surprised to hear that I am reading 'The Prelude' by way of graduating in Wordsworth-ism. What's even funnier, I rather like it! I'm coming to the conclusion that there are two orders of poetry—real poetry and the sort you read while smoking a pipe. 'The Prelude' nearly always on the second level but

> very comfortable and interesting all the same—better than Rousseau's Confessions in something the same style. You read it, didn't you? I expect like me you recognized lots of the early parts from recollections of your own childhood. I fancy the first Book is the best. (*Vol I* 466)

Though we do not hear about *The Prelude* again for quite some time, Lewis mentions reading it again in a 1939 letter to Warren (*Vol II* 273). This is at least his third or fourth time reading the long poem, because the final page of *The Prelude* in his Everyman copy of Wordsworth's poetry bears an inscription that mentions reading the book for the second time in March of 1923 (Marginal Notes: *The Longer Poems*), and in June of 1924 Lewis records in his diary, "I brought Wordsworth out to the garden and there in the delicious coolness I read Book I of *The Prelude*. This poem is really beginning to replace *Paradise Lost* as my literary metropolis" (*All My Road* 333). In 1941 he divulges that he likes to "occasionally refresh" himself by "a dip into the *Prelude*" (*Vol II* 487), and in 1947 he is again "re-reading the *Prelude,*" which is "[a]lways just a little better than one remembers from the last reading" (*Vol II* 764). Thus, when he admits to Dom Bede Griffiths in 1951, "The *Prelude* has accompanied me through all stages of my pilgrimage" (*Vol III* 111), it is undoubtedly true. Lewis, a very busy man, read Wordsworth's *Prelude* at least five times, and apparently returned to small portions of it with far greater frequency.

While Prothero and Williams trace a similar narrative of spiritual development in *The Prelude* and *Perelandra* (54), no one has yet noted the striking similarities in structure between *The Prelude* and *Surprised by Joy*. No doubt because he was so steeped in Wordsworth's poem, the narrative of *The Prelude*, structured as it is by the Romantic metanarrative, is particularly influential to the structure of *Surprised by Joy.* In 1940 Lewis excitedly writes to Warren about receiving a privately published book in the mail: "Revolution Thompson's autobiography in verse, in fact his *Prelude*" (*Vol II* 424). The fact that Lewis already considers an autobiography,

particularly one that deals with spiritual development, to be "a *Prelude*" indicates that he may very well have thought of his own spiritual autobiography in this way. And, indeed, he comments in *Surprised by Joy*, "The thing has been much better done by […] Wordsworth, but every man must tell his own tale" (*SBJ* 16). The problem with this theory, of course, is the question of form. If Lewis intended to write his own *Prelude*, would he not have resorted to verse? The fact is, he had already attempted to do so.

Lewis's first attempt to write his spiritual autobiography occurred shortly after his conversion to Theism in 1930 and resulted in an unfinished, prose piece in which he began to explain his views as an "empirical Theist" (Lazo 52). We know from *Surprised by Joy* that this conversion, while pivotal, was not necessarily significant for Lewis's imaginative life. On the contrary, "There was no strain of music from within, no smell of eternal orchards […] when I was dragged through the doorway. No kind of desire was present at all" (230-31). Lewis's conversion to Christianity, however, reawakened his imagination, and invested the experience of Joy with new meaning. Christianity for Lewis meant a realization of the incarnation as a "true myth," which he documents in a letter to Greeves on October 18, 1931, and this realization seemingly renewed his interest in telling the story of his conversion. Less than seven months later he had begun a long poem—now known as "I Will Write Down"—detailing his spiritual autobiography. The full fragment, which consists of less than 40 lines of iambic hexameter in rhyming couplets, appears in a letter to Owen Barfield, and has been transcribed in full in Don King's *C. S. Lewis, Poet* (2001). The fragment describes Lewis's childhood as "leaping / And climbing, running, wearying out the day, and sleeping," and King notes in this a similarity to Wordsworth's "coarser pleasures" in "Tintern Abbey" (138-39). Even more than "Tintern Abbey," however, I suspect Lewis was thinking about *The Prelude* as he began this prototype of

Surprised by Joy, for he writes a tongue-in-cheek postscript to Owen Barfield in March of 1932, stating "I have written about 100 lines of a long poem in my type of Alexandrine. It is going to make the *Prelude* […] look silly" (*Vol II* 55). Lewis then sends "the opening of the poem" (the portion that King reproduces) to Barfield on May 6th, 1932 (*Vol II* 77). There is no doubt that this fragment, which consists of rhyming alexandrine couplets, is the same poem that Lewis earlier compared to *The Prelude*. Lewis's first Christian attempt at spiritual autobiography was therefore modeled after *The Prelude*, and I maintain that the autobiography he finally publishes in 1955 is still Lewis's *Prelude*, despite its prose form.

Surprised by Joy follows the same general pattern as *The Prelude*, focusing on the author's development from innocence through experience and towards higher innocence; the primary difference, however, is that Lewis's sublime (Joy) is found not in nature, but in the imagination itself, made manifest in books. Prothero and Williams assert, "More cosmopolitan in his tastes than Wordsworth, Lewis could receive it [Joy] not just from Nature (the Castlereagh Hills) but also from literature (Norse mythology), music (Wagner), or art (a toy garden made by his brother on the lid of a biscuit tin and brought into the nursery)" (5). I, on the other hand, would contend that Lewis does not prefer these things because he is cosmopolitan (and, in fact, Prothero and Williams go on to illustrate his deep attachment to the natural world, particularly the Northern Irish landscape), but because his sublime is more linked to fantasy and the imagination than it is linked to physical nature.

Lewis feels Wordsworth himself to be divided on this issue. On the back cover of his copy of *The Poems of William Wordsworth*, Lewis draws a two-column diagram. In the first column he transcribes a quote from Wordsworth's Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads*, that poetry's "object is truth," and in the second column he quotes from Wordsworth's later supplement to the

Preface: "The appropriate business of poetry […] is to treat of things not as they *are,* but as they *appear;* not as they exist in themselves, but as they *seem* to exist to the *senses,* and to the *passions*" ("Essay Supplementary"; Marginal Notes, *Poems of William Wordsworth*). Clearly the distinction he finds here is a question of whether poetry relates objective or subjective truth, and he finds no clear answer in Wordsworth, for he goes on to provide various quotes from "Tintern Abbey" and *The Prelude*, placing two in the first column, two in the second column, and two on the line in between the two. Perhaps most telling is the following passage from "Tintern," which Lewis places in between the columns: "all the mighty world / Of eye and ear, both what they half create, / And what perceive" (108-10; Marginal Notes, *Poems of William Wordsworth*). Clearly Lewis suspected that Wordsworth's experiences of the sublime in nature were not grounded purely in nature itself, but deeply connected to Wordsworth's own consciousness—his imagination. By depicting his own first experience of Joy as an encounter not with actual nature, but with Warnie's miniature, Lewis emphasizes the role of the imagination as superior: "What the real garden had failed to do, the toy garden did. It made me aware of nature—not, indeed, as a storehouse of forms and colors but as something cool, dewy, fresh, exuberant" (*SBJ* 7). In another nod to Wordsworth he also emphasizes the role of memory in Joy: "I do not think the impression was very important at the moment, but it soon became important in memory. As long as I live my imagination of Paradise will retain something of my brother's toy garden" (*SBJ* 7). So Lewis immediately establishes a Wordsworthian connection to his childhood, but deliberately distinguishes it from Wordsworthian nature. His reason for this becomes increasingly clear throughout the book.

Like *The Prelude*, which is often more concerned with the poet's perspective on reality than reality itself, *Surprised by Joy* is, by Lewis's own admission, "suffocatingly subjective"

(viii). In other words, it is concerned with his own subjective experience of things, rather than the hard biographical facts. Many have argued that this subjectivity actually strays into utter falsehood, or deliberate repression—painting an unrealistically rosy picture of Lewis's life. Perhaps most obvious is the complete erasure of his non-traditional, almost certainly sexual, relationship with Janie Moore, who is never mentioned at any point, outside of a possible reference in Chapter Thirteen.[38] Lewis also refers to his earlier sexual indiscretions only vaguely, omitting the fixation with sadism that he describes in early letters to Greeves. While these omissions may have sprung from self-protection, they also protect the purity of Lewis's romantic narrative. Eugene Stelzig identifies the modern autobiography, with its emphasis on the development of the individual's subjectivity, as a romantic invention: "Just as eighteenth-century fiction writers used autobiographical devices (the letter, the diary, the first-person narrative), so autobiographers made use of the resources of fiction to emphasize and highlight the subjective and the personal" (249). Patricia Meyer Spacks calls the practice of autobiography "the conversion of life into story" (18), and it is not altogether surprising that in this conversion Lewis should pick and choose details and events in order to mold his life into the romantic narrative he has clearly chosen. Chronologically, these sexual indiscretions would occur later in the narrative, after Lewis's adolescent "Renaissance," and therefore in the section that could be identified as either higher innocence, or the quest for higher innocence; therefore, Lewis deems them irrelevant to the trajectory of the story and omits them. Furthermore, Lewis may have found a precedent for this "suffocating[…] subjectiv[ity]" in Wordsworth.

[38] "I returned to Oxford—"demobbed"—in January 1919. But before I say anything of my life there I must warn the reader that one huge and complex episode will be omitted. I have no choice about this reticence. All I can or need say is that my earlier hostility to the emotions was very fully and variously avenged. But even were I free to tell the story, I doubt if it has much to do with the subject of the book" (*SBJ* 198).

Lewis owned a copy of Dorothy Wordsworth's journals, which is held in the Wade Center in Wheaton Illinois. On the final page of the journal, Lewis records the date as November 18, 1959, in blue ink. His markings throughout the text, however, appear in pencil, suggesting that 1959 was probably not his first reading of the book. Additionally, references in his letters to Dorothy Wordsworth in 1920 and 1954 suggest that he was certainly familiar with her journals by the time he wrote *Surprised by Joy*.[39] Reading Dorothy's journals, Lewis must have been struck not only by the similarities between her entries and Wordsworth's poetry (he notes in his copy of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" some of the verses that are clearly taken from Dorothy's journal [Marginal Notes, *The Poems of William Wordsworth* 313]), but also many details of Wordsworth's daily life and relationships that pass unmentioned in *The Prelude*.

In Lewis's copy of Dorothy Wordsworth's journals, one perceives a pattern in the marginalia. Lewis repeatedly marks three distinct types of passages. First, those passages of poetic description, which doubtless served as inspiration for William.[40] Second, linguistic curiosities, such as passages where Dorothy refers to illness as being "in" a toothache or headache.[41] Third—and most intriguing—he marks passages that make reference to Annette Vallon,[42] and those that hint at latent sexuality between William and Dorothy. For instance, Lewis marks the following journal entries: "Went to bed at about 12 o'clock. Slept in Wm.'s bed

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[39] April 11, 1920; to Albert Lewis: "A few miles away is a little fishing town called Watchet, which saw at least one interesting scene in its obscure history: it was here that Coleridge and the Wordsworths slept (or 'lay' as they would have said) on the first night of their walking tour. During that afternoon the germ of the Ancient Mariner occurred in conversation and in the inn at Watchet the first lines were jotted down" (*Vol I* 484).
Jan. 9, 1954; to Belle Allen: "Thank you for your nice woody and earthy (almost like Thoreau or Dorothy Wordsworth) letter of the 6th" (*Vol III* 406).

[40] Such passages as the following, which he marked with a marginal line: "The sound of the sea distinctly heard on the tops of the hills, which we could never hear in summer. We attribute this partly to the bareness of the trees, but chiefly to the absence of the singing of birds, the hum of insects, that noiseless noise which lives in the summer air" (*Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth* 4).

[41] Such as: "In the afternoon from excessive heat I was <u>ill in the headach and toothach</u> and went to bed" (Marginal Notes, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth* 43; Lewis's underlining).

[42] Wordsworth's mistress from his time in France, and the mother of his daughter Caroline. In Dorothy's journals, Lewis underlines when "<u>Wm. Wrote to Annette</u>" (Marginal Notes, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth* 105), or received "<u>A letter from Annette</u>" (120).

and I slept badly, for my thoughts were full of William" (*Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth* 120); "After dinner we made a pillow of my shoulder—I read to him and my Beloved slept" (134); and "I was tired to death, and went to bed before him—he came down to me, and read the Poem to me in bed" (135). In addition to these and other passages, Lewis also highlights the famous entry about William's wedding day, and Dorothy's frenzy of grief, in which she "could stand it no longer, and threw myself on the bed" (198). Lewis is not the only reader to have puzzled over these passages; the relationship between William and Dorothy Wordsworth has attracted a similar scholarly scrutiny as that which has focused on Lewis and Janie Moore. Lewis must have noted the absence of any mention of Vallon, or any hint of inappropriate filial affection in *The Prelude*. He may, therefore, have considered his own omissions appropriate to the type of writing in which he labored.

Having established Lewis's conscious participation in the romantic practice of autobiography, and his particular association of *The Prelude* with this genre, we may draw the comparison even further. Not only does Lewis's narrative follow the Romantic metanarrative as originated in Blake, but Lewis seems to have deliberately mirrored his text with that of Wordsworth's *Prelude*. A comparison between the Books of Wordsworth's *Prelude* and the Chapters in *Surprised by Joy* reveals some striking parallels in structure.[43] In order to understand these parallels one must examine the basic content of each pairing. The reflection is imperfect, yet too close to permit mere coincidence.

Book and Chapter One both deal with childhood innocence. This is perhaps the easiest connection to make between the two works, for Lewis expressed open admiration for Book One of the Prelude, writing to Arthur, "I fancy the first Book is the best" (*Vol I* 466). He attests elsewhere, "I certainly think I had Wordsworthian experiences as a boy" (*Vol II* 955). Indeed,

[43] I refer to the 1850 *Prelude*, as Lewis does not appear to have owned or read any other version.

there are great similarities between Book and Chapter One, though Lewis has transformed Wordsworth's narrative somewhat. First and foremost in both accounts is the innocent child, wandering solitary through sublime nature, in "unconscious intercourse with beauty / Old as creation" (*Prelude* I.562-63; Lewis's underlining). With Lewis, however, nature has been exchanged for his own preferred medium—books:

> I am a product of long corridors, empty sunlit rooms, upstairs indoor silences, attics explored in solitude, distant noises of gurgling cisterns and pipes, and the noise of wind under the tiles. Also, of endless books. My father bought all the books he read and never got rid of any of them. There were books in the study, books in the drawing rom, books in the cloakroom, books (two deep) in the great bookcase on the landing, books in a bedroom, books piled as high as my shoulder in the cistern attic, books of all kinds reflecting every transient state of my parents' interest, books readable and unreadable, books suitable for a child and books most emphatically not. Nothing was forbidden me. In the seemingly endless rainy afternoons I took volume after volume from the shelves. I had always the same certainty of finding a book that was new to me as a man who walks into a field has of finding a new blade of grass. (*SBJ* 10)

Lewis overtly describes his experience reading as a sublime equivalent to the sense of endlessness and power Wordsworth experiences in nature. Additionally, he makes a comparison between books and blades of grass, again reminding us that his experience with books is the same as Wordsworth's with nature. Just as we find the young Wordsworth making "one long bathing of a summer's day" (I.290; Lewis's underlining), we therefore see Lewis enjoying "endless rainy afternoons" of reading. While Lewis describes his childhood as "settled happiness," with an "absence of beauty," he also admits to "momentary joy that glorifies the past" (*SBJ* 6; 8). Wordsworth's childhood is similarly characterized by a "vulgar joy," yet "even then I felt / Gleams like the flashing of a shield;—the earth / And common face of Nature spake to me / Rememberable things" (I.581; 585-88). Lewis explains that after first experiencing Joy he "went back to the book, not to gratify the desire […] but to reawake it" (*SBJ* 17), just as the Wordsworthian child "bounded […] Wherever nature led; more like a man / Flying from

something that he dreads, than one / Who sought the thing he loved" ("Tintern Abbey" 71-75). Most significantly, both men report that their glimpses of transcendence in childhood would become the central narrative of their lives. Wordsworth describes his childhood experience as "a song that winds / Through ever changing scenes of votive quest" (*Prelude* I.180-81; Lewis's underlining), and Lewis writes that "in a sense the central story of my life is about nothing else" (*SBJ* 17).

A final resonance between Wordsworth and Lewis's descriptions of innocence in Book/Chapter One is their emphasis on the power and centrality of memory. Margaret Carter notes that "Lewis, like Wordsworth, finds in the remembered and transformed past a special stimulus to imagination" (10). In Book One, Wordsworth celebrates the memory's ability to recall childhood, but also to transmute it into sublime vision: "Those recollected hours that have the charm / Of visionary things, those lovely forms / And sweet sensations that throw back our life, / And almost make remotest infancy / A visible scene, on which the sun is shining" (I.631-35; Lewis's underlining). Lewis similarly admits the capacity of memory both to conjure up and transform when he characterizes himself in Chapter One as the solitary, imaginative (thus, Wordsworthian) child: "My real life—or what memory reports as my real life—was increasingly one of solitude. [….] It will be clear at this time—at the age of six, seven, and eight—I was living almost entirely in my imagination; or at least that the imaginative experience of those years now seems to me more important than anything else" (*SBJ* 11; 15). Just as Wordsworth longs nostalgically for his own childhood, Lewis admits his childhood to have been the most important period of his existence, or at least his romantic existence.

Yet for Lewis, as for Wordsworth, the happiness of childhood cannot continue indefinitely, and innocence gives way to experience via the schoolroom. The second and third

installments of each work deal with school; for Wordsworth it is "School-Time" and "Cambridge," for Lewis "Concentration Camp" at the Wynyard School, and "Mountbracken and Campbell." From experience, Wordsworth lamentingly asks, "One is there, though the wisest and the best / Of all mankind, who covets not at times / Union that cannot be; —who would not give, / If so he might, to duty and to truth / The eagerness of infantine desire?" (II.22-26). This "Union that cannot be," which Lewis underlines in his copy of the poem, is clearly a hint of higher innocence, the longing for which pervades experience. Wordsworth's experience of school-time, however, is not akin to Lewis's, for he remembers his early school days as a continuation of his childhood, "With God and Nature communing" (II.430). Lewis's immediate school experience, of which he remembers that "putting on the school clothes was […] the assumption of a prison uniform" (*SBJ* 23), is more reminiscent of Wordsworth's "Residence at Cambridge." Wordsworth's description of Cambridge as ruled by a "blind Authority beating with his staff / The child that might have led him" (III.608-09; Lewis's underlining), bears striking resemblance to the image of Oldie's "well-used canes," which transformed the innocent child into a "pale, quivering, tear-stained, obsequious slave" in Lewis's narrative (*SBJ* 25; 31). In Cambridge Wordsworth finds himself alienated from nature and the imagination, thus beginning experience, "the second act" of life, in which "Imagination slept" (III.259-60). Similarly, Lewis reports that in his school days, "There was also a great decline in my imaginative life. For many years Joy (as I have defined it) was not only absent but forgotten" (*SBJ* 34). Another similarity in this period of experience is what Wordsworth describes as reading "lazily in trivial books" (III.254), while Lewis also recalls reading poor literature: "I read twaddling school stories in *The Captain*" (*SBJ* 35). Wordsworth's primary source of imaginative alienation is, of course, not

merely through bad reading, but in being kept indoors by that reading, but the result is the same for both men: experience engenders a lack of imagination.

While the Fourth Book ("Summer Vacation") and Chapter ("I Broaden My Mind") have less clear connection, the "Summer Vacation," is a recurring theme in *Surprised by Joy.* Lewis describes holidays and the anticipation of them as a taste of higher innocence: "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. Even, in a sense, by faith; for at the beginning of each term, home and the holidays are so far off that it is as hard to realize them as to realize Heaven" (*SBJ* 36). Lewis is no doubt aware of Wordsworth's own descriptions of summer delights when writing about school holidays.

Book and Chapter Five both deal with a reawakening. In Wordsworth's "Books," it is the recognition that books can have a similar power to that of nature:

> [….]Hitherto,
> In progress through this Verse, my mind hath looked
> Upon the speaking face of earth and Heaven
> As her prime teacher, intercourse with man
> Established by the sovereign Intellect,
> Who through that bodily image hath diffused,
> As might appear to the eye of fleeting time,
> A deathless spirit. Thou also, man! hast wrought,
> For commerce of they nature with herself,
> Things that aspire to unconquerable life;
> [….]
> all the adamantine holds of truth
> By reason built, or passion, which itself
> Is highest reason in a soul sublime;
> The consecrated works of Bard and Sage,
> Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men,
> Twin labourers and heirs of the same hopes; (V.11-20; 39-44)

This sublime is, for Wordsworth, secondary to that of nature, for while nature is a "deathless spirit," books are the "shrines so frail" in which she can "lodge" (V.49). Lewis reverses this

process, detailing his personal "Renaissance," in which Joy returns, and is now available not only through books, but through nature as well:

> this imaginative Renaissance almost at once produced a new appreciation of external nature. [….] soon (I cannot say how soon) nature ceased to be a mere reminder of the books, became herself the medium of real joy. I do not say she ceased to be a reminder. All Joy reminds. It is never a possession, always a desire for something longer ago or further away or still "about to be." But Nature and the books now became equal reminders, joint reminders[…]. (*SBJ* 77-8)

Lewis's language is very deliberate here, for two reasons. First, he wishes to clearly demonstrate that he is reversing Wordsworth's model. Instead of books "aspiring" to nature, nature is "a mere reminder of books": "to walk in it [nature] daily gave one the same sort of pleasure that there is in the labyrinthine complexity of Malory or the *Faerie Queene*" (*SBJ* 146). Second, he begins to establish here the difference that he will draw between himself and Wordsworth. He does not attempt to argue for books as the original source of Joy, but instead attests that books and nature are both "reminders" of what he will later identify as God and Heaven. Wordsworth, on the other hand, seemingly recommends nature as the actual wellspring of the sublime. This distinction will become more important as Lewis continues to develop his own *Prelude.*

The sixth and seventh installments of *The Prelude* and *Surprised by Joy* bear little resemblance to one another aside from mutual adolescent experience, but in Book/Chapter Eight both detail a sort of escape. Wordsworth's "Retrospect" is a return to "<u>the scenes of childhood</u>" in the Lake District (VIII.50; Lewis's underlining), while Lewis's "Release" documents both his figurative escape from school via Joy ("can I have been unhappy, living in Paradise?" [*SBJ* 118]), and his literal escape from Malvern College, into the tutorship of W. T. Kirkpatrick. In Book Eight Wordsworth learns to love humanity through the love of nature, and in Chapter Eight Lewis strikes up a life-long friendship with Arthur Greeves based upon their mutual understanding of Joy as an "arrow […] shot from the North" (*SBJ* 130). Lewis compares this

"first friend" to a "first love, or even greater" (*SBJ* 131). Clearly this education in friendship, via imaginative reading, is akin to Wordsworth's "thoughts by slow gradations […] drawn / to human-kind, and to the good and ill / Of human life" because "Nature had led me on" (VIII.677-79).

Books/Chapters Nine and Ten deal with major intellectual and philosophical shifts; Wordsworth's experiences in France teach him about human nature and he succumbs to revolutionary fervor ("Great was my transport, deep my gratitude / To everlasting Justice" [X.576-77]), while Lewis learns rationality from Kirkpatrick and aesthetics from Greeves, falling more deeply under the voluptuous spell of Keats, Shelley, and Morris ("I was in the midst of the Romantics now" [*SBJ* 163]).

Next, both experience disenchantment and are forced to significantly revise their philosophies. Book Eleven concludes Wordsworth's time in France, and ends with his rejection of Godwinian philosophy. Wordsworth rejects the sort of inhuman reasoning that he had embraced in his revolutionary passion, explaining it as "<u>errors into which I fell, betrayed / By present objects, and by reasonings false / From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn / Out of a heart that had been turned aside / From Nature's way by outward accidents</u>" (XI.287-91; Lewis's underlining). In this moment, Wordsworth realizes that he cannot follow a form of reason devoid of imagination, but must integrate the transcendent power of imagination with his reason. In a similar turn from the material to the immaterial, Chapter Eleven ("Check") describes Lewis's realization that Joy cannot be satisfied by any material object, and must, therefore, imply a supernatural one. Lewis describes this shift as a "drop of disturbing doubt" interrupting "my Materialism" (*SBJ* 175).

Books Twelve and Thirteen of the *Prelude* describe the poet's retreat back to the Lake District and his growing understanding of feeling, climaxing with the influential friendship of Coleridge, who teaches him about the unity between the imagination and reality, thereby encouraging him into full fruition as a poet. Lewis's Chapter Twelve, "Guns and Good Company" describes not so much Lewis's war experience as his relational experience with other men, and his coming "to know and pity and reverence the ordinary man" (196). Chapter Thirteen depicts his growing understanding of non-material reality, reaching a crescendo with the influential friendship of Owen Barfield, who teaches him that "our logic was participation in a cosmic *Logos*" and pushes him into belief in "the Absolute" (209; 211). Barfield, who was a respected Coleridge scholar, certainly represents Coleridge's influence in Lewis's personal *Prelude*. While Coleridge helps Wordsworth mature as a poet—which is the ultimate end of *The Prelude*—Barfield assists Lewis closer to the realization of God—which is the goal of *Surprised by Joy*.

Finally, Book and Chapter Fourteen serve as the final recognitions towards which all the past narrative development has tended. Wordsworth presents the reader with a picture of the sublime in nature, and carefully explains how this sublime experience leads one, through the love of nature and man, into the love of God: "all affections by communion raised / From earth to Heaven, from human to divine" (XIV.117-18). Lewis's "Checkmate" similarly climaxes with his final recognition that "God was God" (228), and the final object of Joy.

So far so good, but we are finally faced with the problem of Lewis's extra chapter. *Surprised by Joy* consists of fifteen chapters to *The Prelude*'s fourteen books. With Prothero and Williams's argument in mind, however, the puzzle pieces fall into place. As Prothero and Williams report, Lewis apparently believed that Wordsworth practiced a sort of pagan nature

worship, insisting that Wordsworth's sublime experience set nature as its object: "Wordsworth, I believe, made this mistake all his life. I am sure that all that sense of the loss of vanished vision which fills *The Prelude* was itself vision of the same kind [as Joy], if only he could have believed it" (*SBJ* 167). Lewis, on the other hand, believed that Joy was directed not at the object that evoked it, but at something outside of experience: "Only when your whole attention and desire are fixed on something else—whether a distant mountain, or the past, or the gods of Asgard—does the thrill arise. It is a by-product. Its very existence presupposes that you desire not it but something other and outer" (*SBJ* 168). Whether accurate or not, Lewis clearly believed Wordsworth to be no true Christian, and even conceived of himself—in Prothero and Williams's words—as "completing" Wordsworth's vision.[44] In this light, it comes as no surprise that Lewis would choose to add one additional chapter onto his own *Prelude*—the chapter which details his conversion from "Theism, pure and simple" to Christianity (230). He makes this particularly clear by reminding the reader on the last page, "I cannot, indeed, complain, like Wordsworth, that the visionary gleam has passed away" (*SBJ* 238). In this reference, Lewis is confirming that he will not end like Wordsworth, but go a step beyond the great Romantic poet.

Furthermore, the use of the title "The Beginning" for this chapter emphasizes Lewis's forward movement, as opposed to what he perceived to be Wordsworth's mistaken nostalgia for the past. Joy looks simultaneously backwards and forwards, being "a desire for something longer ago or further away or still 'about to be'" (*SBJ* 78). It is:

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[44] I wish to amend Prothero and Williams' argument slightly, however. They claim that Lewis corrects "Romanticism's fatal flaw," which they identify as the Romantics' "reject[ion of] the focus on reason that was characteristic of the Enlightenment" (36). While Lewis certainly performs a marriage of imagination and reason in his work, he seems to have associated this very practice with Romanticism. In a review of George Steiner's *The Death of Tragedy* (1961), Lewis writes, "I could wish, however, that he [Steiner] had not, without qualification, connected Romanticism with Revolution as a liberation from reason. It was not for nothing that the Revolution made Reason a goddess. It attacked the *ancien régime* not only for iniquities but for 'absurdities' […]. The 'reason' from which Wordsworth records his liberation in *The Prelude* is not that of Descartes but that of Godwin" ("Tragic Ends" 77-78).

> a longing (yet it was also fruition) [….] I had tasted Heaven then. [….] True, it was desire, not possession. But then what I had felt on the walk had also been desire, and only possession in so far as that kind of desire is itself desirable, is the fullest possession we can know on earth; […] the very nature of Joy makes nonsense of our common distinction between having and wanting. There, to have is to want and to want is to have. (*SBJ* 166)

In this description we see once again the "already, not yet" character of Lewis's higher innocence. Joy is both a present taste of Heaven, as well as an anticipation of Heaven, *even* when it arises out of memory. Clearly Lewis found Wordsworth's sublime to be too fixated on the vanished past. He seems to have been unconvinced by Wordsworth's commitment to "grieve not, rather find / Strength in what remains behind" ("Intimations of Immortality" 182-83), instead finding Wordsworth's vision in need of revision. Indeed, by mirroring the structure of *The Prelude* in his own autobiography, then adding a final chapter, Lewis effectively offers *Surprised by Joy* as a sort of new, improved *Prelude*.[45] Indeed, by offering a new, improved model of *The Prelude* in *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis also reveals his larger project of writing a new, improved Romantic metanarrative, for his higher innocence is more dynamic than Wordsworth's, thanks, in large part, to Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Joy and Coleridgean Polarity

[45] Another distinction Lewis clearly wishes to make between Wordsworth and himself, is that of the egotistical sublime versus the fantastic sublime. Lewis does, for a time, embrace what might be called Wordsworth's sublime, the egotistical sublime, saying, "I concluded that it was a mood or state within myself" (*SBJ* 169), but he eventually moves beyond this idea.[45] Lewis comes to understand his own Joy as what David Sandner has named the "Fantastic Sublime." The fantastic sublime is not "anchored in the world of sense-experience" but "unmoored from reality" (Sandner, *The Fantastic Sublime* 59), and Lewis believes that this helps one to focus outwardly, rather than inwardly. In describing his "ideal," or "normal" day, he describes a day full of reading, writing, tea, eating, and a walk in nature (*SBJ* 141-43). This description sounds like a very Wordsworthian day, particularly if we—like Lewis—are familiar with Dorothy Wordsworth's journals. The great difference, however, arises when Lewis examines the ultimate result or tendency of this day: "it is a life almost entirely selfish. Selfish, not self-centered: for in such a life my mind would be directed toward a thousand things, not one of which is myself. The distinction is not unimportant" (*SBJ* 143). Indeed, it is not, for it places Lewis's relish of the fantastic sublime, which is selfish, yet focused outward, in direct contrast to Wordsworth's egotistical sublime, which is concerned more than anything with his own poetic genius, his own subjective experience, his own memories.

Lewis, like Wordsworth, owes much to Samuel Taylor Coleridge; in particular, his concept of higher innocence as unity is heavily rooted in Coleridge's understanding of polar logic. It is utterly impossible to leave Owen Barfield—the Coleridgean character in Lewis's own *Prelude*—out of any conversation about Lewis and Coleridge, for Barfield was not only influential in Lewis's conversion, but he was a respected and passionate Coleridge scholar. Furthermore, Coleridgean polarity is the key concept in Barfield's scholarship, with which Lewis was undoubtedly familiar, and I propose that polarity is a key concept through which to understand Lewis's unique characterization of higher innocence in *Surprised by Joy* and throughout his fictional work (as discussed in chapters two, three, and four).

In *The Friend* Coleridge describes "the universal law of polarity or essential dualism" in the following manner: "Every power in nature and in spirit must evolve an opposite as the sole means and condition of its manifestation: and all opposition is a tendency to re-union" (*The Friend* 97). He also writes in the margin of Swedenborg's *De Infinito et Causa Finali Creationis*, "we seek first for the Unity, as the only source of Reality, and then for the two opposite yet correspondent forms, by which it manifests itself" (qtd in Barfield, "Either: Or" 52). In his ground-breaking book, *What Coleridge Thought* (1971), Owen Barfield attempts to explain this concept:

> Polarity is dynamic, not abstract. [….] Where logical opposites are contradictory, polar opposites are generative of each other—and together generative of new product. Polar opposites exist by virtue of each other *as well as* at the expense of each other; [….] Moreover each quality or character is present *in* the other. We can and must distinguish, but there is no possibility of *dividing* them. (*What Coleridge Thought* 36)

Elsewhere, Barfield describes polar logic as "Coleridge's way out of the great *either : or* with which contemporary humanity is confronted" ("Either: Or" 58-9). In other words, Coleridgean

polarity is an instance or state of dynamic unity in which seeming opposites are held in harmony, paradoxically synthesized, yet distinct in their uniqueness.

In Lewis's autobiography he focuses on Joy as the unifier of his outer and inner lives, finally synthesizing his reason and imagination into a cohesive whole of experience and knowledge. In this way, Coleridge's concept of polarity comes to represent higher innocence in Lewis's self-construction. *Surprised by Joy* reveals Lewis as torn between many seeming dualisms: romantic and Victorian sensibilities, the sublime and the homely, the life of imagination and daily life, poetry and the novel, fantasy and realism, etc. Arthur Greeves helps Lewis to appreciate both poetry and the novel, fantasy and realism, the romantic and the Victorian:

> He[…] side by side with his love for myth and marvel, which I fully shared, had another taste which I lacked till I met him and with which, to my great good, he infected me for life. This was the taste for what he called 'the good solid, old books,' the classic English novelists. [….] Under Arthur's influence I read at this time all the best Waverleys, all the Brontës, and all the Jane Austens. They provided an admirable complement to my more fantastic reading, and each was the more enjoyed for its contrast to the other. The very qualities which had previously deterred me from such books Arthur taught me to see as their charm. What I would have called their 'stodginess' or 'ordinariness' he called 'Homeliness'—a key word in his imagination. [….] He meant the rooted quality which attaches them to all our simple experiences, to weather, food, the family, the neighborhood. [….] This love of the 'Homely' was not confined to literature; he looked for it in out-of-doors scenes as well and taught me to do the same. Hitherto my feelings for nature had been too narrowly romantic. (*SBJ* 151-52)

Lewis admits that allowing fantasy alongside realism, poetry alongside the novel, the romantic alongside the Victorian, the extraordinary, distant, indistinct and beautiful alongside the ordinary, present, distinct and sometimes ugly, has the positive impact of "emphasiz[ing] it, enrich[ing] the contrast, sharpen[ing] the dualism" and enlivens the perspective which holds them simultaneously in view (*SBJ* 155). Though Lewis uses the term "dualism," one cannot help wondering if he is really witnessing Coleridge's polar logic in his mind's eye, for the two sides

of this dualism seem to melt deliciously into one another, to reveal to Lewis a more unified vision of literature and the world around him.

He explains the whole idea by describing the Irish countryside outside Little Lea:

> Your horizon from here is the Antrim Mountains, probably a uniform mass of grayish blue, though if it is a sunny day you may just trace on the Cave Hill the distinction between the green slopes that climb two-thirds of the way to the summit and the cliff wall that perpendicularly accomplishes the rest. That is one beauty; and here where you stand is another, quite different and even more dearly loved—sunlight and grass and dew, crowing cocks and gaggling ducks. In between them, on the flat floor of the Valley at your feet, a forest of factory chimneys, gantries, and giant cranes rising out of a welter of mist, lies Belfast. Noises come up from it continually, whining and screeching of trams, clatter of horse traffic on uneven sets, and, dominating all else, the continual throb and stammer of the great shipyards. And because we have heard this all our lives it does not, for us, violate the peace of the hilltop; rather, it emphasizes it, enriches the contrast, sharpens the dualism. [….] Now step a little way[…] and you will see, looking south with a little east in it, a different world. And having seen it, blame me if you can for being romantic. For here is the thing itself, utterly irresistible, the way to the world's end, the land of longing, the breaking and blessing of hearts. You are looking across what may be called, in a certain sense, the plain of Down, and seeing beyond it the Mourne Mountains. (154-55)

There is something about the "sharpen[ing]" of "the dualism" between the beauty and peace of Lewis's hilltop and the wretched bustle of Belfast that leads directly into the "Now" of the sublime "land of longing" he finally describes. And, of course, if we remember our Blakean imagery—which is assimilated in the larger romantic idea—we recall the imagery of innocence in the quiet, happy hilltop, and that of experience in the "factory chimneys" and "stir" of the city (*SBJ* 154). This sublime prospect is of course an allusion to Joy, but also thereby an allusion to higher innocence, or the anticipation of higher innocence. It may have somehow come about through the polar opposition of nature and civilization, the imagination of innocence and the reality of experience. Indeed, Heaven for Lewis, as for Blake is frequently a unified vision of the garden of innocence and the city of experience—transmuted into the perfected city of God, the new Jerusalem. Lewis gives one final example of this polar logic at work:

> […]best of all we liked it when the Homely and the unhomely met in sharp juxtaposition: if a little kitchen garden ran steeply up a narrowing enclave of fertile ground surrounded by outcroppings and furze, or some shivering quarry pool under a moonrise could be seen on our left, and on our right the smoking chimney and lamplit window of a cottage that was just settling down for the night. (157-8)

Again Lewis presents us with a picture of polarity, finding in the seeming opposition of wild natural beauty and homely human existence a unity, achieved through the power of imagination. This striving for polarity becomes key for Lewis's return to Christianity, for the central narrative of polarity in the autobiography is story of Lewis's conversion. Lewis recalls of his non-Christian self:

> Such, then, was the state of my imaginative life; over against it stood the life of my intellect. The two hemispheres of my mind were in the sharpest contrast. On the one side a many-islanded sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow 'rationalism.' Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless. (*SBJ* 170)

This tension of "car[ing] for almost nothing but the gods and heroes, the garden of the Hesperides, Launcelot and the Grail, and […] believ[ing] in nothing but atoms and evolution and military service" (*SBJ* 174), was a tension that required resolution. Lewis's quest for higher innocence, therefore, necessitated the synthesis of his feelings with his beliefs, thus requiring a polar unity between the imaginary and the real. In George MacDonald he began to find this resolution. After reading *Phantastes* he recalls:

> Up till now each visitation of Joy had left the common world momentarily a desert—'The first touch of the earth went nigh to kill'.[46] But now I saw the bright shadow coming out of the book into the real world and resting there, transforming all common things and yet itself unchanged. Or, more accurately, I saw the common things drawn into the bright shadow. [….] That night my imagination was, in a certain sense, baptized; the rest of me, not unnaturally, took longer. (*SBJ* 181)

[46] From Keats's *Endymion*. This was a favorite quote of Lewis's.

This is a "visitation of Joy" in which Lewis has moved closer to higher innocence, taking a step towards unity between human imagination and physical reality. The use of baptism in this description is particularly pertinent to the overall image, as baptism represents a simultaneously physical and spiritual reality; in the baptismal water the spiritual reality is united with the physical sign of covenant.

Shortly after the reconciling experience of *Phantastes,* Lewis becomes what he calls an "Absolute Idealist." This is probably the moment in which his belief system is closest to that of Barfield, and it is therefore unsurprising that he explains it very much as a synthesis of polar opposites:

> The Absolute was 'there,' and that 'there' contained the reconciliation of all contraries, the transcendence of all finitude, the hidden glory which was the only perfectly real thing there is. In fact, it had much of the quality of Heaven. [….] What I learned from the Idealists (and still most strongly hold) is this maxim: it is more important that Heaven should exist than that any of us should reach it. (*SBJ* 210-11)

Later he again recognizes this Idealism as a striving for the unity of higher innocence, saying, "that is why we experience Joy: we yearn, rightly, for that unity which we can never reach except by ceasing to be the separate phenomenal beings called 'we'" (*SBJ* 222). This Idealism, of course, is what ultimately gives way to Theism, and finally Theism gives way to Christianity. And Christianity, which is centered on the incarnation, is itself the ultimate synthesis between polar opposites, for the incarnation represents a final reconciliation between myth and fact, spiritual and physical reality.[47] Lewis writes: "Here and here only in all time the myth must have become fact; the Word, flesh; God, Man" (*SBJ* 236). Christianity, via the incarnation, therefore resolves the dualisms of Lewis's former life and simultaneously manifests and points towards higher innocence. In this way Coleridge's polar logic becomes a central and integral piece of

[47] This idea of the Incarnation as a prime instance of polarity will become increasingly important for analysis of the space trilogy in chapter three.

Lewis's personal understanding of higher innocence, and will play a key role not only in his autobiography, but also in his fictional endeavors. Furthermore, Coleridge, with his emphasis on polar logic, is most likely the source from which Lewis firmed up his own technical term for higher innocence: Joy.

Lewis most likely borrowed the term "Joy" not directly from the Wordsworthian sonnet that gives the autobiography its name ("Surprised by Joy"), but from Coleridge's "Dejection: an Ode." Barfield suggests that Coleridge's term for the self-other recognition between man and nature (the sublime) is "joy," as seen in the Dejection Ode ("Either: Or" 55). In "Either: Or: Coleridge, Lewis and Romantic Theology" Barfield entertains the theory that Coleridge's term might bear connection to Lewis's Joy, but quickly and decidedly dismisses the notion. Yet, an analysis of Joy and its function within the "Dejection Ode" provides a distinct glimpse of what may very well have been the source and prototype of Lewis's Joy.

"I write melancholy, always melancholy: You will suspect that it is the fault of my natural Temper," writes Coleridge in his notebook in October of 1803 (*The Notebooks* 1609). It is true that the poet is often distinguished for a certain flavor of despair, and yet he parries that, "Alas! no.—This is the great Occasion that my Nature is made for Joy—impelling me to Joyance—& I never, never can yield to it.—I am a genuine Tantalus—" (1609). This Joy, for which Coleridge perceives himself to have been created, figures prominently in his "Dejection: an Ode," and would seemingly elucidate the poet's conception of polarity. By examining the definition and role of Joy in "Dejection: an Ode" we may reach a new understanding of polar logic and of its unique meaning for C. S. Lewis.

In "Dejection: an Ode" Coleridge depicts an experiential process in which polarity plays a key role via Joy. First, the poet mourns over the brokenness of the world and of humanity,

which manifests itself in his own creative impotence. This grief expresses an anxiety, a sense of disunity in the world, and a simultaneous longing for wholeness. Second, the poet finds himself effectively surprised by Joy, discovering in nature, or perhaps *through* nature, a glimpse of something transcendent. This is the moment in which Joy appears, invoking concurrently an awareness that the world is not ideal and the longing for a better world. This longing is not an unpleasant sensation, but rather ecstatic, so that, thirdly, the poet experiences an inexpressibly beautiful impression of a new, unified and perfected world, and thereby a flash of the creative capacity in its highest degree: the Primary Imagination, which is achieved through the comprehension of polarity. Unfortunately, this joy, as Coleridge laments in his notebook, is no more than a tantalizing glimpse of a wholly absent perfection; it can neither realize itself, nor fulfill its inherent longings. Coleridge therefore continues to "write melancholy," always poised for a new, tantalizing manifestation of joy. All in all, this series of events is not simply reminiscent of the traditional sublime experience, but it also bears a shocking resemblance to Lewis's own descriptions of Joy in his autobiography.

"Dejection: an Ode" begins with Coleridge sitting at his window, frantically searching through nature in pursuit of some unnamed feeling. He lists off the beauty that spreads itself before him, as if making a catalog of the sights. He anticipates a coming storm, hoping that, "Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed, / And sent my soul abroad, / Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give, / Might startle this dull pain and make it move and live" (17-20). However, whatever the feeling Coleridge searches for in this scene of natural grandeur, he does not find it. Lewis similarly admits that Joy cannot be harnessed through deliberate pursuit, saying "I woke from building the temple to find that the God had flown" (*SBJ* 165). Just as Lewis regrets the divide between what he loves and what he believes, Coleridge laments that

his gaze is not accompanied by feeling and concludes, "I see, not feel, how beautiful" the natural scene is ("Dejection" 38). This distinction between sight and feeling, between the eye and the heart, represents the essential brokenness or disunity of the world as Coleridge experiences it. Furthermore, this disconnect manifests itself in a "dull sobbing draft" that "moans and rakes / Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute, / Which better far were mute" (6-8). As the image of the Aeolian lute is a common metaphor for the poet, played upon by nature, Coleridge thereby asserts that his current state of disjuncture enables him only to create bad poetry that would be better left unwritten. Without the polar logic of the Primary Imagination, Coleridge's poetry has no unifying power.

The anxiety Coleridge expresses in these first two stanzas is characterized by a desperate longing. Exclamation points abound in his descriptions of the scene, as though he wished to work himself into a frenzied state, yet his longing finds "no natural outlet, no relief" (23), and he continues only to gaze with "how blank an eye" (30). Hence the descent into dejection: unsatisfied urges and a growing sense that "It were a vain endeavor, / Though I should gaze for ever / On that green light that lingers in the west," have led the poet to cease his anxious search and confess himself unable to force from "outward forms" the sensations "whose fountains are within" (42-46). In this admission of defeat, Coleridge confesses that his longings are not actually directed towards nature itself but that he longs for an intellectual, emotional experience that is somehow connected with nature. The comparison is strikingly similar to Lewis's own recollections of "the fatal determination to recover the old thrill, and at last the moment when I was compelled to realize that all such efforts were failures" (*SBJ* 166). Like Coleridge, Lewis finds that whenever he focuses on any particular object as a source of Joy, Joy eludes him.

In stanza 4 of "Dejection" Coleridge begins by explaining the brokenness of man's relationship to nature. He explains that nature is only meaningful in so much as man interprets meaning from it: "in our life alone does Nature live" (48). Furthermore, humanity's correspondence with nature represents both nature's "wedding-garment" and "shroud" (49), suggesting that while man is meant to commune with nature in an intimate, mutually-nurturing relationship, this relationship is disrupted by death. Up until this point, the poem has effectively established an image of brokenness, of broken relationship, of void where there ought to be feeling, of death where there ought to be nurture, and in all of this, a desperate longing that these relationships should be healed.

Suddenly, however, this unanswered desire seems to stumble upon an answer:

> And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
> Than that inanimate cold world allowed
> To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
> Ah! […] ("Dejection" 50-53)

At the moment the poet ceases his "ever-anxious" search for fulfillment, the possibility arises that there may exist certain encounters, certain sights that invoke the very feeling he has despaired of experiencing. He admits the possibility of a moment of transcendence, a moment in which the "inanimate cold world" and the "poor loveless ever-anxious crowd" momentarily reach beyond their brokenness and provide a glimpse of something of "higher worth" (50-52). This sudden, inexplicable occurrence is the feeling Coleridge has hitherto wished for: it is Joy.

As Lewis will later concur, the appearance of Joy is seemingly unpredictable, and cannot be forced or anticipated. While Coleridge searches anxiously for Joy through the first two stanzas of the poem, he finds it not, yet, in the midst of ensuing despair, he suddenly realizes its potentiality with a surprised, "Ah!" (53). In this moment the poet is effectively surprised by Joy, as Lewis would later characterize the sublime experience. Coleridge now begins to describe it:

> Ah! From the soul itself must issue forth
> A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
> Enveloping the Earth—
> And from the soul itself must there by sent
> A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
> Of all sweet sounds the life and element! (53-58)

The experience of Joy (although Coleridge has not yet identified it as such) is described as emanating from the soul, and granting both "light" and "glory," despite its being a "cloud" (54). The paradoxical nature of a "luminous cloud" suggests the paradoxical nature of joy itself (54), for joy represents both an obscuring and an enlightening of the Earth: it obscures the reality of a sin-wrecked world with the impression of a potentially perfected one. He further explains this transcendent experience as allowing the soul to send out "A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth, / Of all sweet sounds the life and element" (57-58). This voice, which emerges from man's soul, is of divine origin, being the source of "all sweet sounds." The voice's self-origination also evidences its origin in God, for Coleridge, according to Jonathan Wordsworth, perceives God to be the only, or original, self-determining thing in the universe when he titles himself "I AM" to Moses (31). This transcendence therefore allows the human soul to echo the voice of God, and this echoing is no small thing for Coleridge—it is an apprehension of polarity.

The fifth stanza of "Dejection" finally identifies this experience as that of Joy, and more fully explains its power and role. Coleridge attests that the "pure of heart" already know what he alludes to (59), having a nature less tainted by sin and therefore more receptive to Joy. He now defines Joy more fully, as a "beautiful and beauty-making power" (63). Joy is simultaneously "Life, and life's effluence, cloud at once and shower" (66), for it is both a longing for and a realization of transcendence. Furthermore, this Joy is explicitly represented as a glimpse of a perfected world:

> Joy, Lady! Is the spirit and the power,

> Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower
> A new Earth and new Heaven,
> Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
> Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
> We in ourselves rejoice!
> And thence flows all that charms our ear or sight,
> All melodies the echoes of that voice,
> All colours a suffusion from that light. ("Dejection" 67-75)

Joy, for Coleridge, engages a human capacity for the Primary Imagination, which, echoing the eternal, creative act of God, can perceive of a world of polar logic, in which humanity is truly wedded to nature, and no longer its grave-clothes. In other words, Joy in "Dejection" is the realization of polarity, the realization of a perfected world, and, therefore, a transcendent moment of powerful, redemptive imagination.[48]

Unfortunately, Coleridge returns immediately from his raptures on Joy in stanzas 4 and 5 to a state of dissatisfaction and creative impotence in stanza 6. He bemoans that "afflictions bow me down to earth," "rob me of my mirth," and "Suspend[….] / My shaping spirit of Imagination" (82-6). He thus resigns Joy to a mere memory, and it is at this point that Lewis sees himself diverging from Coleridge, just as he diverges from Wordsworth. In *Surprised by Joy* Lewis attempts to paint a rosier picture than the tortured romantic longing of *The Prelude* and "Dejection," and thus Lewis claims that he has lost all interest in Joy post-conversion. Nonetheless, Lewis's Joy appears a clear descendant of Coleridge's and that same Joy that tantalized Coleridge assists Lewis in reaching his "Jerusalem." Lewis's Joy, like Coleridge's in "Dejection," is best described as an apprehension of polarity, a unifying force, a decidedly Coleridgean higher innocence, which will reappear in all of Lewis's fiction.

In conclusion, just as Blake, Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth contribute to Lewis's understanding and internalization of the Romantic metanarrative in *Surprised by Joy*, so

[48] A similar use of Joy also appears in Coleridge's "Fears in Solitude."

Coleridge offers an integral contribution, solidifying Lewis's conception of higher innocence around the theory of polarity and possibly providing Lewis with Joy as a term for the apprehension of polarity. By establishing the parallels between *Surprised by Joy* and these various depictions of innocence, experience, and higher innocence, it becomes clear that the Romantic metanarrative was central to Lewis's conception of his own development; however, in each case Lewis not only appropriates, but builds on the Romantic metanarrative, extending and revising it into a more definite, more Christian narrative. He clarifies and solidifies Blake's higher innocence, rejects Keats and Shelley's sublime, extends Wordsworth's narrative, and moves beyond Coleridge's Joy to deep fulfillment. The practice of tessera—completing the Romantic metanarrative in its various manifestations, is one that echoes through all of Lewis's fiction. As the following chapters will demonstrate, all of Lewis's fiction revises various Victorian interpretations of the same Romantic structure behind *Surprised by Joy*.

CHAPTER TWO: "I might—": Spiritualizing the Victorian Bildungsromane in Till We Have Faces

"'You can't get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me,' said C. S. Lewis" (Hooper, "Preface" v). These may be Lewis's most cherished words, oft quoted by fans and academics alike. Less well known is Walter Hooper's recollection that, "he meant it, for at that moment I was pouring his tea into a very large Cornish-ware cup and he was reading *Bleak House*" (v). Hooper playfully implies that Dickens's longest novel is positive proof of Lewis's unquenchable love of story—one must be truly devout to make it all the way through this exemplar of Victorian long-windedness. Yet it is intriguing that a Dickens novel should be the book to evoke such an encomium from Lewis. This biographical anecdote, from which the quote has been carefully memorialized and the specific book forgotten, captures how scholarship and popular memory have neglected Lewis's taste for the Victorian novel. This chapter aims to remedy this neglect.

Alongside Romantic poetry, Lewis's adolescent and adult literary diets consisted of generous portions of Victorian novels, fantasies and prose romances; it should come as no surprise that these authors, whom Lewis discovered during his "personal Renaissance" and continued to admire in his later life, left a deep impression on his literary work (*SBJ* 71). On March 7, 1916, Lewis writes to Arthur Greeves with a complaint about George MacDonald's *Phantastes*:

> There are one or two poems in the tale—as in the Morris tales you know—which, with one or two exceptions are shockingly bad, so don't TRY to appreciate them: it is just a sign, isn't it, of how some geniuses can't work in metrical forms—another example being the Brontes. (*Collected Letters Vol I* 169-70)

This young, arrogant reader (Lewis was 17 at the time of writing) did not yet know that his critique would one day apply equally well to himself. Lewis at this time believed himself

destined for poetic fame, yet he would later find his greatest artistic successes in novels, prose romances, and fantasies akin to those of Charlotte Brontë, Morris, and MacDonald. In fact, the reading he undertook in these adolescent years—particularly the novels and fantasies—would shape his ongoing perspective on literature. As evidence of this formative impact, one finds Lewis drawing comparisons between Victorian writers and other works he encounters. Just as McGrath notices Lewis's "Victorian spectacles" in viewing the Middle Ages (2990), we see Lewis judging older texts against the standard of his favorite Victorian authors. In one such instance he writes to Arthur in 1916,

> the 'Arcadia' continues beautiful: in fact it gets better and better. There has been one part that Charlotte Bronte could not have bettered [….] that is equal to if not better than the scene where Jane Eyre wakes up on the moor—do you remember? (*Vol I* 201-02)

Most literary scholars would find this comparison troubling, either because they believe Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590) more important and influential than *Jane Eyre* (1847), or simply because it is illogical to judge an older text by a newer one. But Lewis, just seventeen-years-old, was not yet a sophisticated literary scholar. Instead, he openly allowed texts to impact him, and Brontë's emotional impact, for Lewis, made her the yardstick by which to judge Sidney. Immature though it may seem, it demonstrates the primacy of these Victorian texts and authors in Lewis's developing imagination.

This chapter will establish what no existing scholarship has yet acknowledged: that Lewis was in conscious intertextual dialog with Victorian realism. To prove this I will demonstrate that *Till We Have Faces* (1956) can be effectively and meaningfully read as a revision of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853). In order to understand what drew Lewis to these Victorian non-poets, we must turn once again to the legacy of Romanticism. Lewis's most direct literary influences are those Victorians who continually revise

and adapt the Romantic metanarrative, and the Victorian realist novel owes a great debt to Romanticism, for it carries on the Romantic metanarrative via the *Bildungsroman*. Lewis builds on and borrows from this novelistic tradition. While he derives his philosophy of mythopoeia from Tolkien, he seems also to infuse it with the formal elements of nineteenth-century high realism. In *Till We Have Faces* he models Orual and her narrative on those of Jane Eyre and Esther Summerson, who both undergo female *Bildungsromane*, a form built on the Romantic metanarrative. The idea of Coleridgean polarity as higher innocence (as discussed in chapter one) is particularly prevalent in this reading, because Brontë and Dickens both concern themselves with the unifying or harmonizing of seemingly antithetical concepts, feelings, and even genres. The form of Jane and Esther's narratives maintains (or, attempts to maintain) a strict polar logic between realism and romance, and both heroines illustrate growth through their ability to balance, even synthesize, their reason and passions. Orual's story follows the same pattern. Though Lewis makes great strides in the psychological realism of his "novel," *Till We Have Faces* has all the fantastical trappings of a mythopoeic romance.[49] Furthermore, Orual, like Jane and Esther, attains higher innocence through the reconciliation of her reason and imagination. It is the paradoxical union of romance and realism in Brontë and Dickens which initially attracts and confuses Lewis, and *Till We Have Faces* becomes the incarnation of his desire to achieve that unity between realism and romance, just as Jane, Esther, and Orual also seek a higher innocence in which reason and passion harmoniously co-exist. Ultimately, Lewis not only rewrites Jane and Esther's narratives, but seeks to complete them in Orual; in the manner of Bloom's tessera, Lewis exchanges the marriages with which the Victorian narratives end for a greater, more mystical union with the divine, suggesting that Orual's more deeply spiritual

[49] Orual is generally seen as a much more psychologically real character than any of Lewis's creations in the Narnia or Ransom stories. In particular, Orual is viewed to be by far the most realistic female in all of Lewis's work.

ending is a more perfect image of higher innocence, better incarnating the polar logic of imagination and reason, realism and romance, as well as physical and spiritual.

This chapter, along with those to follow, will in some manner counteract the widespread notion that Lewis disliked, even despised, the Victorians. Kate Durie summarizes this viewpoint, stating:

> [Lewis] felt a deep disquiet about the nineteenth century. […] there is a great gulf fixed—of consciousness and sensibility—between the age when Scott and Austen wrote and the modern age. This gulf reflects changes consequent on the birth of the machine, and the loss of a superstructure of belief. There is little real sense of where the Victorians figure in this account, except that they are obviously on the wrong side of the divide. Lewis's medieval training made him a systematist; the Victorian period is not tidy. The very qualities that excite many Victorian enthusiasts—the period's stretching of norms, the shaking of the foundations of both religious belief and personal morality, the fertility of experiment, the extremes of post-Romantic exuberance and despair, appall Lewis. (228-29)

I will argue that it is exactly the "not tidy" nature of Victorian thought, culture, and art that attracts Lewis. No doubt Durie is, on a large scale, correct. Lewis finds Victorian culture and thought often troubling; he perceives the era as a dangerous intellectual climate and traces a direct lineage from thinkers like Matthew Arnold to the modernist philosophies that he so despises. Nonetheless, Lewis also finds in the Victorians an openness to dialog, even to paradoxical unity in the midst of tension. Victorian authors manage to embrace seemingly disparate ideas, genres, and emotions, combining faith and doubt, fantasy and realism, feeling and rationality; Lewis endeavors to follow this example, as it appeals to his Blakean and Coleridgean sensibilities. For Lewis, the Victorian era and Victorian art represent not simply a dangerous moment, but a moment of greater intellectual diversity than the early twentieth century, a moment when the atheistic, materialist legacy of Keats and Shelley battles with, but has not yet destroyed, the Christian romanticism of Wordsworth and Coleridge. It is an era of open conversation, of possibility. While the Victorian era eventually gives way to the malaise of

Modernism, it nonetheless shows great resistance before doing so. I believe Lewis perceived many of these Victorian authors as the last ditch defenses against Modernism—tragic figures, ultimately doomed, yet noble and strong in their convictions. Even the Victorian realists enjoyed this admiration from Lewis, contrary to popular perception. Thus, when Screwtape proposes his toast he says of the Victorian era, "Believe me, Gentledevils, the threat of something like a really healthy state of society seemed then perfectly serious" ("Screwtape" 88).[50]

Realism and Fantasy: Lewis's Higher Innocence of Form

While following chapters will examine Lewis's engagement with Victorian fantasy, science fiction, and children's literature, we must first establish his relationship with the Victorians' most characteristic literary mode: realism. Most readers would not associate Lewis with realism; however, nineteenth-century high realism is, in many ways, the stylistic father of high fantasy—or, at least, Lewis saw it as such. Nineteenth-century high realism owes its birth, in some manner, to the philosophical and political underpinnings of the Romantic movement (the same Romantic movement that is, arguably, the central inspiration for Tolkien, Barfield and Lewis's philosophy).[51]

Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791) was published a year before the French monarchy's overthrow and played a significant role in revolutionary thought. Paine's assertion that "Men are born and always continue free and equal in respect of their rights" (26) stirred the hearts of many at the dawn of the French Revolution, yet, even when the blood and dust of Paris had turned Revolutionary fervor to disenchanted horror, these ideals had a profound impact on the way many artists and thinkers viewed the common person.

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[50] This Victorian "threat," of something like a really healthy state," however, has apparently been "averted" in the twentieth century, "Thanks to" Satan himself ("our Father Below") (88).
[51] See Reilly's *Romantic Religion*.

William Wordsworth was one such artist. As a supporter of the French Revolution, Wordsworth embraced Paine's ideas about human rights. Unfortunately, Wordsworth's firsthand experience of the revolution was disillusioning. He witnessed the descent of French society into the Reign of Terror and was eventually forced to flee the country, returning to England in a deep malaise. Living for some time in the Lake District, however, Wordsworth found the peasantry a balm to his cynicism—they restored his hope in the human dignity asserted by revolutionary thought. Marilyn Butler characterizes Wordsworth's interest in the English peasantry as "the counter-revolution's taste for hearth and home" (66), and Marjorie Levinson suggests that "Wordsworth is most distinctively Wordsworth" when he is avoiding "polemic or position" (4), yet it is impossible to entirely divide Wordsworth's work from the revolutionary philosophies of individuality and freedom that first inspired him. In Book XII of *The Prelude* (1805) he attests not to a new, but to a *re*newed interest in men: "I found / *Once more* in man an object of delight, / Of pure imagination, and of love" (XII.53-55; my emphasis). Nancy Yousef explains this shift as Wordsworth recognizing his interdependence with society, and thus his rejection of his own "seeming independence" (115). According to Yousef, this return to human society is the manifestation of the ultimate "thesis" or "moral" of *The Prelude*, "the title of book 8: 'Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind'" (118). Wordsworth became convinced that "Nature through all conditions hath a power / To consecrate—if we have eyes to see—/ The outside of her creatures, and to breathe / Grandeur upon the very humblest face / Of human life" (XII.282-86), and he therefore focused much of his poetic attention on the common people living around him, finding in their lives and labor a deep philosophical comfort.

When the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* was published, Wordsworth made it clear that his interest in the common person was a deciding aesthetic factor in his art. His "Preface"

states that in "[l]ow and rustic life […] the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language" (203). Because rustic life presents this opportunity, Wordsworth therefore seeks to revolutionize poetry into something that no longer relishes its own artificiality, but actually "imitate[s], and, as far as possible, adopt[s], the very language of men" (205). Wordsworth's revolutionary interest in portraying the commoner and in creating art that closely mirrors reality is taken up by the realist novel, which Ian Watt and Nancy Armstrong, among others, characterize as a literary development correlated with the burgeoning of middle-class individuality. We therefore find the same Wordsworthian interest in the common man reappearing in George Eliot's *Adam Bede*. Eliot's narrator famously reflects on his own writerly vocation, explaining, "I aspire to give no more than a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind" (175). Thus, the nineteenth century realist's attempts to ennoble the world and its inhabitants through fiction finds its roots in Romanticism, and borrows from the Romantics' ennobling metanarrative for human existence.

The thread of influence from Romanticism to Victorian realism continues on from Victorian realism to twentieth-century mythopoeia. In particular, an examination of Eliot's realist manifesto (as proposed in *Adam Bede*) side by side with Tolkien's "On Fairy Stories" and several of Lewis's essays on stories, writing, and fantasy, reveals a startling similarity of purpose and argument. I am, in some capacity, arguing against such scholars as John Haigh, who seeks to "disengag[e] Lewis's fiction from the modern realistic novel and establish it as a variety of the prose romance" (192). While Lewis's fantasies are certainly "prose romances," they—and *Till We Have Faces* in particular—are nonetheless influenced by Victorian realism. To suggest that

Lewis is in conversation only with prose romancers like William Morris would be shortsighted, failing to acknowledge the breadth and complexity of his fiction.

In *Adam Bede*, George Eliot argues for the realist novel as a medium for "deep human sympathy" (178), an art form in which the humble and often unheralded aspects of daily life may be celebrated, brought to light, and appreciated. She admits, "Falsehood is so easy, truth so difficult" (176), and castigates wish-fulfillment fiction, writing,

> I would not, even if I had the choice, be the clever novelist who could create a world so much better than this, in which we get up in the morning to do our daily work, that you would be likely to turn a harder, colder eye on the dusty streets and the common green fields—on the real breathing men and women, who can be chilled by your indifference or injured by your prejudice; who can be cheered and helped onward by your fellow-feeling, your forbearance, your outspoken, brave justice. (176)

By this standard the novelist's work is to reveal the "beauty in […] commonplace things, and delight in showing how kindly the light of Heaven falls on them" (Eliot 178). According to Eliot, fiction should paint a picture that sends readers back to reality with a deeper appreciation for its beauties.

On first glance, Eliot's literary agenda might appear antithetical to that of Tolkien, and therefore Lewis, but a closer look reveals that realist and fantasist have a similar vocabulary, similar approaches, and similar purposes. Like Eliot, Tolkien regards the appearance of falsehood (with its need for a "willing suspension of disbelief") as poor work, instead suggesting that "a genuine fairy-story[…] should be presented as 'true'" (14). This "truth" signifies the underlying truth of Biblical metanarrative to Tolkien, but it is also found in the mundane truths of reality itself, flowing into the secondary world, transmuted, yet intact. He argues,

> *Faërie* contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants, or dragons: it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted. (9)

The focus and "truth" of Tolkien's fantasy is therefore akin to the focus and "truth" of Eliot's realism; both hinge on their accurate and appreciative depiction of real things and people. Furthermore, Tolkien shares Eliot's purpose to reveal "beauty in […] commonplace things, and delight in showing how kindly the light of Heaven falls on them" (Eliot 178), although his approach differs from her own. Tolkien shows humanity "enchanted" and Eliot depicts people in "the light of Heaven." Like Eliot's realism, Tolkien's fantasy gives the reader a deeper appreciation for reality; fantasy, he says, facilitates

> Recovery […]—regaining of a clear view. [….] Of all faces those of our *familiares* are the ones both most difficult to play fantastic tricks with, and most difficult really to see with fresh attention, perceiving their likeness and unlikeness: that they are faces, and yet unique faces. [….] They have become like the things which once attracted us by their glitter, or their colour, or their shape, and we laid hands on them, and then locked them in our hoard, acquired them, and acquiring ceased to look at them. [….] Creative fantasy, because it is mainly trying to do something else (make something new), may open your hoard and let all the locked things fly away like cage-birds. The gems all turn into flowers or flames, and you will be warned that all you had (or knew) was dangerous and potent, not really effectively chained, free and wild; no more yours than they were you. (58-9)

Upon close examination, the similarity in Tolkien and Eliot's language is surprising. Both describe the need to recognize the beauty of familiar faces and the dignity of the mundane. Tolkien's call to recognize the "likeness […] and unlikeness" of the familiar faces that one "ceased to look at" (Tolkien 58), mirrors Eliot's call to "remember [the] existence" of "common, coarse people" (Eliot 178); the "light of Heaven" Eliot's realism casts resembles the "flames" lit by Tolkien's fantasy (Eliot 176; Tolkien 59); Eliot's assertion that realism makes "lovable" "those homes with their tin pans, their brown pitchers, their rough curs, and the clusters of onions" (177-78), resurfaces in Tolkien's affirmation that fairy-stories reveal "the wonder of the things, such as stone, and wood, and iron; tree and grass; house and fire; bread and wine" (59).

The similarities between these respective literary philosophies reveal how easily Lewis could have integrated the two modes of writing. For whether Tolkien was engaged with Eliot's writing or not, Lewis certainly was. [52] In fact, *Adam Bede* was the first Eliot novel Lewis read, writing about it in a December 1917 letter to Arthur, "I have just finished 'Adam Bede'. As you know, it is the first of hers I have read, and I earnestly advise you to read it. [….] I am writing home for […] another George Eliott [sic]" (*Vol I* 348-49). By the beginning of 1918 he reports reading both *The Mill on the Floss* and *Middlemarch* as well, explaining that he is "quite 'caught' by George Eliot's books" (*Vol I* 362).[53] Lewis read most of Eliot's works in the trenches and hospital during his service in the first World War. Lewis's copy of *Middlemarch* (vol. 1) contains an inscription explaining that he first read the novel in 1918, while entrenched on the front in Monchy le Preux (Marginal Notes).[54] K. J. Gilchrist confirms Lewis's connection to Eliot, and even the romantic associations Lewis may have had with her realism, writing, "Set against [the reality of the Great War] was Lewis's mental world. It was a world much like that he would find in reading George Eliot's novels. It was not a world without pain, not without turmoil, but the idyllic, rural England—the England of a long literary and romantic tradition—with which he increasingly identified himself" (48).

Lewis's essays on the subject of story and fantasy are famously similar to Tolkien's "On Fairy-Stories," but also appear to be in conscious dialog with Eliot. This appreciation for Tolkien's brand of high fantasy (Lewis claims that Tolkien's "On Fairy-Stories" is "perhaps the most important contribution to the subject that anyone has yet made" in "On Three Ways of

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[52] It is not within the scope of this chapter to prove a definite connection between Eliot and Tolkien (although some connection doubtless exists).
[53] Jan. 4, 1918; Albert: "I think I told you that I had read 'Adam Bede' and am now at 'The Mill on the Floss', which I like even better. Do you know of any life of George Elliot [sic] published in a cheap edition? If you can find one, I should like to read it" (*Vol I* 352).
Feb. 22, 1918; to Albert: "I […] have also begun 'Middlemarch.'" (*Vol I* 362).
[54]For more on Lewis's wartime reading of Eliot, see Gilchrist.

Writing for Children" [26]), coupled with his appreciation for the detailed realism of Eliot, creates Lewis's own unique perception of good mythopoeic art as fiction that blends romance and realism. Take, for example, his critique of Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* in his essay "On Stories":

> The total lack of atmosphere repels me. There is no country in the book—save as a storehouse of inns and ambushes. There is no weather. When they cross to London there is no feeling that London differs from Paris. [….] If that is what is meant by Romance, then Romance is my aversion and I greatly prefer George Eliot or Trollope. (7)

For Lewis, a truly good romance must have an "atmosphere," flowing apparently from the sort of descriptions provided by Victorian realists like Eliot and Trollope. The same applies not only to the real-world romance, but also to the fantasy or fairy-tale, for Lewis similarly suggests that "[t]he logic of a fairy-tale is as strict as that of a realistic novel" ("On Stories" 13). The best mythopoeia, therefore, will employ invention, but with an air of realism.

Additionally, like Eliot and Tolkien, Lewis proposes an interest in the reader's altered perspective—helping them to appreciate reality through reading. In his essay "On Three Ways of Writing for Children" Lewis acknowledges that fairy stories are "accused of giving children a false impression of the world they live in," but responds, "I think no literature that children could read gives them less of a false impression. I think what profess to be realistic stories for children are far more likely to deceive them. I never expected the real world to be like the fairy tales. I think that I did expect school to be like the school stories" ("On Three" 28). Lewis argues here that the desire aroused by fairy stories is different and, in fact, preferable to that aroused by unrealistic stories set in the real world. The school story provides a wish-fulfillment fantasy about real life, one which will cause the child to look at its own life and find it lacking. As for fairy tales, on the other hand,

> Does anyone suppose that he really and prosaically longs for all the dangers and discomforts of a fairy tale?—really wants dragons in contemporary England? It is not so. It would be much truer to say that fairy land arouses a longing for he knows not what. It stirs and troubles him (to his life-long enrichment) with the dim sense of something beyond his reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth. He does not despise real woods because he has read of enchanted woods: the reading makes all real woods a little enchanted. ("On Three" 29-30)

In "On Stories" he describes Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) as having this effect:

> […]it paints a happiness under incompatible conditions—the sort of freedom we can have only in childhood and the sort we can have only in maturity—and conceals the contradiction by the further pretense that the characters are not human beings at all. [….] It might be expected that such a book would unfit us for the harshness of reality and send us back to our daily lives unsettled and discontented. I do not find that it does so. The happiness which it presents to us is in fact full of the simplest and most attainable things—food, sleep, exercise, friendship, the face of nature, even (in a sense) religion. That "simple but sustaining meal" of "bacon and broad beans and a macaroni pudding" which Rat gave to his friends has, I doubt not, helped down many a real nursery dinner. And in the same way the whole story, paradoxically enough, strengthens our relish for real life. This excursion into the preposterous sends us back with renewed pleasure to the actual. ("On Stories" 14-15)

The Wind in the Willows is not only a paradoxically realistic fantasy, but a secondary world that increases the reader's appreciation for the actual world. Lewis clearly desires good, true fantasy to avoid the pitfall of striking "an amazing figure in literature by general discontent with the universe as a trap of dullness into which […] great souls have fallen by mistake" (Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Vol. II 267). Lewis places a marginal line next to this passage in his copy of *Middlemarch*, and clearly pondered its implications (Marginal Notes).[55] In essence, fantasy, by Lewis's estimation, should encourage the same positive result as Eliot's realism, shedding "the light of Heaven" on everyday life. Thus we find a similarity to Eliot's language when Lewis describes his first reading of *Phantastes*:

[55] It is one of only two passages that Lewis marked in this particular copy of *Middlemarch*.

> Up till now each visitation of Joy had left the common world momentarily a desert—'The first touch of the earth went nigh to kill'. But now *I saw the bright shadow coming out of the book into the real world and resting there, transforming all common things* and yet itself unchanged. Or, more accurately, I saw the common things drawn into the bright shadow. [….] That night my imagination was, in a certain sense, baptized; the rest of me, not unnaturally, took longer. (*SBJ* 181; emphasis added)

It is impossible to imagine that Lewis, whose memory for words and texts was so vast and unrelenting, is not conscious of echoing Eliot's realist philosophy in this description of the fantasy that "baptized" his imagination. He subtly forges a link between the two literary approaches.

This puzzling marriage between fantasy and realism comes even more clearly into focus alongside Lewis's understanding of "homeliness." In "On Stories" he suggests that "*The Hobbit* escapes the danger of degenerating into mere plot and excitement by a very curious shift of tone. As the humour and *homeliness* of the early chapters, the sheer 'Hobbitry', dies away we pass insensibly into the world of epic" ("On Stories" 19; emphasis added).[56] "Homeliness" is a concept that Lewis first learned from Arthur Greeves, and specifically from reading the realist novels Arthur recommended to him. As he recalls in *Surprised by Joy*,

> Under Arthur's influence I read […] all the best Waverleys, all the Brontës, and all the Jane Austens. They provided an admirable complement to my more fantastic reading, and each was the more enjoyed for its contrast to the other. The very qualities which had previously deterred me from such books Arthur taught me to see as their charm. What I would have called their 'stodginess' or 'ordinariness' he called 'Homeliness'—a key word in his imagination. [….] He meant the rooted quality which attaches them to all our simple experiences, to weather, food, the family, the neighborhood. He could get endless enjoyment out of the opening sentence of *Jane Eyre*. (151-52)

But Lewis does not appreciate homeliness purely on its own merit; his favorite occasions of homeliness appear in conjunction with the sublime or fantastic, as he explains:

[56] *The Hobbit* is Tolkien's fantasy epic for children, published in 1937, followed by *Lord of the Rings* (1954-55).

> […]best of all we liked it when the Homely and the unhomely met in sharp juxtaposition: if a little kitchen garden ran steeply up a narrowing enclave of fertile ground surrounded by outcroppings and furze, or some shivering quarry pool under a moonrise could be seen on our left, and on our right the smoking chimney and lamplit window of a cottage that was just settling down for the night. (*SBJ* 157-8)[57]

Just as Lewis preferred the juxtaposition of the homely and sublime in landscapes, therefore, he appreciates *The Hobbit* for its blending of realism and epic romance. He seems to find an intermingling of realism and fairy tale to be preferable to one or the other, and thus declares, "I now enjoy Tolstoy and Jane Austen and Trollope as well as fairy tales and I call that growth: if I had had to lose the fairy tales in order to acquire the novelists, I would not say that I had grown but only that I had changed" ("Three Ways" 26). A taste for works that are simultaneously realistic and fantastic shows up time and time again in Lewis's letters. In one such example, he asserts that Malory is good because he somehow fuses Austen and Morris—realism and romance:

> As to 'Malory' I liked it so awfully this time—far better than before—that I don't know what to say. How can I explain? For one thing, to me it is a world of its own, like Jane Austen. Though impossible, it is very fully realized, and all the characters are old friends, we know them so well: you get right away in those forests and somehow to me all the adventures & meetings & dragons seem very real. (*Vol I* 245)

In this formative era Lewis cements what will become a life-long preference for nineteenth century style realism and fantasy in dialog—a dialog he learns to appreciate in Dickens and adores in Brontë.

Over time, Lewis's appreciation for Dickens grew from strong dislike to love as he began to understand the draw of Dickens's romantic realism. Kate Durie argues that we cannot necessarily trust what Lewis says about the Victorians in his letters, because most of those letters

[57] See chapter one for more detailed analysis of this passage and the concept of homeliness, as well as its connection with Coleridgean polarity.

are written by an adolescent Lewis, and "he clearly reread many of the books he discusses in them, only rarely are second thoughts and later judgments given. Sometimes he changed his mind; sometimes he did not" (228). Lewis read extensively in Dickens's work early on and some of his early correspondence about Dickens is openly derisive. He tells Albert in 1915 that "the novels of Dickens" are "nightmares" with a "deluding longevity" (*Vol I* 154). In March 2, 1919 he writes to Arthur that, "Chaucer was very like Dickens—a virtuous, bourgeois story teller fond of highly moral vulgarity & indecency for its own sake, incapable (at the Tales period not in his early life) of appreciating romance" (*Vol I* 442). In such letters he faults Dickens for being too realistic. And yet elsewhere he describes Dickens as being mythopoeic, rather than realistic. Apparently he is baffled by the very thing he comes to love and emulate in Dickens—the blending of romance and realism. In 1927 he suggests that "to enjoy […] Dickens, you must get rid of all idea of realism—as much as in approaching William Morris or the music hall" (*Vol I* 727). Despite his censure, he finds in Dickens a possible source of Joy, comparing it to Morris and to live music—both repeatedly mentioned repositories of Joy. G. K. Chesterton[58] explains Dickens's romantic realism thus: "His art is like life, because, like life, it cares for nothing outside itself, and goes on its way rejoicing. Both produce monsters with a kind of carelessness, like enormous by-products; […]. Art indeed copies life in not copying life, for life copies nothing. Dickens's art is like life, it is incredible" (14). Furthermore, Chesterton insists that "Dickens did not strictly make a literature; he made a mythology" (61). Robert Newsom has similarly argued that Dickens "imposes upon the reader a kind of unsettled and unsettling double perspective which requires us to see things as *at once* 'romantic' and 'familiar'" (7). As this

[58] Chesterton was one of Lewis's favorite authors and critics. While Chesterton's book on Dickens, *Charles Dickens, The Last of the Great Men* (1942), is not in the Lewis Library Collection at the Marion E. Wade center, Lewis did own other critical works by Chesterton, and very likely read this one, as well as Chesterton's *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (1906), which helped re-popularize Dickens with readers and critics.

statement strikingly resembles Lewis's taste for the sublime and the homely, one can only assume that Lewis eventually shared Chesterton and Newsom's readings of Dickens, and thus came to appreciate Dickens more profoundly.

By 1948 Lewis writes, "I hated Dickens as a boy" (*Vol II* 898), suggesting that he now, in contrast, appreciates the novelist. Clearly Dickens is one of those cases in which Durie suggests that Lewis "changed his mind." In 1954 he reports, "The best Dickens always seems to me to be the one I have read last! But in a cool hour I put *Bleak House* top for its sheer prodigality of invention" (*Vol III* 522). Indeed, Lewis re-read *Bleak House* with pleasure up until the very end of his life, writing on November 7th, 1963 (just 15 days before his death), "I am, as you say, being 'very good'. But so far I rather like it. It was lovely to feel that I need not read Rowse on the Sonnets! Instead I re-read the Iliad, the *Daisy Chain*, *Bleak House* and *In Memoriam*: a good balanced diet" (*Vol III* 1478). We may suppose that Lewis came to love the Dickensian blend of romance and realism, particularly as it appears in *Bleak House*, and as he would revise it in *Till We Have Faces*.

In Brontë, on the other hand, he consciously enjoyed the union of realism and fantasy from start to finish. In a Feb. 1, 1916 letter to Arthur Greeves he reports, "I […] have also re-read Jane Eyre from beginning to end—it is a magnificent novel. Some of those long, long dialogues between her and Rochester are really like duets from a splendid opera, aren't they? And do you remember the description of the night she slept on the moor and of the dawn?" (*Vol I* 161). Lewis here reads realist details like dialog and description as magical, even fantastical—they are what give the book its power over him. In another instance from the same year, Lewis values *Jane Eyre* alongside the text that "baptized" his imagination: "for instance 'Phantastes', 'Jane Eyre'" (*Vol I* 189). Just as he compares Dickens to Morris and "the music hall," so he

suggests that Brontë evokes the same emotional experience: "Aye me! How our tastes and feelings have changed since the days when Wagner was the great common ground of talk, when Morris was only a name […] and I had never read Charlotte Brontë" (1917, to Greeves; *Vol I* 281). Essentially, while Lewis recognized *Jane Eyre* as a representative of realist homeliness, he also enjoyed the novel for its more fantastic elements. In *Till We Have Faces* Lewis would employ a similar fantastical element, and he would do so in conjunction with another realist accomplishment as well—a psychologically real, first-person female narrator.

Lewis's marginalia in nineteenth-century realist fiction has not been previously studied, but it crucially reveals his interest in the psychological realism of characters and narrators; specifically, and most importantly, in their emotional, spiritual, and cognitive transformations. The marginal evidence supports my supposition that realist representations were of particular importance to Lewis, and heavily influenced his own writing. In his copy of Austen's *Emma* (1815), Lewis makes a marginal note of three page numbers addressing the concept of consciousness (Marginal Notes). He also records the page numbers of those passages in which Emma reflects on and realizes her love for Knightley, recognizing her own self-deception and thus experiencing a personal transformation: "She was proved to have been universally mistaken" (*Emma* 250). Similarly, in the back cover of his first volume of *Mansfield Park* (1814) he notes passages concerned with "self knowledge," characters being "'entirely deceived,'" and "deceiving" themselves, as well as moments where Fanny "observed" these self-deceptions (26, 66, 231, 193). In the back of the second volume of *Mansfield Park*, he lists page numbers and excerpts the following quotations from the novel: "did not know yourself" (157) "darkened yet fancying itself light" (193), "my eyes are opened" (328), and "How have been deceived!" (*Mansfield Park* 333). Again, he shows interest in the question of knowledge and deception.

Fanny knows and sees through things that others—though clever, even good, like Edmund—do not; however, everything is eventually brought to light, and the characters are un-deceived. His *Northanger Abbey* (1818) marginalia highlights the passages concerned with Catherine's disillusionment ("The visions of romance were over. [….]" [269-70]) and her "resolution formed, of always judging and acting in future with the greatest good sense[….]" (272). Again when reading *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), he records in the back of the book the page numbers for Marianne's realizations of "how barbarous[ly]" she has acted, and her promise that "my feelings shall be governed and my temper improved. [….] it shall be regulated, it shall be checked by religion, by reason, by constant employment" (107, 234). Lewis apparently used these notes from his copies of Austen when writing his essay "A Note on Jane Austen," in which he identifies "undeception" as the common thread between the Austen novels, and notes that "the undeception […]is the very pivot or watershed of the story[….] it precipitates the happy ending" (4265-4266). These marginal notes, along with the resulting essay on Austen, emphasize Lewis's interest in the trope of the heroine's movement towards a climactic moment of self-realization, with its resulting balance between imagination and reason. This is a plot that he would similarly undertake in *Till We Have Faces*, as the entire plot hinges on Orual's realization of self-deception.

Lewis's interest not only in Austen, but also in this particular trope of personal undeception is significant for many reasons. First, we must recognize this theme in Austen as being related to—if not directly caused by—key ideas in the Romantic movement. Just as the Romantics were interested in individual human experience and perception, so Austen focused on the way a character subjectively observes and understands the world around her, and then reevaluates and corrects those observations based upon personal growth. This depth of character

psychology is ground-breakingly communicated through her use of free indirect discourse in *Emma*.

Second, Austen's heroines traditionally progress not only towards matrimony, but also towards greater self-knowledge, and greater self-unity, depicted through the heroine's ability to balance her passions and her reason. Dynamic heroines like Catherine Morland, Emma Woodhouse, Marianne Dashwood, and Elizabeth Bennett undergo this transformative growth, while static heroines, such as Fanny Price and Eleanor Dashwood already possess this unity, and therefore function as transformative influences on those who do not. This longed-for unity between feeling and common sense, sense and sensibility, is akin to the unity of Blake's higher innocence and of Coleridge's polarity. Thus, the theme to which Lewis seems most strongly attracted in Austen's novels is a transposition of the Romantic metanarrative, as well as a hallmark of nineteenth-century psychological realism.

In Austen, we therefore see Lewis's interest in both the female consciousness and the Romantic metanarrative played out in novelistic form. Yet it is not Austen's narratorial style that Lewis revises in *Till We Have Faces*; instead, he turns to the first person autobiographical style narration employed by Brontë's Jane Eyre and Dickens's Esther Summerson. Despite any faults Lewis may find in Brontë (and his letters are certainly critical at times), he apparently sees Brontë's psychological realism as her greatest strength.[59]

Lewis loved Brontë from the start, but his appreciation for Jane's character matures over time. While his earliest letters rank Brontë with Morris and MacDonald, highlighting the depth

[59] 1945, to Greeves: "I've re-read *Shirley* for the first time almost. [….] through it all the character of Shirley herself triumphs" (*Vol II* 640). In another 1952 letter he critiques a book draft, saying, "The only page that I can't enter into at all is p. 83. I can't conceive not being afraid, as a child, of those unseen presences. I shd. have behaved like little Jane Eyre in the Red Room when she dried her tears for fear a ghostly voice should awake to comfort her" (*Vol II* 262-63). He thus chooses Jane as an example of realistic psychological response.

of her impact on his romantic consciousness, Lewis continues to reread *Jane Eyre* with a deeper, more critical interest in Jane's psychology:

> This week I have re-read *Jane Eyre*. It is quite prodigiously better than the other Bronte books. [….] Part of the interest lies in seeing in the most apparently preposterous male characters how quite ordinary people look through the eyes of a shy, naïve, inflexibly upright, intelligent little woman of the mouse-like governessy type. It opens vistas[…]. Particularly delicious is her idea of conjugal bliss when she says almost on the last page 'We talk, I believe, all day.' Poor husband! (*Vol II* 291)

Despite its chauvinistic tone, this 1939 letter documents an interest in Brontë's careful representation of Jane's subjective experience. Lewis's disdain for Jane must have diminished somewhat over time, as did some of his grossest misunderstandings of women more generally. In particular, his friendship with Joy Davidman, to whom he dedicates *Till We Have Faces*, may have been the turning point in his perspective on women—both real and literary—for the depiction of Orual that he distills from Jane is brutally honest, but not contemptuous. Cynthia Linder describes *Jane Eyre* as "a perfect example of the Romantic style of writing" wherein "the character is portrayed from the core of the personality outwards, thus exposing the inner life of the soul and the workings of heart and mind, as well as the external stimuli which evoke these responses" (67); Lewis practices this "Romantic style of writing" in *Till We Have Faces*, focusing on the central, realism of Orual's character and presenting the rest of the story, with its fantastical elements, from Orual's realist(ic) perspective. Orual's narrative, like Jane and Esther's, is a specific incarnation of the Romantic metanarrative in novel form—a *Bildungsroman*.

The concept of *Bildungsromane* as fictional manifestations of the Romantic Metanarrative is not a new idea. Franco Moretti's concept of the *Bildungsroman* suggests that youth constitutes the perfect symbol for modernity—and therefore the ideal hero for its

literature—because of its inherent motion towards becoming, and because of its ability to morph into numberless things as it develops (556). Similarly, Steven Cohan argues that the English novel has an agenda—it seeks to convince readers that the transition from innocence to experience is a good thing, a growth. The way this experience can be construed in a positive light is by emphasizing the insight, understanding, and wisdom that is gained in experience, and casting these qualities as the repair for the alienation of experience. In other words, the desire of innocence is exchanged for understanding, which allows the alienated protagonist to repair relationships back to a prelapsarian state of harmony. Cohan also notes a tension within the novel genre: the realist novel focuses on experience as growth (embodying forward momentum), while the romance encourages backward movement or no movement at all, seeking to return to innocence (and its desires) or to remain in that innocence. According to Cohan, this paradigm can also be thought about as a movement from romance to realism, or from illusion to reality. He admits that "realism—or the novel itself, for that matter—[cannot] be so easily disentangled from the romance form it tries to reject" (8). In this paradigm of romance as innocence and realism as experience, it seems that Lewis believed in a realm of higher innocence for the novelistic form, that realism could relate not only physical, but spiritual reality, with a childlike faith, yet experienced understanding—a polar logic of realism and romance. It naturally follows that Lewis may have interpreted the English novel slightly differently than Cohan, seeing in the female *Bildungsromane* of Jane Eyre and Esther Summerson not simply a rejection of innocence or romance, but a movement from romance, to realism, and finally to a higher form of realist romance, or mythopoeia—embodied in the spiritual and imaginative maturation of the female narrators of these fictions.

Romantic Metanarrative in the *Bildungsromane* of Jane, Esther, and Orual

By comparing the development of Jane Eyre, Esther Summerson, and Orual, it becomes clear that Lewis not only read Brontë and Dickens's fictions within this paradigm, but that he modeled his own heroine's transformation upon these Victorian models of Romantic metanarrative.[60] We will now turn to these three texts—*Jane Eyre*, *Bleak House*, and *Till We Have Faces*—to draw comparisons between the central female characters and their respective journeys from innocence to experience to higher innocence. The result will be a fuller vision of exactly how these Victorian authors are influencing Lewis, how he employs their ideas, characters and approaches to represent a higher innocence in both Orual and her narrative, and how he revises or extends the Romantic metanarrative by diverging from his Victorian predecessors.

Short-Lived Innocence

The innocence of all three protagonists is shattered very early—so early that its existence is more implied than exhibited in the texts. The result is an air of loss, a tragic longing for an elusive, prematurely snuffed innocence. Specifically, all three novels begin with pictures of abused innocence, innocence that is maintained only through ignorance and which is short-lived..

Jane's narrative opens with an implied description of her wretched, orphaned state. She expresses approbation of the "[im]possibility of taking a walk" because it would be an inevitable reminder of her own "physical inferiority" to her cousins, who now "cluster[…] round their mamma" (5). Jane's isolation in the window seat, and the recognition of her difference from her

[60] Colin Manlove notes a common theme in Lewis's work: "dislocation. His characters are constantly having their assumptions about the world widened or reversed" ("Narrative Structures" 258). Arguing that "the stress in all Lewis's novels is on spiritual growth" (263), Manlove recommends that this "journey out of self" helps characters to discover themselves, the "other," and reality itself (265). While he does not identify this journey or growth as characteristically Romantic, Manlove is nevertheless noticing Lewis's central reliance upon the Romantic metanarrative, which is, perhaps, most apparent in *Till We Have Faces*.

cousins demonstrates her endangered innocence. Aunt Reed describes (or, perhaps, prescribes) this lack of innocence by suggesting that Jane is not a natural child. Thus Jane reports:

> She regretted to be under the necessity of keeping me at a distance; but that until she heard from Bessie and could discover by her own observation that I was endeavoring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner—something lighter, franker, more natural, as it were—she really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children. (5)

Aunt Reed's displeasure causes Jane to take the final step towards experience, asking, "What does Bessie say I have done?" (5). Such questioning will inevitably destroy the ignorance of innocence and complete the transition to experience. Indeed, it is this impulse to question and rebuff that drives Jane to attack cousin John, resulting in her banishment to the "red-room," wherein she finally confronts and answers her own questions. Asking herself, "Why could I never please? Why was it useless to try to win any one's favour?" (12), Jane concludes that she is "a strange child" whose orphan status makes her "an uncongenial alien" to the Reeds (13). Her innocence is shattered in the recognition that her aunt "could not love" her (13).

Esther's narrative, of which the first chapter is suggestively titled "A Progress," begins with a short summary of her early life as an orphan in the house of a stern, tyrannical, unloving godmother. Like Jane, Esther's innocence is intact only through her own ignorance—she does not yet know the shameful associations of her birth. This innocence slips quickly away as Esther is driven, like Jane, to ask her godmother, "Why am I so different from other children, and why is it my fault […]?" (17). Esther is told that she is an "unfortunate girl, orphaned and degraded," and that her young life has "a shadow on it" (17-18). Much like Jane, experience for Esther is a revelation of her own unlovability, an ugliness (though figurative) that makes her attractive "to no one on earth" (18).

Oruals begins *Till We Have Faces* with a childhood account similar to that of Jane and Esther. She implies innocence by contrast with her revelations of experience. She writes, "I will begin my writing with the day my mother died and they cut off my hair" (4). Obviously, this recollection of loss—both of mother and hair—represents also the loss of innocence. Like Jane and Esther, Orual is brought up in a place where she is unloved, unwanted, and even abused. Orual is not technically an orphan like Jane and Esther, because she has lost only her mother, but her father effectively orphans her through rejection and neglect. The king desires a son, and therefore despises Orual's existence, referring to her as part of a "plague of girls" (16). Just as Jane overhears the Reed's servants saying, "if she were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that" (21), Orual notices that the palace slaves show her less compassion because of her own ugliness: "As the shears snipped and Redival's curls fell off, the slaves said, 'Oh, what a pity! All the gold gone!' They had not said anything like that while I was being shorn" (*TWHF* 5). Also like Esther and Jane, Orual's last shred of innocence appears to be her ignorance, which is quickly eradicated. When adults make veiled comments about her ugliness, she initially reports, "I didn't understand that, but I knew it was like things I had heard people say of me ever since I could remember" (7). Soon, however, when the King commands that Orual be veiled, she reflects, "I think that was the first time I clearly understood that I am ugly" (*TWHF* 11). Like Jane and Esther, Orual's innocence is short-lived, and experience rushes in on her in the recognition of her own unlovability. For Orual, as for Jane and Esther, ugliness is not only representative of the broken-ness of the world, but of one's own disempowerment and alienation.

Experience: Gazing into the Narrative Mirror

Ugliness and its recognition represent experience for these heroines, which is symbolic of their alienation from others. Although Lewis's marginal commentary on *Jane Eyre* is all but non-

existent, he did own the novel,[61] and his letters reveal multiple re-readings of the book, centered on a special interest in Jane's psychology as an ugly woman. He clearly sees Jane's ugliness and isolation as integral to her character, calling Jane "shy," "little," "mouse-like," and "governessy" (*Collected Letters Vol II* 291), and writing elsewhere to Jill Flewett, "What an excellent Jane you would make—if the dresser could make you plain enough" (April 17, 1946; *Collected Letters Vol II* 706). As ugliness (both literal and figurative) plays an important role for Jane and Esther, it also becomes the central marker of Orual's spiritual state and ongoing transformation.

The narrative result of Jane's and Esther's progression from innocence to experience is a continued forward momentum, a longing to reach beyond experience. Having become aware of their own ugliness (both figurative and literal), both heroines set themselves the task of transcending their undesirability. Jane avows, "if others don't love me, I would rather die than live—I cannot bear to be solitary and hated. […] to gain some real affection […] I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken, or to let a bull toss me, or to stand behind a kicking horse, and let it dash its hoof at my chest" (58-9). In the same vein, Esther twice recalls that her life goal was and is "to do some good to some one, and win some love to myself" (18 and 25). Although Orual makes no overt purpose statement, Lewis clearly internalized Jane and Esther's missions when shaping his heroine, for Orual's desire to be loved is the central driving force behind her actions throughout the story. Thus her greatest sorrow at Psyche's being sacrificed to the God of the Grey Mountain is that, "[t]he parting between her and me seemed to cost her so little" (71). When Psyche asks, "Is the world[…] so much to lose?" (73), Orual feels it like a "stabbing" (74), because she wishes Psyche to love her more than anything, even more

[61] His copy of *Jane Eyre* is among the Wade Center's holdings, but contains very little annotation. Though disappointing, it is unsurprising that Lewis would mark very little in a book that he read purely for pleasure. The fact does not discredit any possible influence which the book may have had on his own work.

than any potential spiritual fulfillment. The major theme of experience, for Orual—as for Jane and Esther—is the desire to be lovable to others.

Because Lewis not only borrows the central growth plot shared by Jane and Esther, but also uses ugliness as a physical metaphor for the alienation of experience, he also takes up a central thematic element from Jane and Esther's writing: the use of mirrors. In the Victorian novels, mirrors represent both the recognition of experience, but also the desire to transcend it, the movement towards higher innocence. The heroine may find reproach in the mirror, seeing her own plainness, and thus her entrapment in experience. On the other hand, mirrors are also given a transformative power, a hint of the supernatural, in which they reflect change, aspiration, and ultimately higher innocence. Jane and Esther both find themselves changed not only in actual mirrors, but in their own reflections in the eyes of others. Furthermore, the texts that these women write become mirrors themselves, transforming the heroine through the reflection of (and on) her own image and story.

Mirrors can be devices of truth-telling—thus John Reed demands that Jane "stand […] out of the way of the mirror" before hurling a book at her head, an action which he wishes to deny later (*Jane Eyre* 8). Along these lines, Jane uses the looking-glass as a means of self-reproach. She punishes herself for her feelings towards Rochester, saying, "Listen, then, Jane Eyre, to your sentence: to-morrow, place the glass before you, and draw in chalk your own picture, faithfully, without softening one defect; omit no harsh line, smooth away no displeasing irregularity; write under it, 'Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain.'" (137). The mirror, in this way, reflects the reality of experience to Jane, by reminding her of her own unlovable plainness.

But mirrors also reveal more than physical reality, or experience, to Jane. As a child contemplating the possible appearance of her dead uncle's spectre, she gazes tremulously at "the dimly gleaming mirror" of the red-room (13), and sees in it a reflection not of her ugliness, but of an otherworldly quality in herself:

> Returning, I had to cross before the looking-glass; my fascinated glance involuntarily explored the depth it revealed. All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and appearing before the eyes of belated travellers. (11)

In this instance the mirror reveals more than reality to Jane. It becomes a "visionary hollow," able to reveal a "depth" in herself. In fact, it is this other-worldly, faerie quality—the potency of her spiritual self—to which Rochester is drawn, and Rochester's love for Jane acts also as a mirror, reflecting a beauty that her physical person does not possess for other eyes. After Rochester's declaration of love, Jane finds that her reflection is transformed:

> While arranging my hair, I looked at my face in the glass, and felt it was no longer plain: there was hope in its aspect and life in its colour; and my eyes seemed as if they had beheld the fount of fruition, and borrowed beams from the lustrous ripple. I had often been unwilling to look at my master, because I feared he could not be pleased at my look; but I was sure I might lift my face to his now, and not cool his affection by its expression. (219)

Jane is beautified by Rochester's love, so that "lift[ing her] face to his" she will find a more beautiful version of herself reflected in his eyes, just as she now finds it in the mirror. Thus, as the novel's end John, the servant, says of Jane, "If she ben't one o' th' handsomest, she's noan faâl and vary good-natured; and I' his een she's fair beautiful, onybody may see that" (383; ["If she isn't one of the handsomest, she's no fool and very good-natured; and in his eyes she's fair beautiful, anybody can see that"]). Rochester's blindness is both literal and symbolic, for it

rejects what the glass tells Jane, instead reflecting the beauty that he sees (or the ugliness that he does not see—being blind) in her. In this way the image and function of the mirror reflects not Jane's experience-stage self, but her present/approaching higher innocence. Rochester's love acts as mirror for Jane, being itself a mirror image of the beautifying, divine love that the marriage sacrament is instituted to reflect.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Jane's narrative itself functions as a mirror. In writing her autobiography, Jane not only views herself realistically, but also meditates (or reflects) on her own growth and transformation—her sanctification.[62] With the exception of the exchange in which Jane views Bertha's "reflection" in her bedroom mirror, the word "reflection" signifies deep thought or meditation in Jane's narrative. "Reflection" on a given person or situation often allows a new insight to Jane, helps her gain perspective, as if the reflection were somehow more potent than observation of the thing itself. Early in the narrative, Jane reports this process: "when my reflections were concluded, and I looked up and found that the afternoon was gone, and evening far advanced, another discovery dawned on me, namely, that in the interval I had undergone a transforming process" (71-2). In this particular instance Jane realizes that she has outgrown Lowood and must continue her journey elsewhere, but the connection between reflection and transformation applies throughout her story, and even to the narrative itself. Just as reflection (that mental mirroring process) transforms and guides Jane's actions throughout the plot, so her larger reflection through narrative writing transforms her by allowing her to transcend experience and draw towards higher innocence. Thus Jane's marriage becomes an

[62] Linder notes this mirror function within the text, although she does not discuss the mirroring role of the narrative itself: "Running parallel with the comments of other characters there is also the mirror device, which Charlotte Brontë has used to give the reader another kind of objective view of Jane. By describing how Jane sees herself in the mirror, she has hit on a method of externalizing Jane's thoughts about herself, and thus the mirror serves to objectify subjective states of mind in an immediate and concrete image" (47). In light of the autobiographical form of the novel, it is technically Jane who employs the "mirror device"; it is a part of her narratorial approach.

aspirational mirror image of the divine unity towards which her entire narrative tends, ending appropriately with St. John's words of "come, Lord Jesus!" (385).[63]

Esther's *Bildungsroman* in *Bleak House* is strikingly similar to Jane's, employing mirrors and the metaphor of reflection in the same manner.[64] Mirrors function for Esther as a medium for self-reproach, a reminder of her humble position, as well as her physical ugliness after her illness.[65] Early in her narrative Esther recalls scolding herself in the mirror for being discontent: "For I naturally said, 'Esther! You to be low-spirited. YOU!' And it really was time to say so, for I— yes, I really did see myself in the glass, almost crying. 'As if you had anything to make you unhappy, instead of everything to make you happy, you ungrateful heart!' said I" (235). Although Esther does not yet admit it, saying only "I was […] rather low-spirited. I don't know why. At least, I don't think I know why. At least, perhaps I do, but I don't think it matters" (235), she is love-sick for Allan Woodcourt and sad because of her own unworthiness of him. She believes herself to be below him in beauty and station, and thus reproaches herself in the looking-glass, forcing herself to see reality, both literally and figuratively. Similarly after her disfiguring illness, and having accepted John Jarndyce's proposal of marriage she writes, "By and by I went to my old glass. My eyes were red and swollen, and I said, 'Oh, Esther, Esther, can that be you!' I am afraid the face in the glass was going to cry again at this reproach, but I held up my finger at it, and it stopped" (611). By looking in the mirror and addressing herself as "my plain dear" (612), Esther simultaneously reminds herself of her physical ugliness and of her societal humility and isolation. She is still mired in experience.

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[63] This transcendence toward higher innocence is possibly what leads Robert Keefe to observe, "*Jane Eyre* represents the culmination of Charlotte Brontë's esthetic victory over death" (96).

[64] Further research is required to establish the actual connection, if any, between *Jane Eyre* and Esther's narrative, and it is outside the purposes of this chapter. Biographer Jane Smiley claims that "Dickens himself never read it," but that those who recommended the first-person style to him probably had (83). It is impossible to imagine that Dickens did not read Brontë's famous novel, or that Brontë's heroine did not exert some influence on Dickens's.

[65] In the case of her physical disfigurement, it is actually the absence of mirrors that reproaches her. She wakes from illness to find "[t]he mirror […] gone from its usual place" (491).

Yet mirrors also function for Esther, as they did for Jane, as reflections of aspiration, of deeper spiritual and emotional truth. Despite the hard truths Esther's mirror tells her, it also reveals hints of higher innocence: "I had occasionally known little momentary glimpses of my own old face to look out upon me from the glass" (822). Similarly, the affection of other people, like Jarndyce, Ada, and Richard, provide reflections of Esther's spiritual worth and beauty. Most significant is the reflective love of Allan Woodcourt. Esther's marriage to Woodcourt, like Jane's marriage to Rochester, serves as a reflection of deeper spiritual unity. In particular, a passage from the narrative's end displays this love as a mirroring of transformation, beautification, and higher innocence:

> "My dear Dame Durden," said Allan, drawing my arm through his, "do you ever look in the glass?"
> "You know I do; you see me do it."
> "And don't you know that you are prettier than you ever were?" (880).

Esther's journey is not one back to innocence, but out of experience towards a higher innocence, for she does not return to her original beauty, but surpasses it. And who better to convey that truth than Allan? For he is the mirror of her true self, the transformed self towards which she progresses.

As in *Jane Eyre*, the narrative itself acts as a mirror, reflecting Esther's real, actual story, yet simultaneously transforming her into a wiser, more beautiful, more empowered, and more unified self. At the beginning of the narrative, Esther writes timidly, saying, "It seems so curious to me to be obliged to write all this about myself! As if this narrative were the narrative of *my* life!" (26). At this early stage, she is similarly timid in viewing herself: "I […] took a peep at my bonnet in the glass to see if it was neat" (29). She is shy of meditating upon herself in the glass, just as she is reticent about focusing on herself in her narrative, because she is stuck in the stage of experience, aware of her own humble origins, her plainness, her general unlovability. By the

end of the narrative, however, she has grown, transcended experience and grasped towards higher innocence. Thus the final image in her narrative is not only Allan's confirmation of her beauty, but her admission that she does frequently look at herself in the mirror. Her writing style has evolved from insecurity to confidence, ending with the suggestive phrase "even supposing—" (880).

Lewis emulates Brontë and Dickens through his use of mirrors as a literal and symbolic device of transformation in *Till We Have Faces*. *Jane Eyre* and *Bleak House* are female *Bildungsromane* in which female narrators employ narrative—cleverly symbolized through the feminine object of the looking-glass—to subvert what Charlotte Mathieson has identified as the "gendered differences" of Victorian mobility, wherein movement is a "naturalized process" only for the male (398). Jane and Esther use their narratives to simultaneously reflect where they have been (literally and metaphorically), and to determine where they might be going. As for Jane and Esther, the mirror serves dual purposes for Orual. On the one hand, it serves as a medium for reproach. While Jane and Esther scold themselves in mirrors, Orual is scolded by others and forced to confront her ugly reflection. On the other hand, however, the mirror is a positive device for the heroine, because it reveals not only Orual's physical state, but also her spiritual state, and therefore reflects her eventual beautification. Finally, Lewis borrows the self-reflective narrative style of *Jane Eyre* and *Bleak House*, transforming Orual through her own narrative-writing experience; the gods hold Orual's narrative up to her as a mirror, and the reflection transforms her. *Till We Have Faces* thus represents a twentieth-century revision of the Victorian realist *Bildungsromane*, specifically echoing the Victorian female's developing narrative subjectivity.

While Jane and Esther use mirrors to scold themselves, others use Orual's reflection to punish and regulate her. The King subjects Orual to public reproach in the palace mirror when she attempts to save Psyche's life by offering herself as a sacrifice to Ungit:

> The King, without a word, came up to me, took me (softly enough) by the wrist and led me the whole length of the room, to where his great mirror hung. [….] Our common mirrors were false and dull; in this you could see your perfect image. As I had never been in the Pillar Room alone, I had never looked in it. He stood me before it and we saw our two selves, side by side.
>
> "Ungit asked for the best in the land as her son's bride," he said. "And you'd give her *that*." He held me there a full minute in silence; perhaps he thought I would weep or turn my eyes away. (*TWHF* 61-2)

The mirror reproaches Orual with a picture of experience, reminding her of her ugliness, her complete lack of power, and the fact that she is desirable to neither man nor god.

Later in life, in a dream, Orual meets the now-long-dead King, who asks her "Who is Ungit?" and leads her across the throne room. She recalls,

> I saw that mirror on the wall, just where it always had been. At the sight of it my terror increased, and I fought with all my strength not to go on. [….] I was not so much dragged as sucked along till we stood right in front of the mirror. And in it I saw him, looking as he had looked that other day when he led me to the mirror long ago.
>
> But my face was the face of Ungit as I had seen it that day in her house.
>
> "Who is Ungit"" asked the King.
>
> "I am Ungit." My voice came wailing out of me[…]. (276).

Ungit is revealed to represent experience itself—the reality of fallen humanity, ugly in sin, and unacceptable to the perfectly harmonious beauty of the divine. Psyche, on the other hand, represents higher innocence by taking on the role of Christ, passing into the world of death in order "to fetch the beauty" that will transform Ungit (now Orual) (306), making her as beautiful as Psyche. Again, in this final transformative moment, the mirror device repeats a final time, casting a transformed reflection of Orual:

> [….]I cast down my eyes.

> Two figures, reflections, their feet to Psyche's feet and mine, stood head downward in the water. But whose were they? Two Psyches, the one clothed, the other naked? Yes, both Psyches, both beautiful (if that mattered now) beyond all imagining, yet not exactly the same.
>
> "You also are Psyche," came a great voice. (307-08)

This, of course, is simply a dream vision, itself no more real than a reflection. When Orual awakes, she is still her own, ugly, and now severely aged and weakened self, yet she rests on the very cusp of the higher innocence reflected in her dream, for she is about to die. Just as Jane's narrative ends with the anticipatory "come, Lord Jesus!" (Brontë 385), and Esther finishes with a forward-looking "even supposing—" (Dickens 880), Orual's final written narrative ends with "I might—" (*TWHF* 308), written at the moment of her death.

Beyond the use of mirrors within the text, Lewis also borrows the larger mirroring structure of *Jane Eyre* and *Bleak House*, employing Orual's narrative as a mirror that first reflects her state of experience, and only then offers a transformed vision of her movement towards higher innocence. In this, Lewis deliberately distinguishes Orual's narrative work from Jane and Esther's. While Jane and Esther realize their own power and higher innocence through the reflective work of writing, Orual must first recognize her own wallowing in experience, before the narrative can reflect transformation for her. She admits her narrative work is the root of her spiritual growth, saying, "What began the change was the very writing itself. Let no one lightly set about such a work" (253). Yet it is not simply the writing that leads to its own transformative conclusion. Unlike Brontë and Dickens, Lewis chooses to give Orual two narratives. The first and primary narrative reflects the stage of experience, while her second narrative reflects higher innocence, detailing the transformation she undergoes after seeing her true reflection in the first narrative.[66] While Jane and Esther discover their significance to

[66] Thus Mara Donaldson reflects, "The centrality of stories in this narrative—written, deconstructed and rewritten—attests to the power of narrative to transform a life" (163).

themselves, God, and others through writing, Orual sets out to do much the same but ends up learning not to love herself, only to give herself away (which, incidentally, is what Esther and Jane are already doing) before she can once again see herself as lovable.

When Orual actually reads her narrative, her "complaint" (287), to the court of the gods, she sees it and herself more clearly. The narrative casts a realistic reflection of her own selfish, consuming love for Psyche. Even in that reading she recalls that "the voice I read it in was strange to my ears. There was given to me a certainty that this, at last, was my real voice" (292). She now admits that "the complaint was the answer" (294), and asks, "How can [the gods] meet us face to face till we have faces?" (294). In this way, Orual's narrative activity is the mirror that reveals her face, and thus leads her towards transformation and higher innocence.

Higher Innocence Through Polarity: Beauty as Balance

Jane's, Esther's and Orual's stories depict higher innocence through the realization of beauty, or being the object of love, whether human or divine. This exterior beauty, however, is indicative of a much more complex internal transformation in the heroine. Real beauty is seen to be more than subjective perception, to be something essential to the heroine. The beauty that Jane, Esther, and Orual attain within themselves is a personal symmetry, a wholeness, a harmony; in particular, all three heroines experience higher innocence as a form of Coleridgean polarity. Jane, Esther, and therefore also Orual, reach a polar logic between reason and passion (alternately understood as a unity between the material and the spiritual, reason and imagination, realism and fantasy, or truth and beauty—I will use these terms somewhat interchangeably, but am always referring to this same central polarity). Lewis has a strong, life-long "awareness of how spiritual and material realities co-inhere" (Carnell 117), and it comes as no surprise that he would mimic the work of Victorian writers who similarly incarnate this co-inherence in their work.

Jane Eyre is arguably a novel about the tension between material and spiritual reality, reason and passion.[67] Jane is a clever, passionate and imaginative child, seeing in John Reed "a tyrant: a murderer" and flying at him in "a picture of passion" (9). But Jane is also a Christian, and must rule her life by the dictates of Biblical law and sound reason. Jane's journey and transformation is therefore more than a love story; it is the story of Jane's learning to balance the two conflicting tendencies in her soul, and thus of her movement towards a unified self, a higher innocence. Most of the characters in *Jane Eyre* serve as warnings against the rule of reason or passion, or as models for their reconciliation. Thus, Mr. Brocklehurst and St. John Rivers represent the tyrannical rule of reason, Bertha Mason represents the ultimate rule of passion,[68] and Helen Burns provides a picture of higher innocence by balancing her passionate intellect with a simple, reasonable faith.

When Jane attests, "I felt that Helen Burns considered things by a light invisible to my eyes" (47), she refers to Helen's higher innocence. Helen embodies the unity of passion and reason as well as the spiritual and material, so that she can see the material world through spiritual eyes and "live in calm, looking to the end" (50). Helen's constant reference to death is more than a morbid fixation brought on by her illness and impending decease; instead, Helen's polar logic views the material world as only half of reality, mingled in perfect unity with the spiritual world. She critiques Jane:

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[67] This argument provides the foundation for many studies of *Jane Eyre*. For a brief summary, see Nicholas Johnson.

[68] Of St. John and Bertha, Marianne Thormählen writes:

> The black-haired, vile-looking monster incarcerated in the top storey at Thornfield, a personification of unreason and animality, is at one extreme in the novel's thorough-going tension between reason and feeling; at the other we find the handsome, fair-haired parson who rules his household with quiet sternness and is a self-avowed champion of reason. It is odd that the pair of opposites does not seem to have been perceived as such. The hero of the novel is tricked into marrying the former, and but for Divine intervention the heroine would have committed herself for life to the latter. In both cases, physical and spiritual death loomed as the consequences of these acts of folly. (Thormählen 205)

> Hush, Jane! you think too much of the love of human beings, you are too impulsive, too vehement: the sovereign hand that created your frame, and put life into it, has provided you with other resources than your feeble self, or than creatures feeble as you. Besides this earth, and besides the race of men, there is an invisible world and a kingdom of spirits: that world is round us, for it is everywhere; and those spirits watch us, for they are commissioned to guard us; and if we were dying in pain and shame, if scorn smote us on all sides, and hatred crushed us, angels see our tortures, recognize our innocence (if innocent we be […]), and God waits only the separation of spirit from flesh to crown us with a full reward. Why, then, should we ever sink overwhelmed with distress, when life is so soon over, and death is so certain an entrance to happiness—to glory? (59)

By recognizing the unity of the spiritual and material (the co-existence of the visible and "invisible world"), Helen both demonstrates and anticipates higher innocence. Similarly, she demonstrates the unity between these worlds by recognizing human love as a material manifestation of spiritual divine love, and not to be valued purely on its own merit.

This relationship between human and divine love, of course, will become the central theme of Jane's growth. Cynthia Linder explains the message of *Jane Eyre* thus: "Romantic love is an element in true Christian love, and that it is natural to man to aspire to both the natural and the supernatural states of love" (59). Jane must learn to appreciate Rochester's love as a manifestation of the greater reality of God's love. In Charlotte Brontë's fiction, "true love is never allowed to fructify unless there is religious harmony between the parties" (Thormählen 57). Rochester and Jane do not reunite until they recognize first and foremost the love between creature and creator. Therefore, Jane's eventual union with Rochester is not so much a story of human love as of divine love, for only after they have each committed themselves to God are they (re)united. In the novel's climax Jane and Rochester communicate across time and space by supernatural means, but this occurs only after Jane has "entreated of Heaven" to "show [her] the path!" (357), and Rochester has not only "acknowledge[d] the hand of God" in his life, but "supplicated God" to enact His will (380). Jane's marriage becomes the conclusion of her story

only insomuch as its divine sanction symbolizes her own movement towards higher innocence. As the material symbol of spiritual union, her marriage is a symptom of her transformation, rather than its culmination. Thus the "now and not yet" paradox comes into play, for Jane's higher innocence is both manifest in her marriage, yet simultaneously anticipated through her parting quotation of St. John's "come, Lord Jesus!"

The fact that *Jane Eyre* closes not with Jane's, but with St. John's words is a topic of much scholarly discontent and debate. Jerome Beaty famously argues that the novel's ending solidifies *Jane Eyre* as "an unresolved dialogue between [Jane's] values" and "St. John's way" (Beaty 503). In response, Thormählen suggests that it provides structural balance: "The ending of *Jane Eyre* is not a closure so much as a balancing of the book, which leaves the reader to contemplate two very dissimilar patterns of human endeavor under the Heaven to which both assign ultimate power. It does not seem necessary to prefer one to the other or to pronounce a verdict on either" (219). One might push Thormählen's argument further, and say that the reader is invited not only to withhold preference or judgment, but to embrace both patterns equally and fully, to recognize in Jane's domestic desires and St. John's Heavenly ones a unity of course and purpose; both grasp towards higher innocence. In this way, the novel's ending embodies its central polar logic.[69]

Like Jane, Esther's narrative is also characterized by a dialectic and potential synthesis between reason and imagination, depicted through the contemporary struggle between Puritan (reason-based) and Romantic (imagination-based) child-rearing methods. The mind and narrative of Esther Summerson have been the focus of much critical attention. In particular, scholars have

[69] It is important to note that, like Jane, St. John has been transformed by his life experience, and he has undergone a similar coming-of-age, though off-stage. While he once lusted after earthly greatness (only poorly concealed under a façade of Christian rhetoric), the St. John at the end of the novel thirsts for higher things, recognizing the prominence of spiritual reality in addition to material reality.

frequently analyzed Esther as an object of psychological interest, and as an example of the trauma and neglect of Victorian child-rearing culture.[70] In *Narratives of Child Neglect in Romantic and Victorian Culture* (2012), Galia Benziman helpfully posits the coexistence of—or dialectic between—Puritan and Romantic child-rearing notions as a definitive characteristic of Victorian culture and literature,[71] and admits that "most […] readings [of Dickens] share […] the view that [his] work reveals an ambivalent, inconsistent, or at least complex social stance, somewhere in between political subversion and a reinforcement of bourgeois morality" (146). Indeed, many critics have similar notions of Dickens's fiction as a battleground between contrasting ideas, even applying this tension specifically to Esther's artistic and psychological development.[72] The critical consensus suggests that we may constructively view Dickens's fiction, and *Bleak House* in particular, as a space in which the novelist attempts, whether successfully or not, to reach synthesis between his own warring ideologies and the warring ideologies of his day.

Scholars have supposed Dickens to be an upholder of empathic, or Romantic, child-rearing methods, and he at first appears in *Bleak House* to be consciously depicting the evils of regulative, or Puritan, methods. He provides examples of children suffering from these practices, as well as representing the adults that such treatment produces. Most memorable are the cruelty of Esther's legalistic godmother and Mrs. Rachael (whose harsh childhood treatment of Esther we previously discussed), as well as the hideous Smallweed family. The Smallweeds are depicted as a typical regulative family, for "Judy [Smallweed] never owned a doll, never heard

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[70] See Benziman, De Stasio, Dever, Jordan, Smith (Grahame), Ostry, and Winslow, to name a few.
[71] I am very indebted to Benziman for her notion of this dialectic tension, and for the terminology she employs; I borrow her terms for "Puritan," "catechetical," and "regulative" child-rearing, and for the contrasting "Romantic," "liberating," "empathic," and "dialogic" child-rearing.
[72] Joan Winslow identifies what she calls a "division within the person of Esther Summerson" that, she believes, "reflects a larger division found within Dickens' fictional world" (12), and Robert Newsom founds his entire analysis of the novel on Dickens's conflicting desire to show readers "the romantic side of familiar things" (5).

of Cinderella, never played at any game," and "her twin-brother couldn't wind up a top for his life," knowing "no more of Jack the Giant Killer, or of Sinbad the Sailor, than he knows of the people in the stars" (*Bleak House* 290). Obviously, the fact that these young people were raised in a restrictive environment, and not allowed to play or express their creativity resulted in their appearance of "sordid age," their inability to laugh, their familial simian qualities, and ultimately, their inability to function as a productive force in society (290). Elaine Ostry comments thus on the Smallweeds: "Indeed, Dickens suggests that without fancy, the child withers and cannot grow—a decline that jeopardizes the survival of future generations" (61). Such a harsh critique of the Smallweeds, whose habitual denial of expression and imagination obviously represent the traditional Puritan approach to child-rearing, suggests that Dickens aligns himself with the more progressive, Romantic approach, yet this is not entirely true.

Dickens provides equally troubling examples of the Romantic, liberating approach. Richard Carstone, who is unable to settle down to any discipline and eventually dies from disappointment in his Chancery suit, was apparently raised in an empathic atmosphere. Esther reflects on Richard's upbringing, wishing that someone had "directed his character," instead of allowing him to spend all of his time writing verse (167); later she again reflects, "[…]the better I knew him, I still felt more and more, how much it was to be regretted that he had been educated in no habits of application and concentration" (227). Apparently, it is because of Richard's Romantic upbringing and the freedom of expression that such an upbringing granted him that he can waste his life—and Ada's money—in hoping for the "imaginary time" when his Chancery suit will finally be decided (527).

Another cautionary tale against Romantic ideology appears in the figure of Harold Skimpole. Skimpole, whom Esther admits she "could not separate from the idea of a romantic

youth" (*Bleak House* 69), lives his adult life like such a Romantic child, taking no responsibility in financial or social matters. He is reinforced in this lifestyle by the empathic influence of Jarndyce who "never seemed to consider Mr. Skimpole an accountable being" (435), and positively states, "You can't make *him* responsible" (79). Instead of taking financial, social and moral responsibility for his actions, as one would be required to do in a puritanical environment, Skimpole simply dismisses his culpability with the repeated expression, "I am a child" (433). Esther and Ada ask Mr. Jarndyce "what made [Skimpole] such a child," and the answer again has to do with upbringing:

> he is all sentiment, and—and susceptibility, and—and sensibility—and—and imagination. And these qualitites are not regulated in him, somehow. I suppose the people who admired him for them in his youth, attached too much importance to them, and too little to any training that would have balanced and adjusted them; and so he became what he is. (592-93)

Indeed, Skimpole seems to champion an empathic, Rousseauvian upbringing, asserting to Esther that "we are all children of one great mother, Nature" (599). However, this purely Romantic notion that the child can be raised successfully by nature itself is seen, in the novel, to be wholly impracticable and, when attempted, wholly unsuccessful. The end result is that the over-liberated Carstone and Skimpole, just like the over-regulated Smallweeds, fail to assume a productive role in society, instead feeding on society's generosity and misfortunes in leech-fashion.

Esther Summerson represents Benziman's asserted co-existence between these two camps. For instance, despite her own painful experience with the regulative approach, Esther repeatedly wishes that Skimpole and Richard had been more regulated as children. Her wish for this sort of balance between empathic and regulative approaches is reminiscent of the type of co-existence Benziman discusses. Such co-existence, however, is not a recognizable position in Victorian culture. It is a liminal space, a war-zone of constant tension between two extremes, and

in order to inhabit this space, Esther must effectively resist the bad and embrace the good of each side.

Esther's narrative is characterized by an unflinchingly held tension between the warring empathic and regulative ideologies—a polarity that strengthens as her narrative advances. John Jordan observes Esther's narrative as an organized report of "[r]estoring order to broken or chaotic households" (9), and Joan Winslow similarly recommends that Esther enacts a constant repelling of the imagination, in favor of reason (8). Indeed, these interpretations are not without foundation, for Esther does at times show regulative tendencies, scolding herself when she becomes overly emotional or imaginative. For instance, she reprimands herself for becoming too emotional in front of her Guardian: "I said to myself, 'Esther, my dear, you surprise me! This really is not what I expected of you!' and it had such a good effect, that I folded my hands upon my basket and quite recovered myself" (*Bleak House* 94-95). In this moment, Esther recognizes the capacity of losing oneself to a wholly empathic existence, and must therefore check and "recover" herself. Yet, Esther also shows a decided capacity for the imaginative, employing fanciful imagery and symbolism amidst her realistic narration. In effect, Esther does the same thing Robert Newsom attributes to Dickens, "setting up a powerful tension between the fictional (romantic) and the real (familiar) worlds" (6), and "impos[ing] upon the reader a kind of unsettled and unsettling double perspective which requires us to see things as *at once* 'romantic' and 'familiar'" (7). Esther achieves this balance between the realist and the fantastic (or the regulative and the empathic) by engaging in metaphorical and analogic descriptions of every day events and people. She thus describes the Jellyby's nanny as "charg[ing] into the midst of the little family like a dragon" (*Bleak House* 42), a London day as "purblind" and "feebly struggling with the fog" (45), the Dedlock carriage as "like a fairy carriage" (257), and her own illness as a

journey across "a dark lake" (488). Indeed, Esther even occasionally refers to her regulative tendencies as silly, admitting that she is "generally a methodical, old-maidish sort of foolish little person" (92). All of these examples reveal the way in which Esther's narrative enacts a synthesizing work, embracing the best elements of reason *and* passion.

Just as Jane and Esther's coming-of-age narratives follow a trajectory towards higher innocence, so Orual's ultimate transformation appears in her engagement of the Coleridgean Primary Imagination—the realization of polarity between reason and passion, the material and the spiritual, truth and beauty. Lewis embodies a sort of higher innocence in the form of *Till We Have Faces* by unifying Orual's psychological realism with a world of ancient gods and goddesses. Similarly, Orual's higher innocence is demonstrated in her acceptance of material and spiritual reality as equal and intermingling. Of course, she initially resists this polarity: "that moment when I believed I was looking at Psyche's palace and did not see it [….] the horror was the same: a sickening discord, a rasping together of two worlds, like the two bits of a broken bone" (*TWHF* 120). Eventually, however, Orual begins to embrace the union of realism and fantasy, reason and passion, truth and beauty, saying,

> Of the things that followed I cannot at all say whether they were what men call real or what men call dream. And for all I can tell, the only difference is that what many see we call a real thing, and what only one sees we call a dream. But things that many see may have no taste or moment in them at all, and things that are shown only to one may be spears and water-spouts of truth from the very depth of truth. (277)

Jane's spiritual growth depends on her ability to balance and fuse her reason and passions, and Esther must reconcile reason and imagination (as embodied in Puritan and Romantic ideologies and practices). Orual must also approach higher innocence by acknowledging the polar logic between truth and beauty. In fact, Orual's personal chronicle primarily demonstrates her cravings for beauty and truth, which ultimately prove to be shallow manifestations of a sole, fundamental

longing for polarity. The climactic resolution of the novel therefore occurs when Orual enages the Coleridgean primary imagination, apprehending a polarity between truth and beauty, or reason and imagination.

Scholars have long noted the polar logic at the center of *Till We Have Faces*, without attributing it as such. Colin Manlove argues that *Till We Have Faces* is distinct for Lewis, because in it "the total incompatibility between good and bad" collapses ("Narrative Structures" 273). In *Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis* Peter Schakel argues that Lewis was always trying to reconcile reason and imagination, and that only in *Till We Have Faces* (which Schakel believes to be his best work) did he finally do so. He notes the roles of the Fox and Psyche as reason and imagination; he also suggests that Orual represents Lewis, with her devotion to reason, but also in her ultimate recognition of the unity of reason and imagination.

Orual's narrative is divided into two sections. The first is her complaint against the gods—a chronicle of events in which she asks her reader for justification and accuses the gods of silence and injustice. The second is a shorter addition in which she relates a series of realizations and spiritual vision-experiences shortly before her death. While the first is characterized by questions, bitterness, rationalism and discontentment, the second reflects an atmosphere of revelation and resolution. Part I of Orual's manuscript reveals her two deepest desires: beauty and truth. Furthermore, this first installment suggests a relation between truth and beauty, which Orual attempts to define. The final resolution to these desires appears in Part II, with a fusion of truth and beauty in the form of myth and the resulting recognition that Orual's cravings are only empty representations of her innate longing for the divine. This is where Lewis diverges from Dickens and Brontë in his own *Bildungsroman*, for while Jane and Esther's longings are resolved

(at least for the purposes of completing their plots) through marriage, Orual's longings can only be resolved through a higher, more mystical union.

Orual's narrative in Part I of *Till We Have Faces* not only recounts the Cupid and Psyche story in a new way, but also grants the reader a glimpse into Orual's mind. Through the writing of her narrative, she reveals evidence of her subconscious thoughts and desires without explicitly recognizing them. By exploring her actions and motives, therefore, it is possible to determine Orual's primary desires. For all the narrative webs she weaves, Orual ultimately pursues two major concepts: beauty and truth.

In contrast to Jane, who initially errs on the side of passion, reason is the most readily apparent of Orual's desires, and she consciously admits it as an aim. From an early age, she reveals herself to be a pursuer of truth. When a Greek slave, nicknamed the Fox, is brought to the palace, Orual's father assigns him to "see if you can make her wise; it's about all she'll ever be good for" (*TWHF* 7). Perhaps for this reason (for Orual is extremely susceptible to any reference to her physical ugliness—the mark of experience), Orual whole-heartedly applies herself to the lessons of the Fox and learns to employ logic and reason in the determination of truth, a practice which she only intensifies after the sacrifice of Psyche, when she confesses to the reader that "I wanted hard things now, and to pile up knowledge" (184). In fact, it is with this very system of logic that she writes her narrative.

Orual contends from the beginning that she writes her story in the pursuit of truth. Her wish to provide her own version of the story is, in fact, a response to the gods who, ironically, present a version of the story that follows Apuleius's account. She claims that "they have now sent out a lying story in which I was given no riddle to guess, but knew and saw that she was the god's bride, and of my own will destroyed her, and that for jealousy" (*TWHF* 249). Furthermore,

she accuses the gods of shrouding the truth asking, "why must holy places be dark places?" (249), and therefore attempts to present her own, complete record of events. In quest to clear her name, Orual seeks a confirmation of her story's truth through the consensus of her readership, repeatedly entreating affirmation from the "wise Greek whom I look to as my reader and the judge of my cause" (132). Truth, for Orual, is a matter of human understanding and therefore largely determined by human consensus. Therefore, when she argues with Psyche against the existence of the God of the Grey Mountain, her defense is that, "if we could ask every man and woman in Glome, all would say the same. The truth is too clear" (160-61). Thus Orual reveals her deep desire for truth, seeking the confirmation of her account through consensus as well as logic.

In addition to truth, Orual's other obsessive desire is that of beauty. She continually refers to her own ugliness, and although she never explicitly says so, she clearly desires to be beautiful. She despises the beauty of others such as her sister Redival as well as Ansit, the wife of Orual's favorite palace guard. In her half-sister Psyche, however, she finds the closest link to physical beauty that she has ever enjoyed. Psyche is orphaned at the time of her birth, and Orual takes charge of Psyche's care, effectively asserting ownership over the child. In this way, Orual acts as many mothers do, living vicariously through the youth and beauty of their daughters. Orual enjoys Psyche's beauty not as a detached observer, but in a deeper, more involved way. In fact, her association with Psyche's beauty becomes a defining factor of her existence. In her recollection of years past she remembers the passing seasons through the changing silhouette of the orchard trees as their "shadows [flow] water-like over all the hills and valleys of Psyche's body" (*TWHF* 23). Orual recalls the passage of time not as it concerns or affects her, but rather in its physical manifestations through Psyche's beauty, as though this beauty were the very locus

of Orual's existence. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Psyche is given as a sacrifice to the God of the Mountain, Orual follows in hopes of retrieving her body, for Orual's connection to Psyche is a deeply physical one, again confirming a deep-seated desire for beauty.

Ironically, however, Psyche's sacrifice functions as further evidence of Orual's desire for beauty. Although it is unclear in Part I of Orual's narrative (because it is at this point unclear to Orual herself), Part II reveals the very jealousy of the goddess Ungit to be Orual's own. In the first of her visions, when the king shows her the mirror and she confesses, "I am Ungit" (276), she effectively confesses her desire for beauty, for Ungit is famously jealous of Psyche's beauty.

Not only are beauty and truth Orual's two chief desires, but she associates them with each other in her narrative, as though she senses an inherent connection between the two. Neglecting all others, Orual seeks to isolate the Fox and Psyche all to herself and it is fitting that these are her two chosen companions as they are her incarnate sources of truth and beauty. She claims that the years the three spent as an exclusive society were "all springs and summers" (22) and recollects both the teaching of the Fox and Psyche's beauty as record of these happy times. Despite the jealousy with which she possesses both of these individuals, she does not express any jealousy over their relationship with each other but encourages it. This suggests that Orual not only desires truth and beauty individually, but seeks to connect the two. In fact, Orual often attributes the signature characteristic of one individual to the other. She references Psyche's truthfulness as "Virtue herself […] put on a human form" (*TWHF* 26), and even provides the witness of Redival and Psyche herself in defense of this truthfulness. Redival, who envies Psyche not only for her beauty but for her popularity, bitterly admits, "I've been told often enough how truthful you are" (27), and Psyche attests to Orual, "I have never told you a lie in my life" (123). In the Fox, Orual takes note of a special affinity with beautiful verse, recognizing that when he

recites poetry a "real lilt came into his voice and real brightness into his eyes" (9), and that "as he grew older he seemed to be ever less and less a philosopher, and to talk more of eloquence and figures and poetry" (235). By emphasizing truth in Psyche and beauty in the Fox, Orual forges a bridge between not only the two individuals, but also the concepts they embody.

At the end of Part I, however, Orual has failed to *satisfy* either of her desires, much less fuse the two together. Psyche has been exiled by the God of the Mountain and the Fox's reputed wisdom (with which he has always denoted the gods as "folly and lies of poets" [*TWHF* 28]) has been shaken by Orual's first-hand experience with these gods. The fact that Orual begins to wear a veil is itself evidence of her failure as well as her own despair of ever attaining beauty. This physical cover for her homely face represents Orual's understanding that she will never become beautiful and can endeavor only to mask her ugliness. She admits that the veil: "is a sort of treaty made with my ugliness. There had been a time in childhood when I didn't yet know I was ugly. Then there was a time […] when I believed, as girls do […] that I could make it more tolerable [….] Now, I chose to be veiled" (180-81). This narrative device of the veil once again raises a similarity between Orual and her Victorian precursors, for Esther similarly veils her face after the disfigurement of sickness, Lady Dedlock uses a veil to hide her identity, and Jane also utilizes a veil to hide her emotions when returning to Thornfield from the Reeds. Lewis may well have borrowed this veiling device from the Victorians, and just as the veil signifies shame and an attempt at control for the Victorian heroines, it similarly represents Orual's submission to her ugliness, and her desperate wish for control. By the end of Part I, Orual admits defeat in the pursuit of her desires. Instead of achieving the answers she seeks, only more questions emerge, and her first narrative thus ends with the words "no answer" (*TWHF* 250).

Orual's second narrative is an answer to the irresolution of Part I. She begins with the admission of death's approach and a wish to amend her early writing, because, as she says, "I know so much more than I did about the woman who wrote it" (*TWHF* 253). She explains the answers she has received and how they were imparted to her, attributing the means of this enlightenment to her interaction with art or myth. Neuleib affirms that "Orual's lesson is precisely the lesson about the divine nature that only art can illustrate" (47). This use of myth is particularly suitable for Orual, because such art in its very nature employs a fusion of beauty and truth, suggestive of the Hegel's belief that, "the universal need for art […] is man's rational need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again his own self" (Hegel 640). In this way, her narrative art produces not only the mirror reflection of Orual, previsouly discussed, but it also serves to link the concrete and the abstract. Lewis applies these same concepts to the realm of myth, affirming that "in the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction" ("Myth Became Fact" 66). [73] Thus, in the words of Mark Freshwater, "myth serves as a bridge between the infinite realm of Absolute Reality and the finite realm of abstract, propositional truth" (39). This is important for Orual as art employs a physical reality (beauty) to relate abstract concepts (truth), which lead not only to self-realization but ultimately to their divine source.

One way in which myth acts as a source for enlightenment is in Orual's visionary visit to the house of the gods. After leaving the court, the Fox guides Orual into a room with walls that are "painted with stories" (*TWHF* 297). She reflects that "before we came near enough to the picture to understand it, the mere beauty of the coloured wall put that out of my head" (298). Thus, she recognizes and appreciates the great beauty of the paintings, saying, "I think all

[73] In *Poetic Diction* Barfield similarly claims that "Mythology is the ghost of concrete meaning" (92).

mortals would have wondered at these" (297). However, these paintings are more than pretty pictures. They serve to reveal a narrative of all that has happened to Orual and to Psyche, effectively transmitting truth through art-form.[74] "But are these pictures true?" Orual asks, and the Fox responds, "all here's true" (300). Thus, the paintings present a fusion of beauty (physical) and truth (abstract), which guides Orual towards understanding, not because the truth is explained to her, but because the concrete reality of the paintings allows her to experience it for herself.

As Part II nears its end, Orual finds herself reunited at last with Psyche. Just as Jane ends with Rochester, whose love beautifies her, and Woodcourt assures Esther that she is more beautiful than she ever was, Psyche imparts beauty to Orual. This beauty represents higher innocence for Orual, as for Jane and Esther. Yet, in the same way that Jane's marriage is only the "now" and must be combined with the "not yet" of St. John's "Come, Lord Jesus," so Orual immediately finds that she has not yet reached the true source and fulfillment of her longing. She explains:

> I thought I had now come to the highest, and the utmost fulfillment of being which the human soul can contain. But now, what was this? You have seen the torches grow pale when men open the shutters and broad summer morning shines in on the feasting hall? So now. Suddenly, from a strange look in Psyche's face […] or from a deep, doubtful, quaking and surmise in my own heart, I knew that all this had been only a preparation. Some far greater matter was upon us. (*TWHF* 307)

Thus, now that she has obtained her deep desires, Orual quickly recognizes the extension of that longing towards something more substantial. Voices echo through the corridors, heralding the

[74] Although it may not seem, upon first consideration, that paintings could plausibly be considered a form of myth, the fact that these pictures create a world and tell Orual a story suggests that they are, in fact, mythic. Further, I suggest that Lewis considers most forms of visual art to be the products of mythopoesis, as he interjects, "is not the sky itself a myth," in his essay "Myth Became Fact" (67). J. L. Morrow also compellingly suggests that "The act of seeing beauty requires humans to employ the inherent capacity to peer into a deeper reality, whether this power is exercised through the reading of fantasy literature or contemplating a painting or comprehending a flower" (184), effectively equating the reading of myth to the experience of engaging a painting.

entrance of a god, and Orual is both exhilarated and fearful. It is in this moment that she finally receives her revelation. Rather than desiring to be beautiful herself, she has always innately longed for this god, who *is* beauty, and rather than desiring to know the truth, she has desired to know this god, who *is* truth. Only in this understanding can Orual finally recognize that she is "no one," and furthermore that "Psyche herself was, in a manner, no one," that, "if she counted (and oh, gloriously she did) it was for another's sake" (*TWHF* 307). In this way, the divine presence represents the harmony of polarity, as well as being the source of that polarity. In his copy of Coleridge's *The Friend* Lewis underlines the following passage: "O! for one piece of egotism that presents itself under its own honest *bare face* of 'I myself I,' there are fifty that steal out in the mask of *tu-isms* and *ille-isms*!" (emphasis added; Coleridge 13; Marginal Notes). Orual's movement towards polar logic (or higher innocence) requires that she recognize the self-centered nature of all her previous motivations, that she literally and figuratively bare her face. One must conclude that Lewis bore Coleridge in mind when he originally selected *Bareface* as the name for his novel (Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Companion* 252), or when he renamed it to echo Orual's question, "How can [the gods] meet us face to face till we have faces?" (294).[75] As Gunnar Urang suggests, the Orual of Part I "loves the *experiencing* rather than the object *experienced*. [She] seizes on the medium through which the vision comes (Psyche) and loves it in place of, and even against, that which the vision beholds (the god)" (47), while the Orual of Part II finally realizes the source of the beauty she has experienced in Psyche. Finally, after years

[75] Schakel recognizes this, explaining that "[t]he veil gives [Orual] a public identity as the Queen and allows her to bury her personal self: she has no face, no identity, and thus no way to relate genuinely to a god, or to other people. Only when she removes the veil, confronts her true self, and gains a 'face' can she encounter God, without defenses, excuses of pretenses […]. By removing the veil, by dying to self, she becomes able to live to others" (Schakel, *Cambridge Companion* 287).

of pursuit, Orual has both recognized the true object of her desire, as well as the fulfillment of that desire in the anticipation of this divine figure.

In fact, truth and beauty are again linked in this divine encounter. "Will the gods one day grow […] beautiful, Grandfather?" Orual asks the Fox as he guides her through the house of the gods, and in answering he reassures her that "nothing is yet in its true form" (*TWHF* 305). With this statement, the Fox links the growth of beauty with increased reality or truth, suggesting that for something to be true, it will also be beautiful, and vice versa. Another link between these two concepts appears in Orual's reunion with Psyche, wherein she notes that Psyche is more beautiful than ever, yet more herself than ever before, suggesting that the truer a thing is the more beautiful as well. This leads Orual to reflect that she "had never seen a *real* woman before" (306). Psyche's real-ness and beauty, however, is observed to be only a shadow compared with the divine figure, which is reality itself. Higher innocence for Orual, as for Jane and Esther, is characterized by a picture of polarity—a union of the physical and the spiritual, of truth and beauty, of reason and imagination.

In particular, higher innocence culminates for all three heroines in a loving union. For Dickens and Bronte, this union is actual human marriage, which—in the Christian worldviews of these Victorian authors—symbolizes Christ and the Church.[76] Lewis, on the other hand, chooses to cast aside the social symbol for an actual depiction of divine union. As we witnessed in chapter one, Lewis again seeks to further spiritualize the Romantic metanarrative, in this case by exchanging the symbol of human marriage for an actual divine encounter. While it is unclear how closely he perceives himself to be echoing the mingling of divine and human love displayed

[76] The degree to which Dickens and Brontë are deliberately embracing marriage as a Christian symbol is, of course, debatable; however, the very culture of Victorian England that held marriage in such high regard, making it the ideal resolution for any given novel, was certainly rooted in the western, Christian ideas about the sanctity and importance of marriage as a religious sacrament reflecting Christ and his church. The Victorian veneration of marriage was certainly rooted originally in Christian values and significance.

in *Jane Eyre*, he surely considers his depiction of higher innocence as closer to the real thing than Dickens's. He writes to Dom Bede Griffiths in 1954, "I *have* a taste for Dickens but don't think it a low one. He is the great author on mere *affection* […]: only he & Tolstoi […] really deal with it. Of course his error lies in thinking it will do instead of Agape" (*Vol III* 413). Although it seems counterintuitive to the popular portrait of Lewis as allegorist or symbolist, he actually finds the symbol of marriage, which these Victorian authors embrace as the ideal resolution, to be insufficient. Nothing but the thing itself will do in this case—Joy must reach its true conclusion. Orual must reach not simply a symbol of higher innocence, but the actual place "where all the beauty came from" (*TWHF* 75).

Thus *Till We Have Faces* exhibits the deep, shaping influence of Victorian realism on C. S. Lewis as storyteller and mythopoeist. Jane Eyre and Esther Summerson provide the models for Orual, in their psychological realism, the form of their narratives, and in their embodiment of the Romantic metanarrative as *Bildungsroman*. While Lewis diverges from, or builds upon, Brontë and Dickens by making Orual's story more deeply spiritual than Jane or Esther's, Orual's transformative narrative hinges on the same romantic elements as Jane and Esther's. Reading *Till We Have Faces* thus, we must in turn read Lewis himself anew. Although the influence is Romantic at heart—a narrative flowing from Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge into the realist's shaping hands—Lewis nonetheless preserved a foundational commitment to the Victorian novel throughout his life. Despite anything in the Victorian age that may "appall Lewis" (Durie 229), it is in these Victorian texts that he finds higher innocence, Joy, and the inspiration for his greatest novelistic success. Orual, despite her ancient Greek ancestry, has roots in Victorian England, for *Till We Have Faces* is not only a "myth retold" but Miss Eyre and Miss Summerson retold as well.

CHAPTER THREE: "Science Fantasy" as Higher Innocence: Neo-Victorian Genre Blending in The Space Trilogy

At a pivotal moment in the final installment of Lewis's space trilogy, *That Hideous Strength* (1945), Jane Studdock finds herself part of a search party, traipsing across a darkened field in search of a "true myth." Merlin, the wizard of Arthurian legend, has arisen from a long sleep and Jane and her party must recruit him to join in their battle against the diabolical influence of the National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments. Those who oppose the NICE and its menacing scientism are rallying under the orders of their Director, Elwin Ransom, who, it turns out, is the mythic Pendragon of Logres. It is the influence of the Pendragon that has awakened Merlin, and Jane, Dimble and Denniston hope to locate him before the enemy is able to do so. The enthusiasm of their search, however, is tempered somewhat by trepidation:

> The fear which Dimble had felt from the first began to trickle into the minds of the others as they proceeded—like water coming into a ship from a slow leak. They realized that they had not really believed in Merlin till now. [….] The shock was still to take. Out here with only the changing red light ahead and the black all round, one really began to *accept as fact* this tryst with something dead and yet not dead, something dug up, exhumed, from that dark pit of history[…] (229; emphasis added)

This is a strange turn of events for characters and reader alike. The reader, like Jane and her companions, experiences confusion, even fear from the eruption of this mythical figure in the supposedly real world, for *That Hideous Strength* is set not on another planet or in in another world, but in a sleepy British university town. On another level, the reader is shocked by the sudden appearance of Arthurian myth—first in the Pendragon and now in Merlin—in what has heretofore seemed a science fiction series about space adventures. Surely Lewis could have anticipated such disconnect. One must question why he would so deliberately jar the reader.

As the reader's experience aligns with Jane's in this particular scene, it is possible to infer the reader's intended response through that of Jane. In Jane, the jarring realization and imminence of *real* myth leads to philosophical reflection:

> If it had ever occurred to her to question whether all these things might be the reality behind what she had been taught at school as "religion," she had put the thought aside. The distance between these alarming and operative realities and the memory, say, of fat Mrs. Dimble saying her prayers, was too wide. The things belonged, for her, to different worlds. [….] But this time […] the thought would not be put aside. Because, really, it now appeared that almost anything might be true. The world had already turned out to be so very unlike what she had expected. The old ring-fence had been smashed completely. One might be in for anything. Maleldil might be, quite simply and crudely, God. (*THS* 231)

Apparently, the experience of myth "accepted as fact" has shocked Jane into a revelation about the potential reality of Christianity. It has opened her mind to the possibility that "anything might be true," and thereby begun a transformation. The startling appearance of Merlin in twentieth century England has effectively reunited two concepts that were hitherto divided in Jane's experience: reality and the Christian myth—which we might also label empirical, scientific narrative and mythic, or Biblical narrative. This encroachment of myth will slowly ripple through Jane's experience as the novel continues, resolving various philosophical dichotomies.

Clearly, Lewis is up to something. On the surface, the Arthurian mythology in *That Hideous Strength* is startling, frightening, even offensive to the unprepared reader, yet it is this sense of violation that incites Jane's conversion and ultimate renewal. One must necessarily assume that the reader's experience should be the same, that Lewis intentionally interjects this "true myth" into his novel, and his series, with the intention of similarly transforming the novel, the trilogy, and its reader. This point of apparent discord thereby becomes the space trilogy's most integral source of accord, and will become the crux of my argument in this chapter.

While chapter two dealt with Lewis's debt to early and mid-Victorian realism, I will now prove a similar debt to late-Victorian fantasy and speculative fiction in his work. Lewis embodies the same Coleridgean polar logic of form and content discussed in chapters one and two in the space trilogy through the combination of two Victorian genres: speculative fiction and fantasy. Fantasy and science fiction (as it is now more commonly known) represent two strikingly different trajectories in the Victorian imagination— that of supernatural, spiritually-minded Christianity and that of empirical, scientific materialism. By combining the narratives of these diverging genres, Lewis once again engages the Romantic metanarrative, moving through all three books towards higher innocence that is both described *and* embodied in the final book through the concept of Incarnation, or "true myth," as illustrated in the above example of Jane's experience with Merlin. Lewis's work in combining Victorian science fiction and fantasy is integral to his purpose, as he needs to fuse the empiricism of science fiction with the supernatural character of fantasy in order to present the series itself as a sort of factual myth—an embodiment of polarity, and thus higher innocence. For this reason, *That Hideous Strength* is the linchpin of my argument, because it contains the most overt depiction of true myth and thus the consummation towards which the entire trilogy moves. It is also the most appropriate focus of our attention because it has suffered far more critical derision and confusion than *Out of the Silent Planet* or *Perelandra*. By demonstrating exactly why *That Hideous Strength* and its Arthurian mythology is integral to Lewis's romantic vision for the space trilogy, I will also answer questions that have plagued scholars and readers for decades.

That Hideous Strength has engendered much controversy, not simply as a book in isolation, but as the final installment to Lewis's cosmic series. According to Tolkien, it "spoiled" the entire space trilogy (*Letters* 342). While it is true that Tolkien begrudged the influence of

Charles Williams and his "'Arthurian' stuff" on Lewis's work (*Letters* 361),[77] the fact remains that the jarring intrusion of Arthurian mythology into *That Hideous Strength* is one of the commonly cited complaints against the novel. *That Hideous Strength*, with its pre-Christian wizards and mythic British chieftains, seems a strange postlude to *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938) and *Perelandra* (1943).

In *Out of the Silent Planet* Elwin Ransom is kidnapped and taken to Mars, where he escapes his imperialistically-minded kidnappers (the scientist, Weston, and the entrepreneur, Devine). Ransom befriends the planets diverse inhabitants, and discovers that they are ruled and protected by a powerful, beneficent Oyarsa—an angelic being. Through his interactions on Mars, or Malacandra, Ransom also learns that earth once enjoyed its own Oyarsa, yet has become spiritually silent, ruled by an evil power, and cut off from the glorious communion of the rest of the cosmos. *Perelandra* details a similar space voyage, this time to Venus. Ransom is sent on mission by the Oyarsa of Malacandra to protect Venus from the evil influence of the now demonically possessed Weston, with whom he struggles both rhetorically and physically, preserving the unfallen planet from taint. Unlike the other two stories, *The Hideous Strength* does not take Ransom as its central character and involves no space travel at all. Instead, it is a more novelistic account of the dual narratives of Jane and Mark Studdock—characters yet unknown to the reader—who find themselves caught up in a struggle between angelic and demonic forces warring over earth. Even more disconcerting, this story involves a transfigured Ransom, who is now supposed to be the Kingfisher of Arthurian legend, and a re-awakened

[77] C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams began their acquaintance in 1936 when Lewis wrote a letter admiring Williams's novel *The Place of the Lion* (1931)—Lewis calls the novel "one of the major literary events of my life" (*Vol. II* 183). Lewis was immediately charmed by Williams upon meeting him and became increasingly influenced by his taste and opinions until Williams's premature death in 1945. Williams was particularly interested in Arthurian legend and wrote a poem cycle called *Taliesin through Logres* (1938), which the character Camilla reads in *That Hideous Strength*. Tolkien and Lewis were inseparable friends, but their friendship dwindled in later life and Tolkien claimed, "We were first separated by the sudden apparition of Charles Williams" (*Letters* 341).

Merlin, who performs pre-Christian, druidical magic in the fight against the demonic forces of the NICE. The disparities between the first two books and the third book are clear. Thus, while Tolkien admits that *That Hideous Strength* is "good […] in and of itself" (342), he and numerous readers have felt that this sudden insertion of mythological characters and concepts, among other stylistic and formal discontinuities, breaks the organicism of the trilogy as a whole by veering off too drastically from the spirit (and, perhaps, genre) of the series.

George Orwell, in an oft-quoted review from the *Manchester Evening News* (16 August 1945), wrote that *That Hideous Strength* "would probably have been a better book if the magical element had been left out," recommending that such "miraculous happenings […] are not integral to it" (Orwell). Orwell finds it unfortunate that "the supernatural keeps breaking in," and concludes that only "by the [assumedly poor] standard of the novels appearing nowadays" is it a "book worth reading" (Orwell). Science fiction critics from Orwell's day into our own have tended to agree, giving *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra* a patronizing nod, while rejecting *That Hideous Strength* completely.

While critics who are less genial to Lewis's agenda tend to tolerate the first two novels and decry the third, others show a general charity to Lewis's tripartite structure and assume the organicism of the series. These critics—such as Humphrey Carpenter, Wayne Shumaker, and David Downing—fail, however, to defend or elaborate on this cohesion, largely avoiding any discussion of the novel's striking differences from the first two. Carpenter notes that *That Hideous Strength* was "very different in character" from the other two novels, and explains this by postulating that it was "a celebration of everything that had happened in [Lewis's] life up to now" (198). While this could be argued, it hardly defends the novel's place in the cosmic trilogy or makes sense of the book's surprising differences.

More promising is Shumaker's purported defense of the trilogy's structural wholeness. Shumaker argues that "all three volumes were the products of a single creative urge" (51), and suggests that the three novels were three separate stages (Mars, Venus and Earth) on which Lewis made "the same point three times and yet, since the volumes were to be organically connected, once only on three levels" (54). The point Lewis makes, according to Shumaker, is "the placing of Earthly experience in a context of cosmic purpose" (54), and he defends this claim with a very thorough treatment of *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*. Yet Shumaker devotes only one paragraph of his argument to *That Hideous Strength*, ultimately characterizing it as an exception to the "steadily credible" nature of the series (63).

Even Downing gives only moderate praise to *That Hideous Strength*, focusing more on its biographical significance than its artistic wholeness within the trilogy. He mounts an implicit defense of the series' organicism, saying, "Lewis's strategy is to make readers sense that his fantasy world is more real than they might have supposed—and that their 'real world' is more filled with the fantastic than they might have supposed," and arguing that each book in the series makes this progressively more explicit (*Planets in Peril* 47). In his treatment of *That Hideous Strength*, however, he admits that perhaps Lewis tried to do too much in the book. While these renowned Lewis experts have taken important steps towards a unified vision of the trilogy, the task remains incomplete.

In hopes of completing such a critical task, this chapter will suggest that the seemingly problematic characteristics of *That Hideous Strength* are, in fact, the most important points of contact with Lewis's vision not only for the novel in itself, but for the series as an organic whole. Under this assumption the formal and stylistic discontinuities between *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength* become part and parcel of Lewis's overarching image of Incarnation—

Incarnation, for Lewis, being the intrusion of myth into the empirical world, the ultimate manifestation of Coleridgean polarity. In order to fully comprehend the significance of Lewis's formal structure, however, one must first understand the constellating genres at work within the interplanetary novels. Although Lewis seemingly enters into the community of science fiction with *Out of the Silent Planet*, he brings with him deep roots in fantasy literature. The result, I suggest, is a deliberate fusion of scientific narrative, characteristic of the early science fiction of H. G. Wells (1866-1946), and spiritual narrative, akin to George MacDonald's fantasy stories (1824-1905). By blending the empirical nature of science fiction with the mythic elements of fantasy, Lewis practices the same jarring, incarnational fusion of myth and reality via genre as he does within the narrative through the appearance of Merlin and the Kingfisher. In this blending, Lewis practices a neo-Victorian innovation, and the Incarnational theme he foregrounds through the fusion of spiritual and material narratives grows from what he learned from his Romantic and Victorian predecessors.

David Downing notes that Lewis "seemed to view the Ransom books as a deliberate fusion of two genres" ("Science Fiction" 299), but there has been no discussion, to date, on the neo-Victorian nature of this fusion. Nonetheless, Lewis's "Science Fantasy"—as he dubs the cosmic trilogy—has its roots in Victorian genre, texts, and practices. In the sense that Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn identify the Neo-Victorian as any work that is "*self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*" (4), the series is obviously neo-Victorian, as its first installment revises H. G. Wells's *First Men in the Moon*.[78] But the association does not stop here. Not only are H. G. Wells and George MacDonald the most significant influences on the trilogy, as I will argue, but in characterizing fantasy and science fiction as representatives of competing spiritual (Biblical)

[78] Both Lewis's preface and Downing's *Planets in Peril* thoroughly corroborate this fact.

and scientific (evolutionary or simply empirical) narratives, Lewis draws from a philosophical divide that finds its birth in Victorian thought and has endured for centuries as a popular emblem of Victorian culture. Furthermore, Lewis enacts a Victorian practice—most notably that of Charles Kingsley—by intermingling these narratives. Even Lewis's conception of the Incarnation as "true myth" is a revision of MacDonald's Victorian Romanticism and the Coleridgean concept of polarity, as discussed in chapters one and two. Overall, Lewis's "Science Fantasy" genre is undoubtedly neo-Victorian in so much as it, in the words of Elsie Michie, "meditate[s] on [its] relation to […] Victorian precursors" (170).[79]

The Victorian Dilemma: Scientific Versus Biblical Narrative

The Victorian era is widely acknowledged in popular and critical imagination as a time of scientific progress and corresponding religious upheaval. In *Father and Son* (1907) Edmund Gosse corroborates such a picture of the Victorian crisis of faith. Gosse's father is an eminent scientist, yet also an unwaveringly religious man. In the wake of Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) and Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), the elder Gosse confronts a terrible dilemma: he must choose between two of the things he holds most dear—science and religion. Specifically, Edmund's father must choose between the contradictory creation narratives of scripture and evolutionary theory, as the advent of evolutionary science seems to have made religion and science mutually exclusive. At this important moment, Edmund reports that his father "allowed the turbid volume of superstition to drown the delicate stream of reason" (61). What followed was the publication of Philip Henry Gosse's *Omphalos*, in which he asserted a universally scorned "appearance of age" theory of geology. Edmund suggests that this

[79] In "Kidnapped Romance: From Walter Scott to C. S. Lewis" Michie argues that Lewis appropriates and revises a Victorian theme of children's literature: kidnapping. Michie also notes the significance of Elwin *Ransom* as another instance of this kidnapping theme, and as a connection to the work of Christ as a ransom for sinners.

marked the end of his father's scientific reputation, and the decline of a fading generation of Victorian Christianity. Just as Gosse views his autobiography as the "clash of two temperaments" in which his own asserted individuality emerges victorious, so he posits Victorian faith and science as adversaries in a struggle ultimately won by science (186).

Gosse's account of these opposing narratives has remained a part of popular Victorian mythology for decades, yet recent scholarship has introduced two important innovations. First, it has shown that Christianity was not utterly defeated in Victorian England, as Gosse's account might suggest. The work of critics including Christine Kreuger, Charles LaPorte, Stephen Prickett and Kirstie Blair unites in one argument: Christianity was far from dead in Victorian culture, and still enjoyed wide influence in the arts. Second, recent scholarship has suggested that many Victorians saw evolutionary theory and Biblical theology as compatible. Although, as Gillian Beer notes in *Darwin's Plots*, the evolutionary narrative became a prominent influence on literary form in the second half of the 19th century, it did not necessarily do so to the exclusion of Christian narrative. Blair is quick to point out that, "Where there is form, there is faith" (2), and that "deliberately to approach literary forms—especially Victorian literary forms—with the view that they are disruptive and disorderly forces is again to value doubt over faith, and to take the exception for the rule" (15). Both Beer and Blair are, in a manner, correct: evolutionary and Biblical narrative both thrived in Victorian art, and rather than seeing religious and secular narratives as incompatible, many 19th century authors integrated both into their work. Notable Victorians, like George Eliot and Charles Kingsley, consciously combined narratives of belief with those of doubt, Biblical narratives with scientific ones.

Despite much co-mingling, however, the fact remains that Biblical and evolutionary narrative represented two separate and sometimes oppositional mythologies for Victorians.[80] Although the two were often blended in Victorian poetic and novelistic practice, these opposing narratives found their separate embodiments in two Victorian genres: fantasy and science fiction. Both genres are characterized by fantastic events and other worlds, but fantasy traditionally justifies its unrealistic elements through supernatural explanations, or else makes no explanation at all. Science fiction, on the other hand, employs science to explain its more unrealistic elements. In the words of Robert Philmus, "science fiction differs from other kinds of fantasy by virtue of the more or less scientific basis, real or imaginary, theoretical or technological, on which the writer predicates a fantastic state of affairs" (2). Science fiction, therefore, represents an increasing interest in scientific explanations, particularly those offered by evolutionary theory, while fantasy simply depends upon the faith of the reader and the fantasist's skill in convincing.

Perhaps the two most important representatives of these respective genres—and certainly the two most significant influences on C. S. Lewis's conceptions of those genres—are George MacDonald (fantasist and pastor) and H. G. Wells (father of modern science fiction). These two authors not only embody Victorian ideas about their respective genres, employing their characteristic narratives of faith and science, but their work plays an integral role in Lewis's personal and literary development, so that these Victorian genres actually embed themselves into Lewis's personal narrative, to resurface in his writing.

[80] In discussing "scientific mythology" throughout this chapter, I am not proposing that science is, itself, mythological, but rather referring to the way in which scientific theory (particularly that of evolution) provided a competing narrative to that of Christianity. While true science is not a narrative, but a collection of data, Gillian Beer demonstrates the way in which evolutionary theory became a mythological narrative, with which many Victorians replaced the mythological creation narrative of scripture. Science is not, therefore, mythological in nature, but can become mythological when utilized to give meaning to the world and man's existence in that world.

George MacDonald: Fantasy as Spiritual Journey and Myth Become Fact

Perhaps no author had a more profound effect on C. S. Lewis than George MacDonald, and it is certainly MacDonald's fantasy that taught Lewis the characteristic spirituality of the genre, particularly through his Christianization of Romantic ideas. MacDonald's fantasies employ Romantic, yet simultaneously Biblical, metanarrative in both form and content. They replicate the scale and trajectory of scripture in their mythopoeic nature—creating and inhabiting worlds, and more often than not, redeeming these worlds from fallen-ness. *Phantastes*, *Lilith*, and the *Curdie* books all depict kingdoms and individuals in need of redemption, and then set out to redeem them. Additionally, MacDonald's fairylands are often landscapes that the perspective character—if not a first-person narrator—must learn to "believe" in, echoing the continual scriptural call for faith and the Biblical centrality of story itself. In George MacDonald we find a model for the two most important concepts in Lewis's space trilogy: an infusion of traditional Romantic metanarrative with Biblical/spiritual myth, and the mythopoeic concept of "true myth."[81]

Particularly important to MacDonald's influence on Lewis, and on the Space Trilogy, is the Victorian fantasist's reliance on the Romantic metanarrative. Although the Romantic metanarrative runs through all of MacDonald's work, "The Golden Key" (1867) is an ideal example of this Romantic structuring, as it closely and clearly echoes Blake's conception of innocence, experience, and higher innocence. Tangle and Mossy reflect a Blakean image of innocence at the story's beginning, both embracing a naïve belief in fairy tales, and Tangle also displays the vulnerability of the innocent, being "neglected," "untidy," and "sometimes ill-used"

[81] McGillis has clearly demonstrated how "MacDonald is indeed a belated Romantic" and how "he re-Christianizes Romanticism" ("Childhood and Growth" 150). Colin Manlove has suggested that "apart from *The Pilgrim's Regress*, there is very little in Lewis' fiction that may be indebted to MacDonald's" ("Parent or Associate" 232). Manlove makes this argument with the assumption that Lewis, and his fellow Inklings, were more deeply interested in physical realities, while MacDonald was invested almost completely in spiritual ones. I would, of course, suggest that this is exactly how MacDonald influences Lewis, through spiritual narrative, which he then fuses with more physically-invested narratives.

(254). While they begin their quest for the golden key out of innocent wonder and curiosity, they find that experience is a necessary step towards their goal. MacDonald's conception of experience is, like Blake's, a recognition of lack and a discontent with the world, for the children sit in a field full of shadows and realize that they cannot remain in the field, but "*must* find the country from which the shadows come" (280). By the time they have crossed the field "Mossy's hair was streaked with grey, and Tangle had got wrinkles on her forehead" (281), symbolizing their experience. Higher innocence in MacDonald's fairy tale is clearly linked to dying to the world, and waking to a better one, depicted as growing younger. When the Old Man asks Mossy, "is [death] good?" Mossy answers, "It is good, […] it is better than life" (302). The Old Man corrects him, saying, "it is only more life" (302). Furthermore, the process towards "more life" is depicted as growing younger, for the children encounter a number of sages along their journey, and the older these men are, the younger they appear, so that the oldest and final man is "a little naked child" (295). The tale ends with hints of higher innocence in the promise that Tangle and Mossy "knew that they were going up to the country whence the shadows fall. And by this time I think they must have got there" (308).

Clearly Lewis received the Romantic metanarrative in some portion through MacDonald, as he often identifies MacDonald's fairy tales as a major influence. MacDonald first appears in Lewis's letters in 1916, when a young, non-Christian Lewis reports to Greeves that he has just discovered *Phantastes*. "[Y]ou simply MUST get this at once," writes Lewis, and what follows is a multi-year correspondence between the two friends as they read their way through MacDonald's entire fictional oeuvre (*Vol. I* 170). In 1930 a newly-converted Lewis writes to Arthur, "I know nothing that gives me such a feeling of spiritual healing, of being washed, as to read George Macdonald" (*Vol. I* 936), and admits to a 1939 correspondent, "*Phantastes* & *Lilith*

I found endlessly attractive, and full of what I felt to be holiness before I really knew that it was" (*Vol. II* 263). Although Lewis identifies *Phantastes* as the MacDonald novel which *first* influenced him, he also repeatedly identifies *Lilith* as one of MacDonald's masterpieces.

Lilith (1895), a story in which the protagonist—a Mr. Vane—travels to a parallel universe in order to discover spiritual truth, displays some of the concepts which most influenced Lewis and informed his beloved concepts of "myth" and "sub-creation." In *Lilith* God is primarily identified and described as a creator and origin of all things, and this is a concept which Lewis absorbs and integrates into the center of his own philosophy of creation: the belief that man is a natural myth creator, because he instinctually mimics the work of his own creator, and thereby creates myths which echo the "true myth." Furthermore, MacDonald draws Lilith—the ultimate failed mother figure—into this creation motif, and Lewis accordingly weaves similar themes of motherhood and creation into his central female characters.

In *Lilith*, the book-smart yet naive Mr. Vane learns that the source and destination of his identity and purpose is the creator from whence he came. Early on Mr. Raven (who acts initially as guide to the alternate world) tells Vane that, "When a heart is really alive, then it is able to think live things. There is one heart all whose thoughts are strong, happy creatures, and whose very dreams are lives" (*Lilith* 18-19). This is the first of many allusions to the creative power of God, the one true life which gives birth to all life. Thus, when Vane meets Lilith—the failed first wife of Adam—she is identified as both dead and a failed creator, lacking the life of the origin of all life. Lilith, who bucks the perfect creation order by rebelling against God and Adam, therefore becomes figuratively barren, uncreative. The Green Lady of *Perelandra* is a clear foil to MacDonald's depiction of Lilith, as she is in perfect obedience to Maleldil and thus in harmony with creation. In *That Hideous Stength,* on the other hand, Jane is in danger of

following Lilith, as seen in the barrenness of her doctoral thesis on Donne. Jane even foresees, and then reads a passage contrasting the "vanity of Lilith" with the "obedience of Eve" (61). Because she is following the path of MacDonald's Lilith, Jane is unproductive in every sense.

Another aspect of this creation motif is the prevalence of childbirth in Lilith's defeat, and therefore her redemption. The woman from Bulika tells Vane, "There is an old prophecy that a child will be the death of her. That is why she will listen to no offer of marriage, they say" (89). Yet Adam later states that "even Lilith shall be saved by her childbearing" (116). In MacDonald's world, therefore, the will of God is enacted through human procreation—itself another form of subcreation, which Lilith mistakes as her own creation. This creative motif in MacDonald is again echoed by Lewis in both *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*. While the Lady of Perelandra is the "Great Mother" of her world because of her harmonic place within Maleldil's creation (*Perelandra* 152), Jane is condemned by Merlin as "the falsest lady" because of her rebellion against "the purpose of God" through willful barrenness (*THS* 275-76). Indeed, like Lilith, having a child will signal the defeat of Jane's fierce independence, but also her salvation, for it is her child "by whom the enemies [shall be] put out of Logres for a thousand years" (276). Ultimately, Jane, like MacDonald's Lilith, will find true freedom only in obedience, and the sub-creation associated with obedient recognition of the one true creator.[82]

Lilith is harshly rebuked for her denial of God as creator and source of all creation. Her adamant assertion that, "Another shall not make me" is the most fundamental and evil notion possible in the created thing, because it is a denial of the "light that goes deeper than the will" (156). Lilith's creation of herself is a misguided one, because she does not understand the true

[82] It is impossible to ignore the problematic tone in which Lewis and MacDonald impose obedience upon their female characters. Certainly both men suffered from the accepted prejudicial thinking of their respective historical moments; yet it is important in both cases to note that these female characters are exhorted towards ultimate submission not to a husband or father, but to God himself—something that is similarly required of male characters.

source and power of the creative will. Her self-creation has deformed her, so that she must give herself over to be "remade" (158). Similarly Jane must have her own "world […] unmade" (*THS* 140), and her redemption is then signaled by "a resolution to give Mark much more than she had ever given him before, and a feeling that in so doing she would be really giving it to the Director," and, of course, in turn to Maleldil—to God (148). In redeeming Lilith through her acceptance of obligation to her true creator, MacDonald upholds God as the ultimate creative force, or the "true myth," from which all myth flows and towards which all myth leads.

Lewis relates that he was always, from an early age, deeply impacted by mythology, and his experience with MacDonald's work was no different. In his introduction to *Lilith*, Lewis extols MacDonald as master of the "mythopoeic art" (xi). He notes that while, "In poetry the words are the body and the 'theme' or 'content' is the soul […] in myth the imagined events are the body and something inexpressible in the soul" (x), and suggests that while MacDonald sometimes lacked skill in his craft as a weaver of words, it is the inexpressible soul of his created worlds that is important. Rather than the words, the story or myth takes precedence and transforms the reader, so that MacDonald's fiction was able "to convert, even to baptize [Lewis's] imagination," even when "Nothing was at that time further from [his] thoughts than Christianity" (xi). Later in life Lewis realized that the "quality which had enchanted me in his imaginative works turned out to be the quality of the real universe, the divine, magical, terrifying and ecstatic reality in which we all live" (xii). Just as the world explored by Mr. Vane is full of creatures and their creations which all must finally return to their divine creator and origin, Lewis came to believe that all man-made myth is a mere reflection or shadow of the "true myth." Indeed, it was this very concept that helped to bring about Lewis's conversion to Christianity, facilitated predominantly through Tolkien. Lewis describes these ideas in a letter to Greeves:

> Now what Dyson[83] and Tolkien showed me was this: […] in Pagan stories I was prepared to feel the myth as profound and suggestive of meaning beyond my grasp even tho' I could not say in cold prose 'what it meant'.
>
> Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that *it really happened*: 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. (*Vol. I* 977)

The concept of mythopoeia, as Lewis understood and came to believe it, was that, in Tolkien's words, "in practicing 'mythopoeia' […] a storyteller, or 'sub-creator' […] is actually fulfilling God's purpose, and reflecting a splintered fragment of the true light" ("On Fairy Stories" 43). In this way, writers of myth may actually reflect truth because they are reflecting God's very action, which *is* truth, just as MacDonald's creatures who are "alive" are "able to think live things" (*Lilith* 18). Although these ideas are largely associated with Tolkien and others, Lewis first encountered them and was captured by them in MacDonald. As Kirsten Johnson suggests,

> Among the insights Lewis discovered as he re-read (and well-marked) MacDonald's books were a number of important touch-points that Lewis scholars have often associated with other influences. Yet, it was not just J. R. R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson who taught Lewis that mythic Truth was part of the Deeper Magic, nor was it only Owen Barfield who taught him of 'ancient semantic unities.' Lewis scholars frequently—and rightly—refer to these influences; however, it is mostly overlooked that Lewis had been undergoing a study of these concepts (consciously or not) for many years. The seeds had been repeatedly sown by [MacDonald]. (46)

Under the tutelage of MacDonald, and others, Lewis came to believe that God himself was the creator of reality and therefore of "true myth." For Lewis, therefore, "myth is a kind of shadow of Christianity" (Loganbill 55). According to Humphrey Carpenter, Lewis also believes that "the essence of the myth" is dependent on its having "no taint of allegory to the maker and yet [it] should *suggest* incipient allegories to the reader" (30). This notion is another that he inherited from George MacDonald, who says of fairy tales:

[83] Dyson was a mutual friend and a member of the Inklings, who was present for this influential conversation.

> The true fairytale is, to my mind, very like the sonata. We all know that a sonata means something; and where there is the faculty of talking with suitable vagueness, and choosing metaphor sufficiently loose, mind may approach mind, in the interpretation of a sonata, with the result of a more or less contenting consciousness of sympathy. But if two or three men sat down to write each what the sonata meant to him, what approximation to definite idea would be the result? Little enough--and that little more than needful. We should find it had roused related, if not identical, feelings, but probably not one common thought. Has the sonata therefore failed? Had it undertaken to convey, or ought it to be expected to impart anything defined, anything notionally recognizable? ("The Fantastic Imagination" 318)

In Lewis' introduction to *Lilith*, he makes a similar comparison between myth-making and music, saying that mythopoeia "is in some ways more akin to music than to poetry" because "it goes beyond the expression of what we have already felt" (x). Thus the very real, yet mythic world of Perelandra impacts Ransom like a "symphony" or an "air in the opera" (*Perelandra* 46; 48). In reading myth, MacDonald and Lewis deem it necessary for the reader to put aside all notions of symbols and simply experience the text, for "myth must first be understood, or experienced rather, in total, as a concrete reality, and not read for abstract meaning" (Loganbill 55). In fact, Lewis suggests that myth in its very nature has a greater capacity to relate truth than any other medium because humanity may employ stories to impart and receive concepts that cannot be expressed in straightforward language, or even in the types of symbols which allegory employs. As Mark Freshwater suggests, "in allegory, the images stand for concepts. In myth, the images symbolize and imagine *something* which cannot be reduced to a concept" (38). Alison Searle presents Lewis' definition of the 'mythic' as, "the quality of literature that provides such 'intimations of transcendence,' which break into the relative smallness of an empirical, naturalistic mindset, with the sense of something greater, more beautiful, eternal" (231)—a definition which clarifies Lewis's own claims about myth and the "true myth," and illuminates

the space trilogy as a series in which the supernatural fantasy genre "break[s]" in on the empirically minded genre of science fiction.

In the essay "Myth Became Fact," Lewis outlines his philosophy concerning myth's impact and its relation to the Christian story. He argues that when we read myths, we "are not looking for an abstract 'meaning' at all. If that was what you were doing the myth would be for you no true myth but a mere allegory" ("Myth" 66). Furthermore, he confirms the existence of the Christian story as the "true myth," suggesting that it is just like any and every other myth, with the single, compelling distinction that it is true, and thereby the source of mythology:

> Now as myth transcends thought, Incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, *without ceasing to be myth*, comes down from the Heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. ("Myth" 66)

The point of all this returns to Lewis's assertion that myths can convey special truth. Lewis states, "I suspect that men have sometimes derived more spiritual sustenance from myths they did not believe than from the religion they professed" (67), and concludes that because God—the origin and creator (or poet) of the universe—is "mythopoeic," mankind must therefore be "mythopathic" (67). Myth, by this estimation, must be the most fundamental medium for the revelation of truth.

In *Lilith*, God, or the origin of all things, is repeatedly characterized as Love, Truth, Light and Life, all of which are not only titles God assigns to himself at various points in scripture, but also the things towards which all of the creatures in the novel ultimately gravitate. And as these creatures become loving, truthful, full of light and alive, they in turn create loving, truthful, enlightened and live things. This culminates in the novel's end, for it is at the very climax of Vane's ascent towards the creator that he is sent home from this other world, or perhaps simply from a vast and beautiful dream. Vane longs for that inexpressible sense of purpose and truth and

sometimes despairs in his return to his former life, yet reflects, "In moments of doubt I cry, 'Could God Himself create such lovely things as I dreamed?' 'Whence then came thy dream?' answers Hope" (*Lilith* 196). Even if the entirety of the narrative was simply the creation of Mr. Vane's mind, he recognizes that his creative ability and its resulting fantasies stem from a divine inventive source and therefore appreciates the knowledge that the emotions inspired by his own myth are an echo of the true myth that created his mind.

After examining the motif of God as the creative origin of all things in *Lilith*, one may easily imagine how C. S. Lewis reached his own unique conclusions about mythopoeia under the tutelage first of MacDonald's fairy tales and later of Barfield, Tolkien, Dyson, and others. MacDonald's fantastic renderings of the Romantic metanarrative, infused with Biblical richness, instilled in Lewis the foundations for his lifelong convictions about faith and story. Throughout his literary career Lewis would continue to employ these concepts of mythopoeia and the "true myth" in his own fiction. Thus MacDonald's spiritually rich fantasy narratives provide the basis for half of the genre equation in the space trilogy, the other half being supplied by H. G. Wells.

H. G. Wells: The Father of (C. S. Lewis's) Science Fiction

While MacDonald enjoys a widely accepted and celebrated influence on Lewis, scholars are often reluctant to admit any similarity between Lewis and H. G. Wells. This reluctance has many roots, but its primary source is a hesitance to connect Lewis with an author and thinker who placed such great faith in science and progress, particularly that involving evolutionary theory. In one such case, John West and his fellow contributors to *The Magician's Twin: C. S. Lewis on Science, Scientism, and Society* (2012) aim to establish Lewis as a believer in "intelligent design," and make numerous efforts to distance Lewis from evolutionary theory, citing his many departures from modern scientific values. Clearly, there are vast differences between Lewis and Wells, and they certainly did not share an identical faith, or even an identical

perspective on nature and science, but their scientific and sociological outlooks are probably not as antithetical as many scholars would suggest, for even West admits that "Lewis distinguished cosmic evolutionism from the 'science' of evolution" (137).

In a 1951 letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, Lewis expresses an apparently theistic evolutionary mindset, stating, "As to Man being in 'evolution,' I agree, tho' I wd. rather say 'in process of being created'" (*Vol. I* 111). In fact, even when Lewis corresponds with Bernard Acworth, founder of the Creationist movement, he carefully avoids a disavowal of belief in evolutionary theory, saying, "I must confess [your book] has shaken me: not in my belief in evolution, which was of the vaguest and most intermittent kind, but in my belief that the question was wholly unimportant" (*Vol. III* 138). He continues to explain that the thing that most convinced him in Acworth's book was "not so much your arguments against [evolution] as the fanatical and twisted attitudes of its defenders" (138). Clearly it is not the scientific theory of evolution with which Lewis takes exception, but rather the elevation of that theory into an aggressive, quasi-religious ideology.

While the exact nature of Lewis's investment in evolutionary theory is unclear (he himself calls it "vague" and "intermittent"), it is important to recognize that he *is* invested in evolutionary thought, and finds that material narrative not only unthreatening to his Christian beliefs, but mutually enriching. Indeed, evolution (and, along with it, degeneration—a very Victorian concern in itself) crops up in almost all of Lewis's fictional works, as well as in *The Problem of Pain* (1940) and *Mere Christianity* (1952). In all of these textual examples, the material process of evolution is connected not only to physical development, but also to spiritual development, just as Lewis connects it in his letter to Griffiths, wherein he discusses the necessity for "doing full & generous justice to the Natural while also paying unconditional &

humble obedience to the Supernatural" (*Vol. III* 111). In fact, Lewis's sympathy, even interest, in the spiritual possibilities within evolutionary narrative is one that he shares with George MacDonald. Roderick McGillis notes that "MacDonald, like many of his Victorian contemporaries, interprets Darwin's theory of evolution as teleological" ("Childhood and Growth" 157), and, indeed, MacDonald employs evolutionary concepts in his fiction (in particular, many of MacDonald's characters undergo a physical degeneration as they grow spiritually wicked).[84] He also integrates evolutionary ideas into his theology, writing in one of his *Unspoken Sermons* that God is "ever uttering himself in the changeful profusions of nature" and "takes millions of years to form a soul that shall understand him and be blessed" ("The Child" 23). Lewis owned a copy of MacDonald's *Unspoken Sermons*, and his marginal notes evidence multiple readings, making it impossible to imagine that he was unaware of MacDonald's evolutionary undertones in this particular instance, or elsewhere. The point, of course, is not that Lewis learns evolutionary theory from MacDonald, but that he, like his predecessor, is amicable to the science behind it, and willing to integrate it into his creative work.

While Lewis encounters occasional infusions of material, or evolutionary, narrative in the predominantly spiritual narratives of George MacDonald, he primarily consumes evolutionary narratives through the Victorian science fiction of Wells. Of all influences on the space trilogy, Wells's is most overt. Lewis read, enjoyed, and internalized not only the specific conventions of Wells's science fiction, but also the scientific narratives that characterize it. Countless scholars have analyzed Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901; probably Wells's best romances, and Lewis's consistent favorites) for their scientific outlook,

[84] See Reiter for a detailed account of some of MacDonald's uses of degeneration in his fiction.

specifically as relates to evolutionary theory.[85] *The Time Machine* utilizes time travel to provide a futuristic look at earth and the degeneration, or devolution, of humanity, first into the childish Eloi and monstrous Morlocks, and finally into utter extinction. *The First Men in the Moon* presents the reader with travel through space, rather than time, but the result is much the same; in the Selenites we find once again a species whose evolutionary trajectory is troubling. In both novels, Wells employs an overt evolutionary narrative to warn society against the dehumanizing effects of industrialization and class division implicit in a holistic application of evolutionary theory. He ultimately utilizes the evolutionary narrative to imagine the scientific progress necessary for time and space travel, to make predictions about the future, and, perhaps more than anything else, to comment on the present state of earth.

H. G. Wells appears in Lewis's letters in 1909, when he reads *The First Men in the Moon* (*Vol I* 11), and Lewis continues to mention Wells's works throughout his early life, not always with pleasure, but always with interest. He writes to his father in 1917, "Being interested in [Wells] is a very different thing from liking him," and admits in 1920, "I am inclined to agree with you […] about the lack of charm in Wells: but there are other qualities as important, if less delightful" (*Vol I* 335;475). These sort of comments, as well as assertions that Jules, the pompous yet ignorant puppet of the NICE in *That Hideous Strength*, is modeled upon Wells, have led critics of science fiction and Lewis alike to assume that Lewis despised Wells, and that he wrote the space trilogy as a sort of anti-Wellsian series. Peters, Downing (*Planets* 36), Herrick, and Dickerson and O'Hara (163-65) all propose Lewis's opposition to Wells. In *The Science Fiction of H. G. Wells* Frank McConnell reads Lewis's space trilogy as an unfair caricature of Wells:

> It used to be fashionable to speak of [Wells], if at all, as a historical curio of

[85] For two such examples, see Philmus and McConnell.

> English letters, the author of a few interesting realistic novels and a few more vastly entertaining tales that 'fathered' the minor genre of science fiction; but, ran the conventional appraisal, the young author of those interesting stories turned, by the second decade of the twentieth century, into a windy and pompous bore, a shrill controversialist whose dismal themes were the glory of technology, the irrelevance of the fine arts, and the coming wonders of the Age of the Scientific Man. (McConnell 12)

While such a depiction of Wells may seem to lurk beneath the surface of Lewis's cosmic series (most obviously in the character of Jules), the reading is exaggerated at best. A more appropriate reading, however, is Sanford Schwartz's. Schwartz argues that there are "surprising similarities between the 'unfallen' worlds of Mars and Venus and the seemingly antithetical 'evolutionary model' propounded by the terrestrial invaders" and that "Malacandra […] should be viewed not as the polar opposite but as the transfiguration or 'up-grading' of the Wellsian war between the species" (12). Indeed, close attention to Lewis's various writings reveals that he was simply not as antagonistic to Wells as many critics would suggest.

Lewis openly admires Wells's romances in several places, and even defends Wells from early critics of the space trilogy who suggested an antipathy between himself and Wells. In December of 1938 Lewis wrote to Roger Lancelyn Green, in response to a letter about his recently published *Out of the Silent Planet*:

> I like the whole interplanetary idea as a *mythology* and simply wished to conquer for my own (Christian) pt. of view what has always hitherto been used by the opposite side. I think Wells' *1st Men in the Moon* the best of the sort I have read. (*Vol. II* 236)

This particular passage has been used as proof of Lewis's wish to rewrite, write against, even "conquer" H. G. Wells's science fiction; unfortunately, such an interpretation neglects the complexity of Lewis's comment. Lewis states first that he likes mythopoeic science fiction, second that he wished to write such a work from a Christian perspective (or perhaps, for our purposes, wished to blend a scientific mythology with a Biblical one), and thirdly suggests that

of the mythopoeic science fictions he has read, Wells's is the best. From this comment, we can actually assume that Lewis is more interested in imitating Wells than he is in undermining him. It also represents one of many instances when Lewis praises Wells as the best writer of his kind. In a 1949 letter to I. O. Evans Lewis explains that "in Wells it seems to me that one has *first* class pure fantasy (*Time Machine*, *First Men in the Moon*) and *third* class didacticism: i.e. I object to his novels with a purpose not because they have a purpose but because I think them bad" (*Vol II* 918). Again, although Lewis admits a distaste for some of Wells's literary approaches, he similarly avows a deep admiration for two of the author's most famous and successful romances, emphasizing an aesthetic, rather than ideological displeasure. Finally, in 1957 Lewis writes to Green, in response to his *Into Other Worlds: Space-Flight in Fiction, from Lucian to Lewis*:

> I think you are too hard on Wells. Obviously, he touches off something in you which he didn't in me. I still think that a v. good book indeed and don't dislike the Selenites themselves so much as you do. (*Vol. III* 898-99)

Once again, Lewis downplays any animosity he feels for Wells, instead defending *The First Men in the Moon* as laudable fiction. The evidence of Lewis's personal correspondence, joined with Wells's obvious influence on *Out of the Silent Planet*, suggest that critics have distorted the authors' relationship. While Lewis may have disagreed with Wells on many philosophical issues, he certainly appreciated Wells's work in science fiction, and clearly utilized the narrative structures and practices he found in Wells.

Lewis borrows heavily and openly from H. G. Wells in his cosmic trilogy, particularly in the opening book, *Out of the Silent Planet*. This first Ransom novel serves to introduce the series and establish it in a science fiction tradition, yet in Lewis's very borrowings from Wells rest clues to his actual artistic goal: a blend of science fiction and fantasy, which becomes more

overt, even intrusive, as the series continues. While Lewis is happy to follow Wells' scientific narratives to great lengths, he finds them incomplete without blending in spiritual aspects as well.

Before he kicks off his science fiction trilogy with *Out of the Silent Planet*, Lewis acknowledges a debt to H. G. Wells as a primary influence in his novel, saying, "The author would be sorry if any reader supposed he was too stupid to have enjoyed Mr. H. G. Wells's fantasies or too ungrateful to acknowledge his debt to them" (*Out of the Silent Planet* 6). Indeed, Lewis does not exaggerate this debt, for Wells's work permeates the opening of the trilogy. *Out of the Silent Planet* echoes *The Time Machine* first through the character of Ransom, who is largely a revision of the Time Traveler, as well as through the very style of narrative, Lewis's narrator resembling Wells's.

Ransom is strikingly similar to Wells's Time Traveler. Just as the Time Traveler is identified with his title as sojourner, Ransom is identified throughout the opening passage of *Out of the Silent Planet* only as "the Pedestrian" (7). This title and its capitalization immediately identifies Ransom with the Time Traveler, and suggests that Ransom's story is similarly a tale of travel adventure. Another key similarity between the two men is their social arena—both are academic, learned men, surrounded by a community of similar scholarly peers. Yet, a distinction also arises. While the Time Traveler is a man of science, Ransom is a philologist and professor of the humanities. While the Time Traveler's journey is one in which he relies on and confirms his scientific theories of Darwinian evolution and social change (albiet a prophecy of ultimate doom and extinction), Ransom makes scientific observations yet also experiences spiritual awakening, discovering that the earth has become a silent planet, a spiritual dead zone, due to a disunion between science and religion, the empirical and the spiritual, the head and the heart.

The character of Weston, in particular, serves as a biting commentary on the social theories of eugenics which the Time Traveler ponders:

> For the first time I began to realize an odd consequence of the social effort in which we are at present engaged. [….] One triumph of a united humanity over Nature had followed another. [….] We improve our favorite plants and animals – and how few they are – gradually by selective breeding [….] The whole world will be intelligent, educated and cooperating; things will move faster and faster towards the subjugation of Nature. In the end, wisely and carefully we shall readjust the balance of animal and vegetable life to suit our human needs. (*Time Machine* 31)

Weston represents this sort of Darwinian, eugenic mindset, in his strict loyalty to the physical welfare of mankind, at the expense of all else. He says to the Oyarsa, "No care for *hnau*. Care for man" (*OSP* 138). In this way, the Time Traveler and Ransom share a common insight, recognizing the futility of humanity's attempts to take natural selection into their own hands; yet while the Time Traveler relates a fatalistic prophecy for the inexorable evolution of the world, Ransom's journey leads him to an answer for this bleak forecast—a spiritual battle must be won, as opposed to the purely materialistic battle between the *Eloi* and *Morlocks*.

Another similarity between Lewis's science fiction and *The Time Machine* is in the telling of the tale. Lewis seems to have borrowed from Wells the conceit of telling the story from the eyes of a secondhand witness. In both narratives, the protagonist's story is told to the reader through the lens of a third party observer, who both relates, and interprets the story for himself, thereby guiding the reader's response to the fantastic story. Both narrators are educated men—friends and colleagues of these scholarly protagonists—and both struggle with doubts as to the plausibility of the story.[86] Both narratives, however, end with a hint of hope, a cause to believe. The narrator of the Time Machine finishes his Epilogue with reference to the faded flowers from

[86] It is also worth noting that both Ransom and the Time Traveler experience doubts after their returns as to the reality of their experience: Ransom "was ill for several months, and when he recovered he found himself in considerable doubt as to whether what he remembered had really occurred" (*OSP* 152), and the Time Traveler says, "Did I ever make a Time Machine[…]? Or is it all only a dream?" (*Time Machine* 88)

the future that are still in his possession, while *Out of the Silent Planet* ends with a letter from Ransom himself, lending plausibility to the reality of the story, and giving a closing nod to Wells: "if there is to be any more space-travelling, it will have to be time-travelling as well . . . !" (*Time Machine* 160).

The influence of H. G. Wells's *First Men in the Moon* is similarly unmistakable and again suggests Lewis's intention to blend genres. Although Lewis and Wells pull from the same space voyage trope, *Out of the Silent Planet* finds its birth specifically in Wells's Cavor and Bedford: Cavor is Weston, Bedford is Devine, their cavorite spaceship is Weston's sphere—down to the detailed explanation of the gravitational center of the vessel—and Lewis revises the climactic audience with the Grand Lunar as a hearing with the Oyarsa of Malacandra. Ransom is a new addition to the tale, although even his spiritual and philosophical journey is largely inherited from Wells's characterization of Cavor and Bedford. The primary divergence from Wells in Lewis's myth is in the nature of the planets visited and the social reality of their inhabitants.

The moon that Cavor discovers is a veritable anthill of specialized workers. "There are almost innumerably different forms of Selenites" (*First Men* 138), Cavor explains, and these have been organized into a society where every individual performs a highly expert and specific task. Aided by the most extreme applications of science, the Selenites' evolution is not naturally driven, but chemically and mechanically engineered, so that rather than allowing the individual to grow and discover its special talents and capabilities, society actually manufactures its members to fulfill particular roles. In this depiction of Lunar society, Mark Hillegas suggests that Wells is wrestling with one of the inherent paradoxes of his own progressive theories: "how, in an age of science and technology, can the world achieve economic, social, political stability and

efficiency and, at the same time, not dehumanize the individual by completely controlling him?" (Hillegas 52). Wells gives no real answer to this question, and Cavor exhibits simultaneous feelings of admiration and horror as he observes the flawless, yet inhuman structure of lunar society. Cavor attests that the Selenites are "colossally, in intelligence, morality and social wisdom, higher than man" (*First Men* 138), and explains with satisfaction that, "In the moon […] every citizen knows his place. He is born to that place, and the elaborate discipline of training and education and surgery he undergoes fits him at last so completely to it that he has neither ideas nor organs for any purpose beyond it" (143). Despite all this admiration for the social structure in the moon, however, Cavor also witnesses glimpses of the horrible destruction of individualism and freedom in Selenite society. He stumbles upon "a number of young Selenites […] who were being compressed to become machine-minders" and later admits, "That wretched-looking hand sticking out of its jar seemed to appeal for lost possibilities; it haunts me still" (146). Ultimately, Cavor (and through him, Wells) cannot find any solution between the need for societal structure and the need for human dignity, for he both admires and abhors the dystopian society of the Selenites.

Where Wells's purely scientific narrative can give no answer to the yearning for a perfectly structured yet free human society, Lewis provides a spiritual solution: an Edenic paradise. Malacandra is such a society. Instead of being ordered by a central scientific power, the inhabitants of Malacandra simply pursue and fulfill their natural, "unbent" inclinations. Every creature naturally enjoys and seeks that which it most excels at and every creature finds gratification in its natural role. Despite Ransom's logical attempts to determine the dominant species on Malacandra, he is continually discredited by his companions. After hearing of the wisdom of the sorns (the equivalent of Malacandrian naturalists) Ransom thinks to himself,

"Ah—the intelligentsia […] They must be the real rulers, however it is disguised" (*OSP* 69). Yet when he attempts to ask the hrossa "what would happen if the *sorns* used their wisdom to make the *hrossa* do things," reflecting that this "question did not sound nearly so urgent in this form as it would have done if he had been able to say 'used their scientific resources for the exploitation of their uncivilized neighbors,'" he receives no answer besides a discussion of the sorns' "inadequate appreciation of poetry" (*OSP* 69-70). Similarly, the sorn Augray casually dismisses the poetic passion of the hrossa, valuing his species's technical, scientific understanding of the environment around him. The hrossa perform the role of society's poets, the sorns of its philosophers and scientists, and the pfifltriggi its skilled laborers, yet none of these roles are valued or esteemed any higher than the others and all enjoy a healthy anchoring in the natural world. Again, the text reflects Lewis's aesthetic approach, for just as the sorns and hrossa healthily coexist, so the scriptural and evolutionary narratives of fantasy and science fiction are married in the text. In the unfallen society of Malacandra exists the true socialist ideal: no alienation, no disillusionment, no manipulation, and perfect egalitarianism—so egalitarian, in fact, that such a notion in all probability would not exist in the Malacandrian lexicon. Kanakaberaka, the only pfifltriggi of Ransom's personal acquaintance on Malacandra is mystified by Ransom's description of the distribution of labor on Earth and illustrates the lack of alienation that exists between the Malacandrian worker and its labor:

> All keep the mines open; it is a work to be shared. But each digs for himself the thing he wants for his work. [….] How would a maker understand working in suns' blood unless he went into the home of suns' blood himself and knew one kind from another and lived with it for days out of the light of the sky till it was in his blood and his heart, as if he thought it and ate it and spat it? (*OSP* 115)

In essence, Lewis presents the naturally occurring utopia possible only in a world free from the effects of the fall as an answer to the dystopia of Wells's lunar society. In characteristic fashion,

Lewis answers Wells's materialistic paradox with a spiritual solution. While Wells's pure science fiction poses questions, Lewis answers those questions with a fusion between science fiction and fantasy, suggesting that neither genre is entirely complete without the other.

The differences in the cruel, scientific society of the Selenites and the social structure of peaceful Malacandra largely determine the fates of their respective other-worldly visitors. Once the Great Lunar hears of the violence and chaos of humanity, he perceives a threat to Lunar society, and spurred on by fear of such earthly colonizers eliminates Cavor, thereby eliminating all human potential for space travel. The Oyarsa of Malacandra, on the other hand, tells Weston, "one thing we left behind us on the *harandra*: fear. And with fear, murder and rebellion. The weakest of my people does not fear death" (*OSP* 140). Rather than killing the human threat to Malacandra, Oyarsa instead sends them back to the planet from which they came, and simply disembodies their spacecraft to discourage further cosmic exploration. Nonetheless, both hearings entail a critique of Earth.

Ultimately, Lewis employs the genre characteristics of Wells's science fiction in order to accomplish similar work to Wells. Just as Wells must take his reader to the moon in order to offer a warning about life on earth, Ransom's adventures on Mars and Venus are not only journeys of interplanetary discovery, but open the door to a widening knowledge of Earth and its place in the cosmos. Yet, even while Lewis mimics Wells's scientific narrative, he provides spiritual answers to the philosophical questions implicit in Wells. In order to provide these answers, Lewis blends the genre conventions he inherits from Wells and from MacDonald, creating a hybrid genre that combines characteristics of fantasy and science fiction, and, by virtue of the Victorian genre identities, reconciles a scientific narrative with a Biblical one.

In fact, Lewis is quite explicit about this genre combination when he writes about the process through which he began to conceptualize his own science fiction trilogy. He writes on multiple occasions of David Lindsay's *Voyage to Arcturus* (1920), and the way this book suggested a genre hybrid to him. In October of 1944, he writes to Charles A. Brady:

> The real father of my planet books is David Lindsay's *Voyage to Arcturus*, [….] I had grown up on Well's stories of that kind: it was Lindsay who first gave me the idea that the 'scientifiction' appeal could be combined with the 'supernatural' appeal—suggested the 'Cross' (in biological sense). His own spiritual outlook is detestable, almost diabolist I think, and his style crude: but he showed me what a bang you cd. get from mixing these two elements. (*Vol. II* 630)

Again, in January of 1947 he writes to Ruth Pitter:

> From Lyndsay I first learned what other planets in fiction are really good for: for *spiritual* adventures. Only they can satisfy the craving which sends our imaginations off the earth. Or putting it another way, in him I first saw the terrific results produced by the union of two kinds of fiction hitherto kept apart: the Novalis, G. Macdonald, James Stephens sort and the H. G. Wells, Jules Verne sort. (*Vol. II* 753)

This second letter reveals not only that Lewis consciously thought of his space trilogy as a blend between "supernatural" and "scientifiction," but that he saw these "two kinds of fiction" as nineteenth century fantasy and Victorian science fiction, mentioning MacDonald and Wells by name.

Victorian Genre-Blending: George Eliot and Charles Kingsley

Having established Lewis's conscious blending of Victorian science fiction and fantasy, I now wish to take the argument a step further. Lewis's "Science Fantasy" is not simply a combination of Victorian genre conventions, but is itself a neo-Victorian practice. As I will demonstrate, Victorians practiced this strange synthesis of spiritual and scientific narratives long before Lewis took up his nib pen. With the popularization of evolutionary theory that corresponded with Darwin's *Origin of the Species* in 1859 came a literary shift that Gillian Beer

has explained in *Darwin's Plots*: evolution, as an explanation for life, become a central narrative (even myth) for humanity, and began to shape literary narratives in the same way that the Biblical narrative of existence had formerly done. As previously stated, this idea has supported many scholars in their assertions that science effectively replaced faith in Victorian culture, but such suggestions are a gross exaggeration. Not only did Christianity continue to flourish in Victorian culture, many Christians willingly embraced scientific advances, finding evolutionary science compatible with their faith, and many non-Christians maintained an attachment to the literary potency of Biblical narrative. The result is not only a co-existence between scientific and Biblical narratives, but, in many cases, a combination of the two.

An important example of these intermingling narratives appears, significantly, in one of Lewis's favorite novelists: George Eliot.[87] Lewis's letters establish at least four readings of *Middlemarch* (1871-72),[88] which he hailed as "by far the best of G. Eliot's books" (*All My Road* 262). In *Middlemarch* Lewis found a delicious nostalgia for the past, and an inspiring narrative structure. Lewis admits to being "quite 'caught' by George Eliot's books" in a 1918 letter from a hospital near the French front (*Vol. I* 362), and Gilchrist suggests that Lewis used such intellectual landscapes as Eliot's provincial, by-gone Middlemarch to escape from his modern, wartime reality. Yet the groundbreaking structure of Eliot's realism would also influence Lewis's own work. In *Middlemarch* one finds the prime example of what Beer identifies as "evolutionary narrative," which Lewis inherits.

Middlemarch (1874), hailed as the pinnacle of realism in the novel and a quintessentially Victorian—therefore Darwinist—narrative, consists of an intricately connected society and plot,

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[87] See chapter two for more detail about Lewis's interest in Eliot, and an explanation of the impact her philosophy of realism may have had on Lewis's own literary philosophy.

[88] See Feb. 21, 1918, to Greeves (*Vol I* 360); Feb. 22, 1918, to Albert (*Vol I* 362); Feb. 24, 1930, to Greeves (*Vol I* 883); 1930, to Owen Barfield (*Vol III* 1521); Jan, 1943, to Greeves (*Vol II* 549). Also, May 8, 1939, to Dom Bede Griffiths: "The best of all her books as far as I have read is *Middlemarch*." (*Vol II* 257).

forming a web that plays out in complex strands of cause and effect, and embodying the sort of evolutionist mythology that Beer associates with Darwin's work. This scientific myth appealed to George Eliot, as someone who turned away from Christian faith in favor of scientific truth and deep human sympathy; however, in *The Reader's Repentance* Krueger traces humanitarian writing like George Eliot's to a tradition of women preachers, who used scriptural authority to attain their own authoritative voices, suggesting that Eliot did not fully abandon her religious roots, literary or biographical. Indeed, Biblical narratives appear in *Middlemarch*, coexisting with the larger evolutionary frame. Interspersed with the famous "parable" of the "pier-glass" and the narrator's sympathy for Lydgate's scientific ambition (264), are references to Dorothea as saint ("New Theresa" [838]), inferences of Bulstrode's need for grace, and a general sympathy for humanity (the narrator is frequently "sorry" for characters [192; 241]) that finds its match in Christ's sermon on the mount. Despite religious disinclination, therefore, Eliot illustrates compatibility between the Biblical and scientific narratives that were intermingling in the lives and works of Victorians.

Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863) is another prime example of the multifaceted or multi-plot Victorian text that blends evolutionary and spiritual narratives. Kingsley, writing in the wake of Darwin, seeks to promote a Christian message of redemption in his story, yet his narrative follows evolutionary tracks, mirroring Tom's spiritual development in his physical development from boy to water baby to man. Before Tom has turned into a water baby, his actions are frequently compared to that of a gorilla, and the fairies say of him, "He is but a savage now, and like the beasts" (39), and after Tom's transformation the narrator asks of a supposedly cynical reader, "if a water animal can continually change into a land animal, why should not a land animal sometimes change into a water animal?" (49). Kingsley also refers

repeatedly to "the great hippopotamus test" (96), punning on contemporary debates about the hippocampus minor. All of this evolutionary thought is not, however, meant to suggest a threat to God, anymore than it can suggest a threat to the existence of water babies, as Kingsley attests that, "Wise men know that their business is to examine what is, and not to settle what is not" (48). Kingsley openly embraces Darwin's theory, yet simultaneously encourages Christian belief, saying: "You do not know what Nature is, or what she can do; and nobody knows; not even […] Mr Darwin, […]whom good boys are taught to respect" (46). The overall trajectory of Tom's journey is a process of Christian redemption, foreshadowed by his early attraction to a painting of Jesus and fulfilled through his transformation by the Holy Spirit as Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid, but Kingsley manages to masterfully interweave his Biblical narrative with an evolutionary one, suggesting that the two are not only compatible, but potentially identical.

In contrast to Eliot and other Victorian realists, Kingsley's practice is not only a mixture of Christian and scientific elements, but a fusion of genres. By mixing scientific elements into his "Fairy Tale for a Land Baby" (3), Kingsley gives his fantasy a twist of science fiction, and thereby suggests a hybrid genre. This, of course, is strikingly similar to Lewis's approach in the space trilogy, though inverted. Kingsley presents the reader with a fairy tale and injects science fiction, Lewis presents the reader with science fiction and injects fairy tale.

While it is easy to invoke Kingsley as an illustration of Victorian genre blending and to maintain that Lewis mimics this practice, the connection between Kingsley's *Water Babies* and Lewis's space trilogy is rather more elusive. Lewis's repeated assertion that he first got the idea to combine scientific and supernatural narratives from David Lindsay's *Voyage to Arcturus* complicates the supposed connection to Kingsley. Nonetheless, two things are undeniably true. First, Kingsley's *The Water Babies* was a significant book in C. S. Lewis's life. Second, Lewis

habitually repressed or suppressed certain details of his life from public view, and had reason to suppress reference to Kingsley's text.

Apparently *The Water Babies* was one of Florence Lewis's prized books, which she read aloud to her sons, and when she died in 1908, Albert must have put away some of her most prized volumes, making them inaccessible to the boys. After his father's death, however, Lewis regained access to these books, and he relates a seemingly traumatic re-encounter with *The Water Babies* in a 1930 letter to Greeves:

> It was one of the books belonging to my mother which my father had locked up at her death and I only recovered at the recent clearance. It was strange—after the first few pages the most incredibly faint memories began to come about me: she must have read it, or started to read it, to me when I was very small indeed. I had even a curious sense of bringing my mother to life—as if she were reading it through me. The feeling was impressive, but not entirely pleasant. (I don't mean that it was at all unpleasant in the commonplace ghostie sense.) The book itself seems to me not very good. There is some fancy, and I don't object to the preaching: but after Macdonald it is tasteless. Put the two side by side and see how imagination differs from mere fancy, and holiness from mere morality. [….] it is not *very* good: but well worth reading. (*Vol. I* 901)

Despite the book's being "not *very* good," it must have been an object of interest, for he confesses to "[…]glancing through Mammy's old copy of the *Water Babies*[…]" again in a 1939 letter to Warnie (*Vol. II* 288). Clearly the book was not only familiar to him, but may have haunted him with complex, even disturbing, feelings about his mother.

Scholars from Tolkien to Downing to Ward have noted Lewis's selective presentation of his own life, recognizing that he was prone to leaving out bits that he wished to obscure. [89] It is popularly remembered that one of his friends, after reading *Surprised by Joy,* suggested that it might be better titled *Suppressed by Jack* (Ward 15). In fact, many biographers and critics attach this tendency of repression to the death of Florence Lewis, which was the major catastrophe of

[89] The central argument of Ward's *Planet Narnia* is built upon the assumption that Lewis was not always completely honest (or at least did not always share the whole truth) when discussing his own life and work.

Lewis's young life. His mother's death not only produced Lewis's first religious doubts, but effectively alienated him and Warnie from their father, and resulted in their being sent off to the various boarding schools that Lewis so passionately hated. Downing asserts that Lewis saw the time before his mother's death as his true "childhood," and that this childhood was something Lewis attempted to return to throughout his life, but particularly in the space trilogy, in which "the recovery of childhood" is a "master motif" (33). What Downing identifies as "childhood" I am, of course, characterizing as Blakean innocence, and I perceive the trilogy's concern as higher innocence, rather than the recovery of innocence. But the result is the same in reference to *Water Babies*. Surely the man who "could call to mind a passage he had seen that week or something he had read in school decades earlier" (Downing 121), would have had Kingsley's *Water Babies* in his mind while writing a series of books that connected so deeply with the longing associated with the lost childhood innocence in which his mother read the book to him.[90] This seems particularly likely, as his traumatic re-reading of the text occurred in 1930, the year in which Walter Hooper places Lewis's first conceptualization of the series (*Companion and Guide* 206-208), and we see him leafing through the book again in 1939, having already published *Out of the Silent Planet* and potentially planning *Perelandra*.

Considering the book's association with his mother, it is unsurprising that Lewis makes little reference to *Water Babies,* for he often avoids reference to Florence. A. N. Wilson notes that she is only "a shadowy figure" in *Surprised by Joy* (11). Because of this silence, it is impossible to prove a definite connection between Kingsley's *Water Babies*, with its narrative/genre blending, and Lewis's science fantasy; nonetheless, Lewis consciously works

[90] Jane and Mark both demonstrate their movement towards higher innocence by reading stories from their childhoods; Jane asks for "the *Curdie* books, please" (*THS* 160), and Mark reads "a serial children's story which he had begun to read as a child but abandoned because his tenth birthday came when he was half way through it and he was ashamed to read it after that" (358).

with Victorian genres, and his decision to blend those particular genres is an equally Victorian convention, whether consciously or subconsciously so.

Romantic Metanarrative in The Space Trilogy: Higher Innocence as "Science Fantasy"

Perhaps the most important outworking of Lewis's neo-Victorianism in the space trilogy is his deliberate employment of form to match the central theme of the series: the concept of "myth become fact," which he inherits from George MacDonald and Coleridge. In achieving this thematic harmony, Lewis first introduces the series as though it were purely science fiction, and introduces fantasy elements into the story with increasing rapidity, so that the reader becomes jarred by unexpected content, as well as unexpected form. As the series has been traditionally interpreted as science fiction, rather than a fantasy, I will proceed to explain the formal characteristics of fantasy as they appear in the series, eventually linking these formal characteristics to the central theme of "myth become fact." Ultimately, it becomes clear that Lewis's work in combining Victorian science fiction and fantasy is integral to his purpose, as he needs to fuse the empiricism of science fiction with the supernatural character of fantasy in order to present the series itself as a sort of factual myth—an embodiment of polarity, and thus higher innocence.

In order to analyze the Ransom trilogy as fantasy, Farah Mendelsohn's *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008) will be particularly helpful. Interpreting the space trilogy through an application of Mendelsohn's taxonomy of fantasy, it becomes evident that Lewis is working within particular fantasy conventions. While they are simultaneously grounded in common scientific perception, *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra* follow the structure of Mendlesohn's Portal-Quest Fantasies. Similarly, *That Hideous Strength* deals with modern scientific progress in a dystopian fashion, yet simultaneously, and significantly, functions as what Mendlesohn identifies

as Intrusive Fantasy, highlighting the transformative effect of myth become fact. This embodied myth, possible only through the intrusive story form, is the key event towards which all three novels tend.

The intrusion of the fantastic into the scientific novel form is therefore Lewis's deliberate mirroring of form and content, further emphasizing the Incarnational renewal of the divisions of fallen reality. Just as the form (body) of the trilogy matches its content (soul), so the renewing effects of true myth introduce reunion between the dichotomies of body/soul, language/meaning, and female/male, to name a few. Lewis, whose conversion to Christianity hinged on his understanding of myth become fact, held this theory of incarnate myth—as achieved through his genre mixing—as the central resolution not only for *That Hideous Strength*, but also for his entire cosmic trilogy, proposing a marriage to fantasy as the answer for the misguided anthropocentrism of the science fiction genre,[91] and re-engaging the Victorian dialogue between scientific and scriptural narrative.

Mendlesohn sums up the difference between fantasy and science fiction succinctly:

> Fantasy, unlike science fiction, relies on a moral universe: it is less an argument with the universe than a sermon on the way things should be, a belief that the universe should yield to moral precepts. This belief is most true of the portal-quest narratives, and of the intrusion fantasies. (5)

It is questionable whether Lewis was capable of writing anything that denied a moral universe, and he certainly made no attempt to do so in the interplanetary novels; quite the contrary, in fact.

[91] The space trilogy has been admitted into the science fiction canon, and yet some prominent science fiction scholars retain doubts. In *Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia* John Clute's sole comment on Lewis's interplanetary trilogy is the recognition that the series is "much loved by many who dislike S[cience]F[iction]" (215). Lewis was an avid reader not only of the scientific romances of Wells, but also the "eschatological" category of science fiction, concerned with the final destiny of humanity, such as Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men* (1930) ("On Science Fiction" 65). This particular type of science fiction, in which the longevity of the human race is upheld with a sort of inhuman amorality, Lewis considers "brilliant" though "depraved" (66).

By this definition, therefore, we may analyze his novels within the frame of fantasy, even while recognizing them as science fiction.

First in the series is *Out of the Silent Planet*, in which Ransom is unwittingly kidnapped and taken on a spaceship to Mars. In and of itself, this novel works as a portal-quest story in both content and style. In addition to informing a reading of the single novel, however, these characterizations recommend the function of *Out of the Silent Planet* within the trilogy. While the novel in itself acts at a portal-quest, the novel within the series acts primarily as a portal, a door into the rest of the series. As the first in the three books, it sets up the conflict of the trilogy and then points towards the other stories to come. In this way, it serves as the first step in Lewis's tripartite structure of portal/quest/intrusion or innocence/experience/higher innocence.

As far as structure is concerned, *Out of the Silent Planet* coincides with Mendlesohn's portal-quest taxonomy. The structure of the plot is primarily one of "transition and exploration" (Mendlesohn 2). The narrative details the journey to Malacandra, Ransom's experiences there, including his quest to visit the great Oyarsa of that world, and Ransom's journey back to earth. Also in correlation with the structure of the typical portal-quest, Ransom's experience traversing space (the spaceship being, for all practical purposes, the actual portal) and his exploration of Malacandra function as a catalyst for his personal growth. Mendlesohn explains that "Although 'the journey' is a recognized function-trope in portal-quest fantasies, it is usually interpreted as a metaphor for a coming of age—it provides a space for the protagonists to grow up" (7), and, indeed, Ransom undergoes a sort of innocence/experience transition in the novel. Early in the novel, Ransom is an innocent, as expressed through his role as an unwitting victim. Rather than saving Harry, an "idiot boy," from the clutches of Devine and Weston, Ransom takes on the role of that child, being drugged, kidnapped and taken to space (*OSP* 10). In this, Ransom actually

becomes what Elsie Michie calls a "neo-Victorian child, a child, like those evoked in Scott's and Stevenson's novels, that must be kidnapped" (170). What follows in the novel, therefore, becomes Ransom's coming of age story, and we follow his growth from innocence to experience throughout the text. While travelling through space, we are told that Ransom's position as a hostage "did not very greatly disquiet him," in light of the engrossing and surprising things he learns about the "sweet influence" and "vitality" of space (*OSP* 31-32). Once on Malacandra, Ransom uses his extensive knowledge of philology to learn the language and thereby the culture and history of the planet. The intellectual capacity that enables Ransom to glean information about the planet is itself a part of the portal-quest outline, as "portal-quest fantasies are full of learned people, who have read many books" (Mendlesohn 16), yet his interest in Malacandra also has a childlike curiosity and naivete, to which the Malacandrans are often forced to condescend. In one such instance, Ransom simplistically tells the hrossa that he "had come out of the sky," and instantly finds himself lectured like a child:

> Ransom, who had deliberately given a childish version of the truth in order to adapt it to the supposed ignorance of his audience, was a little annoyed to find Hnohra painfully explaining to him that he could not live in the sky because there was no air in it; (67)

As previously discussed in the novel's relation to Wells, Ransom's attempts to fit Malacandra into his own conceptions of evolution and species dominance turn out useless, even naive, and he must repeatedly take the position of a child, learning from the native species about their world. Not only the structure of the novel, however, but also the narrative technique establishes this coming-of-age trope.

The portal-quest structure that Lewis chooses for *Out of the Silent Planet* provides an ideal setting in which to infantilize a grown protagonist like Ransom in a non-pejorative manner. In this type of fantasy, the narrative style "positions both protagonist and reader as naïve"

(Mendlesohn 2). This naïveté allows the reader to share Ransom's experience and growth. The only way to ensure this naïveté in the adult character or reader, however, is to present a reality that is unknown, or, as in Lewis's particular case, to present a reality that does not meet typical expectations. This type of "defamiliarization" serves to "justify the explanation of the world to the reader," as well as providing him with a clean slate, equipped "for the process of familiarization that takes place throughout the novel" (8).

Lewis's particular brand of protagonist/reader naïveté has to do with typical reader assumptions, and particularly the common archetypes in the mind of the science fiction reader. In the Note that precedes Chapter 1, Lewis makes the reader aware of previous science fiction stories by acknowledging his "debt" to "Mr. H. G. Wells's fantasies" (*OSP* 6). Ransom, the reader's experiential guide, is similarly aware of traditional Victorian science fiction tropes. "His mind," the narrator explains, "was richly furnished with bogies. He had read his H. G. Wells and others" (35). Apprehensions about the horrible monsters he will meet on Mars build throughout the journey. These apprehensions, however, prove to be nothing more than childish nursery fears, thereby functioning for Ransom and the reader as naïveté. Shattered expectations therefore operate as an allegory of reading, and Ransom, as well as the reader, must abandon their assumptions in favor of new reading approaches within the science fiction genre.

For Ransom, the letting go of his innocent, ignorant assumptions about the Malacandrans is a slow realization of experience, for it causes him to look back critically on his own planet, thereby taking on the knowledge and cynicism of experience. The inhabitants of Malacandra turn out to be peaceable, intelligent creatures, who slowly assuage Ransom's childish fears and ultimately instill in him a deep understanding of the fallen nature of Earth, as opposed to the unfallen Malacandra. Although, in a portal fantasy, "the fantastic is *on the other side* and does

not leak" (Mendlesohn 1), the protagonist's experience in the fantastic reality often causes reflection on the world from which the protagonist came. In such moments, "we look back through the portal to have the frame world described to us as audience" (32). Thus both Ransom and the reader experience anew the transition from innocence into experience through defamiliarization and re-familiarization. A striking example of this mirror effect occurs in the hearing with Oyarsa. Weston zealously describes the "destiny of the human race" and its "right to supersede," while Ransom translates his words into the Solar Tongue (135). The effect, however, of expressing these prevalent Earthly theories in the Malacandran language reveals their depravity: "He says we have many ways for the *hnau* of one land to kill those of another and some are trained to do it. [….] Because of all this, he says it would not be the act of a bent *hnau* if our people killed all your people" (135-36).[92] Just as Ransom's past attempts to treat the native Malacandrans like savages or children have rebounded on him, Weston's grand theories come out sounding childish, even savage in translation. In this moment Ransom's innocence and therefore childish language serves to contrast with the explicit violence of Weston's ideology, heightening the contrast of transition between innocence and experience. This self-reflective tendency thus highlights not only Ransom's transition from innocence to experience, but also lays out the larger metanarrative for the entire series.

Although it functions as a portal-quest, or growth story in itself, *Out of the Silent Planet* functions specifically as the portal story of the cosmic series, representing innocence in the larger tripartite movement of both metanarrative and trilogy. Specifically, this portal functions not only to open up the fantastic or cosmic reality, but the portal allows Ransom, and therefore the reader, to recognize the fallen nature of earth and humanity by experiencing an unfallen world. In the Romantic narrative of the trilogy, this novel particularly depicts innocence and experience, as

[92] As previously mentioned, Lewis borrows this particular technique of juxtaposition from *First Men in the Moon*.

Ransom understands the depth of Earth's experience in juxtaposition to Malacandra's innocence. The suggestion that Earth is flawed in a way other planets are not is implicit from the moment Ransom's innocent assumptions about space and about extra-terrestrials begin to dissolve. In a way, Ransom's journey to Malacandra is an anti-fantasy because he discovers the unnatural, strange and horrific not on Mars, but on Earth. This idea of the Fall, or experience, is encapsulated in the novel's climax and turning point: Hyoi's murder. Ransom has now lived among the hrossa and begun to practice and admire their ways. The hunting of the hnarka represents a sort of coming of age ritual for the hrossa, and Ransom's participation in the killing of the beast brings about Ransom's own tragic crash into experience. At the moment Ransom finally accepts the hrossa as non-alien—"That difficulty […] was now overcome. They were all *hnau*" (81)—experience intervenes:

> Ransom was deafened by a loud sound—a perfectly familiar sound which was the last thing he expected to hear. It was a terrestrial, human and civilized sound; it was even European. It was the crack of an English rifle; and Hyoi, at his feet, was struggling to rise and gasping. There was blood on the white weed where he struggled. (81)

The contrast drawn here is starkly Romantic, with the innocent pastoral image of the rustic fishing boats shattered by the industrial, "civilized" sound of an English rifle. Immediately Ransom, and the reader, recognize the capacity of humanity to carry experience, or sin, wherever it goes. "Hyoi," he says, "it is through me that this has happened. It is the other *hmana* who have hit you, the bent two that brought me to Malacandra […] I should have told you. We are all a bent race" (81). This transformational moment functions as epiphany and call to action for Ransom. He (and the reader) has plunged into experience, and now longs for higher innocence.

As I have previously discussed, the solution to Ransom's problem of experience within the isolated narrative of *Out of the Silent Planet* is an infusion of higher innocence in content and

form. Ransom comes to realize that the purely material narrative he has attempted to assign to Malacandra will not fit. The species do not seem to follow his own ideas about evolution, species domination and survival of the fittest. The solution, he discovers, is an intermingling of spiritual narrative with the material narrative of the planet. Thus the Oyarsa is revealed to be not merely a physically dominant species, but also a spiritual ruler of the planet, clearly signaling for the first time that this is not merely science fiction, but "science fantasy." The realization of spiritual narrative also causes Ransom to reflect on his way back to Earth:

> Those *handramits* [….] put to shame his original impression that they were natural valleys. They were gigantic feats of engineering, about which he had learned nothing; feats accomplished, if all were true, before human history began… before animal history began. Or was that only mythology? He knew it would seem like mythology when he got back to Earth (if he ever got back), but the presence of Oyarsa was still too fresh a memory to allow him any real doubts. It even occurred to him that the distinction between history and mythology might be itself meaningless outside the Earth. (144-45)

Malacandra, unlike Earth, enjoys higher innocence, manifest through the polar unity of history (the material) and myth (the spiritual). The solution is not purely spiritual, and does not abolish Ransom's scientific understanding of evolution, instead Malacandran evolution has been both a spiritual and a physical process, thus evincing growth without violence, competition and destruction, but instead with greater and more complex harmony. Within *Out of the Silent Planet*, this glimpse of "true myth," and thus of higher innocence, provides resolution to the innocence/experience plot of the novel. Within the larger series, however, the novel serves simply as a defamiliarizing taste of innocence, only to send Ransom back to Earth with a deep understanding of experience, and Earth's plight within cosmic contexts. Ransom's realization that "the distinction between history and mythology might be itself meaningless" only "*outside the Earth*" functions as call to action within the trilogy. The conflict of the trilogy is thus

established: the portal has effectively opened up the cosmos and illuminated Earth's corruption, heralding an impending quest for the containment and healing of Earth's brokenness.

Like *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra* functions as a portal-quest fantasy, and thus another (further) growth narrative for Ransom. This time the portal is not a space ship, but a coffin, which is supernaturally carried to Venus by the eldils. Again, it is a story of "transition and exploration," following Ransom's journey to Venus, his experience of observing, understanding, and appreciating the paradisal Perelandran seascape, as well as his interactions with the innocent and newly-created Mother of that planet. But *Perelandra*'s function as a quest story is more defined than that of *Out of the Silent Planet*, as Ransom is sent to Venus on quest to protect the planet from evil powers that seek to invade it.

Stylistically speaking, the narrative approach of *Perelandra* is even closer to Mendlesohn's ideal portal-quest, as it employs a standard frame narration. In portal-quests, "the tales are usually told in third person" and "the listener is represented as if present at the telling of a tale" (Mendlesohn 1). In *Perelandra* the narrator, who was identified as "Lewis" only in the Postscript of *Out of the Silent Planet*, enters the action of the story, placing Ransom's story within the frame of Lewis's experience. The novel begins with Lewis's journey to visit Ransom, providing the characteristic frame. Lewis, in this first chapter, recognizes the reader's reliance upon him since "the reader, not knowing Ransom," could not receive Ransom's story except through Lewis's telling (*Perelandra* 18). However, Chapter 1 of *Perelandra*, while confirming the novel's characteristic portal-quest narrative style and structure, presents another aspect that somewhat undermines the classification.

Unlike *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra* erodes the characteristic of the portal fantasy as a type of fantasy in which "individuals may cross both ways [but] the fantastic does not"

(Mendlesohn 2). In *Perelandra* the portal leaks. In Chapter 1 Lewis confides a "growing conviction that, since his return, the eldila were not leaving [Ransom] alone," citing various evidences that Ransom "was keeping strange company; that there were—well, Visitors—at that cottage" (*Perelandra* 10). Mendlesohn suggests that any leaking of a portal, any occasion in which the fantastic appears in non-fantastic reality "would move the fantasy into the category of *intrusion,* which uses a very different grammar and tone" (2). In fact, it is an intrusion, an eldil, which appears in Ransom's home, inviting his entrance into the portal and inciting his quest, which is the substance of the novel. On the scale of the individual novel, this still functions as a contained portal-quest fantasy, yet the hint of intrusion is significant for *Perelandra's* role within the series as a whole: it foreshadows the inversion from a portal to an intrusion fantasy in *That Hideous Strength*. The momentum towards higher innocence via polar logic of form and content increases steadily in this novel, beginning with the stark difference in Ransom's passage to the planet. Instead of the purely science fiction trope of the space ship, Ransom now travels in a supernaturally propelled craft. In "On Science Fiction" Lewis suggests that this decision was an attempt to improve in *Perelandra* what he should have done better in *Out of the Silent Planet*: "I am inclined to think that frankly supernatural methods are best. I took a hero once to Mars in a space-ship, but when I knew better I had angels convey him to Venus" (69). It seems highly probable, however, that this remark is a sort of red herring, to distract us from what he was really up to in the space trilogy. Michael Ward has compellingly argued for Lewis's interest in "hidden meanings," even to the extent that he sometimes deliberately led readers and correspondents away from the scent of his true literary intentions (5). Ward begins his book with a 1916 letter to Greeves, in which Lewis reflects that it "is proper in romance, [that] the inner meaning is carefully hidden" (qtd. in Ward 3). We may readily assume that the transition from scientific to

angelic propulsion between the first two books of the trilogy was more strategic than Lewis attests. These supernatural details are hints at the intrusive fantasy to come, and Ransom's means of conveyance signal the steadily increasing presence of the supernatural. Lewis may well have wished to obfuscate this movement somewhat in order to hide the meaning behind it, so that the reader could experience and enjoy the supernatural intrusion, rather than merely contemplating it.

Yet *Perelandra* is not a purely spiritual narrative. While *Out of the Silent Planet* began as a material narrative and then integrated supernatural elements, *Perelandra* at first appears to be primarily concerned with spiritual matters, but these matters turn out to have serious, material requirements and repercussions. Where *Out of the Silent Planet* functioned as a portal in the series and found its turning point in the recognition of experience, *Perelandra* operates primarily as a quest and centers around an event of higher innocence attained through sacrifice, so that the very center, or crux, of the trilogy itself is the incarnation myth, an echoing of the original instance of "myth become fact." Ransom's quest on Perelandra is to defend the planet from the "Dark Lord," the "depraved Oyarsa of Tellus" who "is meditating some sort of attack on Perelandra" (*Perelandra* 32-33). The ensuing battle between Ransom and the newly possessed professor Weston is deeply saturated with Christological imagery, but only after Ransom has grasped its physical component. At first, he attempts to avert the Lady's spiritual ruin through philosophical and theological abstraction, discoursing with the Lady and the Un-man for days on end. Finally, however, he grows weary, admitting that "but for a miracle, the Lady's resistance was bound to be worn away in the end" (140). A moment later he realizes that "he himself was the miracle" (141), and then considers the possibility of a physical altercation with the Un-man, reflecting:

> It stood to reason that a struggle with the Devil meant a *spiritual* struggle . . . the notion of a physical combat was only fit for a savage. [….] no such crude, materialistic struggle could possibly be what Maleldil really intended. [….] It would degrade the spiritual warfare to the condition of mere mythology. But here he got another check. Long since on Mars, and more strongly since he came to Perelandra, Ransom had been perceiving that the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact was purely terrestrial—was part and parcel of that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall. Even on earth the sacraments existed as a permanent reminder that the division was neither wholesome nor final. The Incarnation had been the beginning of its disappearance. In Perelandra it would have no meaning at all. (143-44)

Thus Ransom enters the battle after recognizing a polar logic between the mythic and the real, that "the distinction between fact and myth, was purely terrestrial" (147), and that, in this world he can assume the figure of the Christ myth. After a long, desperate struggle involving equal amounts of physical and spiritual strain, Ransom and the Un-man find themselves in utter darkness. Ransom succeeds in choking the monster and, like Christ, spends roughly three days in the darkness. He eventually crushes the head of the Un-man—alluding to the Genesis 13:15 prophecy concerning the serpent and Eve's seed—and emerges victorious, yet permanently scarred. After recovering, Ransom recognizes "his most serious injury. It was a wound in his heel. The shape made it quite clear that the wound had been inflicted by human teeth" (187). This wound seals Ransom's embodiment of Christ on *Perelandra*; it represents the stigmata of the Christ and the wound from the serpent that bites his heel. Ransom's presence on Perelandra now consists of a polar logic between his real, physical self, and his spiritual representation of Christ, thus paradoxically embodying a reality and a myth, engaged simultaneously in physical and spiritual battle. Ultimately, it represents his ascent to higher innocence, as someone who has become "true myth."

In fact, higher innocence becomes, once again, the solution to the conflict of *Perelandra*, just as it served in *Out of the Silent Planet*. Ransom, by enacting factual myth, achieves the

higher innocence in which he will be depicted in *That Hideous Strength*. But it is not only Ransom that reaches this state, but also the inhabitants of Perelandra. Diverging from Milton's fortunate fall and Blake's necessity of experience, Lewis suggests that higher innocence is possible (if only outside of Earth) without passing through experience, for the King and Queen of Perelandra remain unfallen, yet grow "older." Tor explains, "Maleldil sent you into our world at that day when the time of our being young drew to its end" (208). The King and Queen of Perelandra are able to grow "older" without aging or dying because Ransom (in Christ fashion) takes their potential experience upon himself, enacting the necessary violence of that state on the Un-man. Thus, while the Lady can say "I am older now" (61), she does not experience the disenchantment from which Ransom's actions protect her, and we find in her an uninterrupted polar unity: "Opposites met in her and were fused in a fashion for which we have no images" (64). Tor clearly expresses this state of non-experienced higher innocence:

> There is an ignorance of evil that comes from being young: there is a darker ignorance that comes from doing it, as men by sleeping lose the knowledge of sleep. [….] But Maleldil had brought us out of the one ignorance, and we have not entered the other. (209)

While it is tempting to view *Perelandra* as a story merely of innocence maintained, it actually reinforces the same overarching drive towards higher innocence that guides the entire space trilogy, and drives Ransom back to Earth, to bring similar transformation in the terrestrial sphere.

Perelandra functions as the crux of the trilogy in many senses. It is the central book, and its turning point rests on a reiteration of the Christ myth, suggesting a literal and figurative "cross." This instance of "myth become fact" within the text—Ransom stepping into the role of Christ—also signals the polar logic of Lewis's genre blending activity. And, indeed, Lewis recognizes these connections (although subtly) in his famous letter to Charles A. Brady, writing that "the 'scientifiction' appeal […] combined with the 'supernatural' appeal—suggested the

'Cross' (in biological sense)" of genre (*Vol II.* 630). Although Lewis parenthetically clarifies that he is making a biological reference with the word "Cross," his capitalization implies that he is also thinking about an actual cross, in fact, *the* cross of Christ, which itself represents to him both a spiritual and a scientific turning point, the primary instance of true myth. He attests in *Mere Christianity* (1952), "People often ask when the next step in evolution—the step to something beyond man—will happen. […] it has happened already. In Christ a new kind of man appeared" (62), and in *The Problem of Pain* (1940), written within a year of Perelandra, he identifies the evolutionary development of humanity as a "long spiritual preparation" for the "catastrophic historical event" of Christ's incarnation, the original myth become fact (21). [93] Ransom's reenactment of the Christ myth in *Perelandra* serves as a perfect hinge for all of Lewis's genre blending, polarity of form, and polarity of content, as it is both a materially real, physical struggle, yet simultaneously a spiritual one, both representative of Christ's material and spiritual victory over death on Earth. In this way the climax at the center of the middle book in the cosmic trilogy presents a fusion not only between science fiction and fantasy, material and spiritual, fact and myth, but also between form and content by serving as the literal cross in the series. It also mimics not only the Biblical metanarrative, but also the cosmic narrative which Lewis himself creates in the series. Lewis has clearly made this concept of Incarnation (with all its polar implications) the center of his trilogy, and indeed, he makes the actual Incarnation the center of his fictional universe, for it is the turning point of all worlds. Thus, the Lady of *Perelandra* informs Ransom that all hnau have taken human form since the Incarnation: "Since our Beloved became a man, how should Reason in any world take on another form? [….] That is all over. Among times there is a time that turns a corner and everything this side of it is new. Time does

[93] Hooper suggests that Lewis wrote *The Problem of Pain* from the summer of 1939 through the spring of 1940 (*Companion* 295). Lewis's first mention of *Perelandra* is in a 1941 letter, but his description suggests that he has already written through chapter 5 (*Companion* 224).

not go backward" (62). Just as the Incarnation serves as a crossroads in cosmic history, so Ransom's stepping into a mythic, salvific role on Perelandra serves as the major crossroads for the trilogy, as this experience forges Ransom into a bridge by which the powers of Heaven will proceed to invade Earth.

That Hideous Strength is the answer to all of the questions raised in the first two interplanetary novels. While *Out of the Silent Planet* functions within the series as a portal transition from innocence to experience—opening the cosmic reality of the fantastic, or mythic, and simultaneously reflecting the corruption of earthly reality—*Perelandra* functions as a quest to protect innocence and reach higher innocence—the reward for Ransom's accomplishment of this quest being a submersion in the harmony of true myth and the revelation that this polarity is an answer to earth's depravity. In fact, Ransom now becomes the bridge by which the Heavenly powers may enter Earth. *That Hideous Strength* must necessarily, therefore, function as the culmination of the forward momentum created through the innocence and experience tropes, and, as this culmination requires the embodiment of true myth, it also requires the form that Mendelsohn designates as intrusion fantasy.

Because *That Hideous Strength* is set on Earth, it cannot feasibly take the portal-quest form of *Out of the Silent Planet* or *Perelandra*, which requires both protagonist and reader to be unfamiliar with the setting. In order for the reader to experience the intrusive in its full force, the point of view character must be one who is familiar with Earth, but unfamiliar with the fantastic. "Unlike the portal fantasy, which it otherwise strongly resembles," Mendlesohn remarks, "protagonists and the reader [of an intrusion fantasy] are never expected to become accustomed to the fantastic" (xxii). Thus, in practical terms, it is impossible for Ransom to be the protagonist, or focalizing character in *That Hideous Strength*. At this stage in the trilogy Ransom is so

familiar with the fantastic as to have become its representative, and, as the reader eventually discovers, its embodiment. The narratorial voice can no longer depend upon Ransom as a naïve protagonist and must therefore achieve point of view from the characters of Jane and Mark Studdock, who are positively ripe with naïveté. This fact answers, in the most practical terms of artistic craftsmanship, the complaint of many readers regarding Ransom's apparent distance in *That Hideous Strength*, because keeping the narrative close to Ransom would, in effect, spoil all the interest of the story and cause the structure of the intrusion fantasy to dissolve into absurdity. For the purposes of this particular story, to know the mind of Ransom would be as anticlimactic as knowing the mind of God—there would be no surprises—thus the necessity for new "readers" within the text, namely Jane and Mark.

The use of Mendlesohn's taxonomy for the intrusion fantasy is, however, not as simple as the application of her portal-quest fantasy to the earlier books. Mendlesohn writes, "The trajectory of the intrusion fantasy is straightforward: the world is ruptured by the intrusion, which disrupts normality and has to be negotiated with or defeated, sent back whence it came, or controlled" (115). This construction is applicable to *That Hideous Strength* as concerns the intrusion of the dark eldila under cover of NICE. Most of the intrusion fantasies Mendlesohn cites are horror stories, such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and the scenes set in Belbury betray a stylistic flare towards horror: the slavering and artificial breathing of the bodiless Head, the seeming ubiquity of Wither's hunched, glazy-eyed form stalking the corridors and grounds of the mansion, the unrealized impression of dark, dank cells where Fairy Hardcastle has her "private pleasures" with "little fluffy" girls (*THS* 157; 345). All of these add to the traditional latency of the horror novels to which Mendlesohn applies the intrusion fantasy. They also apply well to the nineteenth century Gothic tradition, which Schwartz has noted as a major influence in

That Hideous Strength. However, within *That Hideous Strength* there is not only the intrusion of the depraved eldila, but also the intrusion of Deep Heaven: the embodiment of myth that brings renewal.

Despite the apparent inconsistency of a beneficent intrusion fantasy, Mendlesohn admits that "any story into which magic intrudes fits this category," whether the magic is good or evil (121). Furthermore, she cites examples of what she calls "indigenous fantasies," in which the fantastic is some geographically based myth or legend, suggesting that in these situations "it is necessary (as in the portal-quest fantasies) to emphasize continually the need to ally with the 'good' intrusion" (153). Ransom's embodiment of the Arthurian myth is just this sort of "indigenous fantasy," for it is the mythology of Britain, of Logres. Thus, Tolkien's complaint about the misplaced Arthurian "stuff" in the trilogy is partially answered by the necessity of beneficent intrusion as the trilogy's ultimate solution, as well as the practical implementation of such beneficent intrusion.

The movement from denial to acceptance of the magical is another characteristic of the intrusion fantasy that functions as an integral part of *That Hideous Strength*. Mendlesohn observes that, "For all that the intrusion fantasy appears—usually—to be a 'this world' fantasy, the narrative leads always toward the acceptance of the fantastic, by the reader if not the protagonist" (Mendlesohn 115). In this light, the intrusion fantasy is, in essence, a call for the reader to adopt a new perspective on her own world—a notion that applies to Lewis's scope of vision within the trilogy and within his hybrid genre form. The purported goal of the intrusion story, by this definition, is to convince the protagonist and reader of the existence of true myth: "The intrusion of the fantastic is matched by a dragging of the protagonist into its range, or into the 'true story' of the world" (Mendlesohn 137). This hearkens back to Mendlesohn's assertion

that fantasy, as opposed to science fiction, "is less an argument with the universe than a sermon on the way things should be, a belief that the universe should yield to moral precepts" (5). The sermon metaphor aligns with an explanation of intrusion fantasy as "a narrative of convincement," for its central drive is a recognition of the true myth (148).

In this way, the intrusion fantasy becomes the best formal expression of Lewis's Coleridgean polarity. The sort of story that forces both protagonist and reader to accept the existence of the supernatural in the real world draws its reader, by its very nature, towards an engagement of the Primary Imagination, balancing two seemingly opposing ideas in union. Just as Lewis embodies Higher Innocence through the fusion of science fiction and fantasy, material and spiritual narrative, so he once again embraces this central theme through the content and narrative structure of *That Hideous Strength*. Once we understand his polar logic, we also begin to understand his seemingly random, chaotic, even disturbing choices in this controversial book. In fact, we recognize that without the jarring tensions the book would lose its potency altogether.

Thus, higher innocence creeps in through a process of eliminating denial and eliciting acceptance of true myth within *That Hideous Strength*, but the process also plays a major role in the momentum of the trilogy as a whole, and represents the fictional embodiment of Lewis's formal hybridization. The transformational moment both for the novel and for the entire cosmic series is the same. The pivotal moment of acceptance, the moment in which myth becomes fact, is in Jane's first meeting with Ransom—the Pendragon—at St. Anne's. As Jane approaches the house she realizes that "she was standing on the shore of a little green sun-lit island looking down on a sea of white fog, furrowed and ridged yet level on the whole, which spread as far as she could see" (*THS* 135). This island rising out of a sea of mist is a real-life echo of the isle of Avalon, hinting that it is the residence of Britain's mythic protector. Jane is ushered inside and

upstairs to the Blue Room where "the Director" resides (for Ransom has not been openly identified, or seen, at this point in the novel). Upon entering his chamber, "She looked and her world was unmade" (140). Ransom's higher innocence is reflected in characteristic MacDonald fashion, through his apparent agelessness. Jane first perceives him to be "a boy, twenty years old," but reflects that "no boy could have so full a beard. And no boy could be so strong. [….] this face was of no age at all" (139-40), for Ransom has become a human myth. The result of this mythic intrusion is an instantaneous influence of renewal over the major divisions inherent in Jane's fallen, human experience:

> For the first time in many years the bright solar blend of king and lover and magician which hangs about the name stole back upon her mind. For the first time in all those years she tasted the word *King* itself with all linked associations of battle, marriage, priesthood, mercy, and power. At that moment, as her eyes first rested on his face, Jane forgot who she was, and where, and her faint grudge against Grace Ironwood, and her more obscure grudge against Mark, and her childhood and her father's house. It was, of course, only for a flash. Next moment she was once more the ordinary social Jane, flushed and confused to find that she had been staring rudely […] at a total stranger. But her world was unmade; she knew that. Anything might happen now. (*THS* 140)

In this flash, Jane experiences the power of true myth to heal such divisions as those between language and meaning, philosophy and reality, the physical and the spiritual, and male and female. In her deepened understanding of the word King, she experiences the reunion of a word and its true meaning. In forgetting her grudge against Grace she experiences a reunion between the philosophical ideas embodied in the name and person of Miss Ironwood, with the reality of that person. By forgetting her misgivings towards Mark, and the socialization of growing up in her "father's house"—which one may assume to have been suffocatingly patriarchal, being identified by her father's very possession of it—Jane tastes a reunion between the sexes and a resolution to the tensions of male and female gender relations. Later in their conversation Jane also recognizes a reunion between humanity and nature as she watches Ransom share his crumbs

with a family of mice. This unmaking and remaking of Jane's world—with the admission that "anything might happen now"—is the acceptance characteristic of Mendlesohn's intrusion fantasy. Ransom, who embodies a reunion between myth and fact (providing in content what Lewis has already practiced through his "science fantasy" form), is the catalyst for the healing of all of the major schisms in Jane's experience and in the novel. Furthermore, this movement from denial to acceptance runs not only through *That Hideous Strength*, but through the entire trilogy, building up towards the climactic encounter between Jane and Ransom.

In *Out of the Silent Planet*, Ransom (and therefore the reader) traverses a portal which opens up the world of fantasy to his comprehension, revealing the fallenness of Earth in juxtaposition to the unfallen nature of Malacandra. *Perelandra* functions within the series as a quest in which Ransom (and therefore the reader) attains higher innocence in the unfallen cosmos and implicitly apprehends Earth's similar need for the renewing force of myth become fact. In *That Hideous Strength*, therefore, Ransom himself becomes the true myth which is needed to renew Earth's fallenness and the reader is, once again, entreated to share in the experience of the point of view character, accepting Ransom as Pendragon, and thus accepting the reality of true myth. It could even be posited that this artistic manipulation is Lewis's way of testing his reader's faith—seeing if they will accept the intrusion, on a contextual and stylistic level. In this moment of pivotal transformation for the point of view character and the reader, Lewis achieves the climax of his space trilogy—a flash in which higher innocence is depicted through Ransom's embodiment and Jane's revelatory experience, but also through a unity of image and form. The seeming tension of the intrusive fantasy thus actually brings a balance and unity which the narrative would otherwise lack.

With Jane's acceptance of true myth, and thus of higher innocence, we see her undergo a re-enactment of her various stages of development. Travelling home after seeing Ransom, she is described as being "so divided against herself that there were three, if not four, Janes in the compartment" (147). "The first" Jane is a representation of her innocent self, which is "simply receptive of the Director" and "delight[ed]," while the "second" Jane represents experience, being "grown-up," "regard[ing] the first with disgust," and identifying the first (innocent) Jane as a "girl" (148). The "third Jane" is the debatable presence to which the narrator's "if not four" refers, and represents simply Jane's conscience, reflecting on herself, and thus flowing into "the larger experience of the fourth Jane" (148). Finally, this fourth Jane is "simply in a state of joy," a state of higher innocence—Joy in Lewis's famous sense—which is now "supreme" over all the other Janes (149). The supremacy of this fourth Jane signals the ultimate resolution of the novel, and of the series, which is to come.

Yet, as the series winds down, it appears to wind up, for another characteristic of the intrusion fantasy is that of escalation. In Mendlesohn's words, "Escalation—of many kinds—is an important element of the rhetoric" of the intrusive fantasy (xxii). In order to stave off familiarization in the protagonist and reader, the magical element must necessarily increase, whether in a quantitative or qualitative fashion; in addition to increased numbers, the intrusions "seem to get louder" (Mendlesohn 153). Upon the appearance of the Intrusion (Ransom as myth become fact), the escalation of intrusions in *That Hideous Strength* seems to increase speed, next in Merlin's appearance and finally culminating in the "descent of the gods" and "the banquet at Belbury" (*THS* 317; 340). The god's descent over St. Anne's is heralded by an increase in volume. First, it begins as a "region of tingling sounds" in the lobby outside the Blue Room (317), then, as the first god (Viritrilbia or Mercury) descends everyone in the kitchen "of a

sudden […] all began talking loudly at once" (318). By the time Jove, or Jupiter, has arrived, the kitchen of St. Anne's is a veritable wingding: "No one afterwards knew how it happened but somehow the kettle was put on, the hot toddy was brewed. Arthur—the only musician among them—was bidden to get out his fiddle. The chairs were pushed back, the floor cleared. They danced. [….] it involved beating the floor, clapping of hands, leaping high" (323). This escalation, represented here by music and dance, is itself a depiction of the advent of higher innocence, or Joy, which Lewis so frequently associates with the great power of music. The beneficent intrusion at St. Anne's escalates into joyous celebration, but this intrusion looks quite different within the sinister halls of Belbury.

In the case of the "banquet at Belbury" episode, the formal concept of escalation is particularly helpful as it explains an aspect of *That Hideous Strength* that is deeply troubling. The steadily escalating nature of the evil Oyarsa's intrusion on Earth (which, one must remember, has been evident since the beginning of *Perelandra*, and therefore growing over the course of two novels) sheds light on what could only be characterized as scenes of giddy, frenzied bloodshed in the rectification of Belbury. George Orwell summarizes these sequences as "so preposterous that it does not even succeed in being horrible in spite of much bloodshed" ("The Scientists"), and the characterization is perhaps more correct than Orwell knew. It is not without reason that the chapter is titled as a "banquet," and it is not a stretch to read the passage as humorous. While the embodiment of myth at St. Anne's manifests through unified merry-making, the myth embodied at the NICE is the divisive curse of Babel. The attendees of the NICE banquet begin first to speak gibberish, then disintegrate into disorderly panic. [94] The panic

[94] This gibberish significantly begins with Jules's accidental mention of "Calvary" rather than "*Cavalry*" (341), once again reinforcing Lewis's central reliance on the concept of incarnation. While Jules intends to refer to a reliance on cavalry—a blunt physical force—he unintentional refers to reliance on Calvary—a popular metonymy for Christ and his crucifixion, which represents both a physical and a spiritual event.

increases, people shoot and trample one another, and a tiger inexplicably appears and begins preying upon attendees. The scene is horrid, yet the narrator welcomes the animals with an ironic smirk, observing that, "For the first time that evening everybody realized how many hiding places the room contained" (345). Even Mr. Bultitude (the resident domestic bear of St. Anne's) joins in on the "banquet" and has the great privilege of eating the Deputy Director. There are several factors at work in this gleeful treatment of grotesque violence. The scene bears an unmistakeable resemblance to the reckoning scene in MacDonald's *The Princes and Curdie*, in which Curdie's monster allies enter the royal banquet hall and massacre those unfaithful to the king. MacDonald describes "A scene of confusion and terror" with an almost identical tone to that of Lewis, humorously noting such details as a footman who is nonplussed until his "finger lay on the floor. Then indeed did the footman run" (*Princess and Curdie* 180). Like MacDonald before him, Lewis's gleeful tone represents the inherent joy of experience being wiped clean—and what better illustration of this than nature wiping out the humans who would dominate and abuse it? In addition, the horrifying, almost ludicrous bloodshed represents the continued escalation of the magical intrusion. This escalation culminates and then ceases in the obliteration of the entirety of Edgestow, leaving only a "cataract of loose earth" (*THS* 365), just as the city of MacDonald's *Princess and Curdie* ultimately "fell with a roaring crash," "went up with its dust," and then fell into "a great silence" (221).[95]

Yet *That Hideous Strength*, and with it the entire space trilogy, does not end with the judgment and escalating destruction of Edgestow. On the contrary, it returns finally to the restorative power of true myth, manifest in Venus's descent on St. Anne's. A final characteristic

[95] See Johnson for a more detailed analysis of *That Hideous Strength* alongside the *Curdie* books. Jeff McInnis has also drawn parallels between MacDonald's Curdie books (specifically *The Princess and the Goblins*) and *That Hideous Strength*.

of intrusion fantasy, as cited by Mendlesohn, is a "sense of encroaching intimacy," suggesting overtones of sexual intrusion (116). While this sense is for Mendlesohn a menacing one, Lewis inverts it in the same way he inverts malevolent intrusion for *the* benevolent Intrusion (or Incarnation). Mendlesohn suggests that the latency and suspense of the intrusion fantasy "is constructed in part through a holding back, a denial of sexuality—and of the truth of relationships between the protagonists" (176). On the level of the novel, the lack of connection between Mark and Jane, both physically and relationally, has instilled a sense of latency, and their reunion at the novel's end is sexually charged. The novel concludes with Jane hastening to a second wedding night, crossing the garden to meet her husband in a "place of sweet smells and bright fires, with food and wine and a rich bed" (380). But this consummation is not limited simply to the central married couple. All the inhabitants of St. Anne's, animal and human alike, pair off with such gusto that MacPhee remarks, "this is becoming indecent" (374). This triumphant celebration of love represents the consummation of the tension that has been building not only in *That Hideous Strength*, but in the entire cosmic trilogy. The disunity that was first recognized by Ransom on Malacandra has finally found union through the embodiment of true myth, and Lewis therefore engages the image of physical, emotional, and spiritual union between male and female as a poignant image of polarity.

How the cosmic trilogy could possibly exist without its final installment is difficult to imagine in light of the over-arching form of the series. The beneficent Intrusion of myth in *That Hideous Strength* answers the growing sense of dissatisfaction produced by an expanding realization of Earthly disharmony in *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*. This movement is reflected simultaneously in the content, style, and form of the three novels, not in spite of, but *because* of the unusual choices Lewis makes to construct these portal, quest, and intrusion

fantasies within a science fiction series, not only depicting innocence, experience, and higher innocence through story, but also through the fusion of two genres that represent them well—the spiritual, imaginative and improbable character of fantasy embodying innocence, and the hard factuality, and evolutionary pragmatism of science fiction representing experience.

Most importantly, we must return to the roots of Lewis's series, with which we began. With the origins of the cosmic trilogy resting on Victorian shoulders, we might say that the central theme that unites the trilogy is itself of Victorian heritage. The Victorian division between Biblical and scientific narratives, as begun with Darwin and perpetuated by Edmund Gosse might be categorized in Lewis's conceptualization of experience, and characterized in the genre division between fantasy and science fiction. But continuing the blending practiced by Charles Kingsley, Lewis therefore practices a sort of narrative higher innocence, realizing his "myth become fact" theme through a genre fusion. This sort of scientific fantasy was not only the type of story Lewis longed to read, but he believed the union of such things to be an integral need for humanity. In *Perelandra* "Lewis," the narrator, explains:

> We tend to think about non-human intelligences in two distinct categories which we label "scientific" and "supernatural" respectively. We think, in one mood, of Mr. Wells' Martians (very unlike the real Malacandrians, by the bye), of his Selenites. In quite a different mood we let our minds loose on the possibility of angels, ghosts, fairies, and the like. But the very moment we are compelled to recognize a creature in either class as *real* the distinction begins to get blurred… (*Perelandra* 11).

Ransom's role as the Pendragon was thereby intended not only as the turning point of a novel, or a trilogy, but of an entire literary genre, and the Victorian era serves not only as the locus of all that needs repair within these genres, but as the origin of their redemption as well.

A comprehensive treatment of the space trilogy as a whole recommends rather a different conclusion than Tolkien's dismay. *That Hideous Strength* plays an integral, intrusive role in the

trilogy, hinging on the shock value of the Arthurian materialization. Despite any personal distaste for the marriage of seemingly opposing genres, or for the intrusive Arthurian fantasy, the critical reader must not overlook the significance of his or her offended sensibilities. Rather than representing an artistic slip-up, Lewis's neo-Victorian use of genre and genre blending to embody myth in both form and content is intended to startle and even offend readers, for such shock and bewilderment mirrors the inherent scandal of God becoming a man, and such tension must be endured, embraced, resolved, and thus beautified by the unifying power of higher innocence.

CHAPTER FOUR: Romantic Metanarrative in *The Chronicles of Narnia*: How Lewis Empowers the Nineteenth-Century Child

The Romantic metanarrative, with its emphasis on the child, is nowhere more apparent than in Lewis's stories for children, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In fact, before the series has even begun, the dedication of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* provides a hint at his central aims and ideas. "My dear Lucy," he writes:

> I wrote this story for you, but when I began it I had not realized that girls grow quicker than books. As a result you are already too old for fairy tales, and by the time it is printed and bound you will be older still. But some day you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again. You can then take it down from some upper shelf, dust it, and tell me what you think of it. I shall probably be too deaf to hear, and too old to understand a word you say, but I shall be
>
> Your affectionate Godfather,
> C. S. Lewis (*LWW* v)

The progression that Lewis describes in this dedication—a child reading fairy stories, an adolescent rejecting them, and an adult returning to them with delight—is based on his own experience of growing up, and the spiritual awakening he experienced upon returning to the Joy-laden literature of childhood. As we have seen, Lewis's autobiography is romantic in idea *and* structure, following a Blakean trajectory, and it is no difficult task to correlate the dedication's fictionalized Lucy Barfield with that same Romantic metanarrative: the child Lucy represents innocence, the adolescent Lucy, experience, and the hypothetical, hoped-for adult Lucy, higher innocence. Lewis also hints at this romantic influence explicitly in his essay "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," when he proposes that he wrote the Chronicles in defiance of "an age so ferociously anti-romantic as our own" (27). That Lewis had a romantic vision at heart is undeniable, and I argue that this dedication specifies that vision. Alister McGrath believes that the overarching project of *Narnia* is "about finding a master story that makes sense of all other stories—and then embracing that story with delight" (279). In this argument McGrath is

supposing a Christian metanarrative, yet the statement applies equally well to Lewis's use of the Romantic metanarrative and, in fact, the Romantic metanarrative does not clash with the Christian foundations of Lewis's imagination, or at least did not appear to do so to Lewis. Thus Lewis hints at the impetus behind the Narnian Chronicles: rather than merely teaching children Christian theology and morals through Biblical allegory, the stories are meant to delight innocence and awaken a longing for higher innocence. The result of these Romantic encounters will, Lewis hopes, drive readers towards Christian truth, but he deliberately foregrounds the Romantic metanarrative, with its universal applicability to human experience, outside of religious creed, practice, or tradition.

Another assumption implicit in the dedication is that Lewis, as author, has reached the requisite stage where one can not only "start reading fairy tales again," but also start writing them. This assumed higher innocence seems to give Lewis special understanding of his child audience; thus Lewis frequently addresses the child not only as a conscious individual, but as an equal. When describing the process of writing for children, Lewis attests:

> We must meet children as equals in that area of our nature where we are their equals. Our superiority consists partly in commanding other areas, and partly (which is more relevant) in the fact that we are better at telling stories than they are. The child as reader is neither to be patronized nor idolized: we talk to him as man to man. [….] we may, under the Omnipotence, sometimes dare to hope that we may do them good. But only such good as involves treating them with respect. We must not imagine that we are Providence or Destiny. ("On Three Ways of Writing for Children" 34)[96]

The result is a style of children's fiction that appeals to children because it gives them moral responsibility and adventurous agency, but some have considered it indicative of Lewis's own

[96] This sentiment is strikingly akin to Nodelman's assertion: "I suspect it is the fatal contradiction at the heart of most adult views of childhood, which insist both that children are different from and even opposite to adults and that they are in the process of becoming more adult all the time" (67).

childishness.[97] Laura Miller notes that Lewis's "facility at writing for children has ever since offered his biographers cause to describe him as a man who never entirely grew up" (9). Indeed A. N. Wilson famously suggests that Lewis was psychologically stunted by the loss of his mother, and that he never properly grew up. But the attribution of childishness is not uncommon even among Lewis's friends and more sympathetic critics. Ruth Pitter said that he possessed "an almost uniquely persisting *child's* sense of glory and nightmare" (qtd. in Downing, *Into the Wardrobe* xiii), and Barratt argues that Lewis never lost his childhood (316). Downing similarly believes that "the unique narrating voice in the chronicles […] sounds like the part of Lewis who is fifty writing for the part of him who is still twelve" (*Into the Wardrobe* xv). In line with Lewis's romantic fictionalization of himself in *Surprised by Joy*, it is perhaps most accurate to imagine that Lewis underwent an era of exile from fairy land, that he lost his childhood, and only regained an appreciation for innocence later in life. Unlike Downing and Barratt, I perceive a Lewis who is not split between his adult and child selves, but who holds the two in the polar logic of higher innocence.[98] For, as we shall see, Lewis is explicit about the necessity of maturation, just as he is insistent that certain child-like qualities are a sign of that maturation. In this way, the dedication sets the tone for the deep romanticism of the Chronicles.

In addition to revealing Lewis's reliance on the Romantic metanarrative for structure and trajectory, the dedication also suggests how distinctly neo-Victorian Lewis's romanticism is in the Narnia stories. By dedicating the book to a child who shares the name of his central protagonist, Lewis steps into the Golden Age tradition of child-inspired storytelling. Surprisingly

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[97] Rowland notes that "the literature of the period we now call Romantic was characterized as infantile and childish" by its contemporary critics (4). This, of course, is not far off from the way critics like A. N. Wilson criticize Lewis of failing to grow up. Lewis is often infantilized by both critics and allies. These childish descriptions are sometimes garnered as accusation, but also as praise—belying the fact that those who remain sympathetic to Lewis's Romanticism see his "child-like-ness" as a positive emblem of that movement.

[98] Gubar makes a similar argument about Golden Age children's authors. She wishes to dispel the myth characterizing those authors as eternally childlike, suggesting that they are actually very aware of the adult, social world, and are empowering children to not only be a part of that world, but to join into the task of shaping it (7).

little has been made of actual children's significance in the creation of Narnia, probably because there is little evidence to support Lewis's creating Narnia with or for any specific child or children. Nevertheless, while Lewis did not partake in the society of children on the level of Lewis Carroll, J. M. Barrie, or Frances Hodgson Burnett, neither was he the misanthrope that biographers and critics of the Wilson school would suggest. Joan Murphy, a younger cousin in the Lewis family, recollects that "Jacks" (as the family affectionately called him) played the role of an engaged and enthusiastic uncle to her when the family was together. She not only remembers the warmth and familiar intimacy of sitting on Jacks's knee, but she also recounts, "he encouraged us […] more than anything else—to make up stories" (172). In one such instance, Lewis was with the children, who were playing with toy boats. Murphy recalls, "I can remember Jacks telling us stories about those boats having adventures—they sailed across the sea and got to the other side—and then he made us make up stories. He never let you get off lightly, we knew we had to do some work—we had to decide where our boats were going" (Murphy 172). Although nearly twenty years before the publication of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), the similarity between Jack's game with the children and the Dawn Treader's quest is notable. Just as Lewis and the children created a story in which their boat "sailed across the sea and got to the other side," so the crew of adventurers on the Dawn Treader sail across the Narnian sea and reach Aslan's country on the utter edge of the ocean. Furthermore, Lewis places himself in the Golden Age tradition in his essay on writing for children, stating, "This is the way of Lewis Carroll, Kenneth Grahame, and Tolkien. The printed story grows out of a story told to a particular child with the living voice and perhaps *ex tempore*" ("On Three Ways" 23). There can be no doubt that Lewis enjoyed children, and was even inspired by them in the writing of Narnia.

The real-life inspiration for the first Narnia story (to whom the dedication is addressed) was Lucy, the daughter of Lewis's close friend and fellow Inkling, Owen Barfield. She was also Lewis's goddaughter, as the dedication suggests. Little writing exists on Lewis's actual relationship with Lucy, though her niece and nephew contribute a few insights. Adelene and Owen A. Barfield report that Lewis "behaved just as an affectionate godfather would" towards their aunt (31). In describing the real Lucy, they report that she "was a happy, lively child who loved dance and music—very outdoorsy, physical, and practical. As in Lewis's descriptions of Lucy Pevensie, she had fair hair that, in her case, came almost to her waist" (Barfield and Barfield 29). Despite lack of evidence for her involvement with the story's creation, Lucy certainly inspired her namesake character in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.[99] Furthermore, Lucy reportedly adored the book, which she saw as "her own" (Barfield and Barfield 31), and continued reading it throughout her lifetime with unfading delight.

Yet Lewis may have specifically chosen Lucy Barfield as the inspiration and recipient of the first Narnia story not merely because she was a real child to whom he was close, but also because of the Romantic associations her name evokes. Adelene and Owen A. Barfield suspect that Lewis and Barfield both loved the name Lucy long before Lucy Barfield was adopted. Particularly, they note Wordsworth's use of the name in his famous poems, and they also recall Barfield's depiction of a character named Lucy in *The Rose on the Ash-Heap*, wherein Lucy is "the adoptive daughter of the Lord of Albion, with whom she 'guides and guards all that is good

[99] Lewis was probably first inspired by the children living at the Kilns as evacuees from World War II bombings in London. It is highly likely that Jill Flewett, one evacuee child with whom Lewis stayed in close contact, is the inspiration for Jill Pole of the later books. Hooper recalls, "Though Lewis had probably forgotten it, there is some evidence which would seem to indicate that the initial impetus behind his Narnian stories came from real children" (*Past Watchful Dragons* 29). Hooper, and others, note that the first manuscript evidence of Narnia, a paragraph which resembles the opening paragraph to *The Lion*, was recorded by Lewis while the Kilns was inhabited by these evacuee children. Telling, however, is the fact that this initial paragraph did not include a character by the name of Lucy. Clearly, Lewis found some greater inspiration in Lucy Barfield that precipitated the story's completion.

in the English spirit'" (Barfield and Barfield 32). [100] Both associations, of course, are Romantic, for while Lucy is a prominent figure in Wordsworth, Albion is an even more notable character in Blake's mythology, from which Barfield, no doubt, drew inspiration. And thus an inspection of Lewis's goddaughter brings us full circle—back to the Blakean paradigm, the Romantic metanarrative which Lewis outlines in his dedication, and which drives the Narnian Chronicles. In fact, the Barfields suggest that Lewis's portrayal of Lucy captures not only the real child's vitality and innocence, but also the higher innocence towards which the reader is meant to aspire. They argue that "in the character of Lucy Pevensie, [Lewis] has given not only my aunt but also every child (of any age) a higher self into whom she might project herself" (Barfield and Barfield 31).

Lewis is following in the tradition of Golden Age children's literature by suggesting that his story is inspired by the child to whom he dedicates it, yet he is also basing his child protagonists on romantic dream children—the fictionalizations of those real Victorian children. Victorian and Edwardian children's authors frequently developed stories with and for significant children in their lives: Lewis Carroll wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871) for Alice Liddell; J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1911) arose from imaginary games he played with the Llewellyn-Davies boys; George MacDonald's fairy tales and *Curdie* books (1872 & 1883) originated as bedtime stories for his own children; Colin of *The Secret Garden* (1911) was inspired by Frances Hodgson Burnett's son Lionel; and Kenneth Grahame invented the talking animals of *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) in letters to his son, "Mouse." In all of these cases of Golden Age children's literature, the child protagonists are simultaneously based on a real child and a romantic dream child, for the real child elicits or

[100] Prothero and Williams similarly note that "In Narnia, it is Lucy Pevensie who is a very Wordsworthian sort of child" (49). She is "Nature's Priest" to her siblings and friends (50).

inspires the story, but the fictional representation of that child is unavoidably romantic—frozen in the stasis of literature, unaging, the image of all that is good and innocent. Knoepflmacher has famously described the fusion of real and imaginary child thus: "To 'behold' in a younger […] Other 'what I was once,' each writer must create an imaginary dream-child" (12). Lewis similarly bases his child characters on both real and unreal children. But instead of fusing the real and the romantic child, he fuses the real child with his favorite Victorian and Edwardian iterations of that romantic dream child.[101] In this way he mimics the creative (and highly romantic) method of Golden Age authors, as well as allowing their creations to inspire his own.[102]

By recognizing and understanding Lewis's connection to Golden Age authors and texts, I will accomplish several objectives. I will trace and confirm the centrality of the Romantic metanarrative in the Narnia stories, particularly in shaping the appearance and growth of the child protagonists. I will also answer some of the most popular objections to Narnia. Some have argued that Lewis wishes to freeze the child in innocence, or that he punishes his protagonists for reaching sexual maturity, especially in the case of Susan. When we view Narnia as working

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[101] I can by no means prove that Victorian and Edwardian children's authors were not similarly influenced by fictional children. It is probable that they were influenced by other contemporary writings for and about children; however, their processes of creation imply a much more explicit link between their real child subjects and their resulting fictional characters. For instance, Carroll's Alice is a direct representation of Alice Liddell (to the extent that Carroll pasted a picture of Alice into the original manuscript), and differs from Liddell primarily in her romantic characteristics: she is an eternal, un-aging child, she can enter imaginary worlds, she can talk to animals and shape-shift, among other things. Lewis's Lucy, on the other hand, is similar to Lucy Barfield only in limited ways, and shows as many—if not more—similarities to Alice, with whom she shares common characteristics including, but not limited to, her romantic traits. Lucy is clearly based directly on Alice, therefore absorbing Alice's romantic characteristics, rather than appearing to be a version of Lucy Barfield, translated through general romantic concepts.

[102] Green and Hooper express a dis-ease with any attempt to attach the Narnia books to any sources other than the obvious: the Bible. They recommend that everything Lewis read had an influence on him, even when he himself did not realize it (251-52). In their attempts to preempt research on Lewis's "influences," Green and Hooper simultaneously discourage yet encourage the critic by admitting that Lewis's work is deeply, even subconsciously, infused with a variety of literary influences. In fact, Hooper at times argues against himself on this topic. In his essay "Narnia: The Author, the Critics, and the Tale" he admits that everything Lewis writes is rife with literary allusions and borrowings—including those from the Bible; yet the Bible is not the only or central source for Narnia (112). We must proceed, therefore, with care, but also with confidence.

within and building upon the tradition of Victorian and Edwardian children's literature, however, it becomes clear that he not only encourages spiritual and physical growth in the child, but that he also seeks to empower the child through imaginative agency. Thus, I will demonstrate Lewis not merely recycling the tropes and characters of Golden Age children's literature, but actually advancing a literary genre, and providing a refined and compelling image of romantic ideals that builds on his nineteenth century precursors. In short, I claim that the Romantic metanarrative is a central structuring agent in Narnia, that Lewis takes inspiration for Narnia from Golden Age children's literature, and that Narnia furthers the empowering objective of that literary movement through his own unique reimagining of its romantic ideals. I will therefore proceed to examine the Narnia stories through several different lenses, all relating to nineteenth-century texts, authors, or popular discourse about the child.

First, I will argue for the influence of the "secret garden" concept on Lewis's creation. Gardens feature prominently in Golden Age children's stories, particularly *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Secret Garden*. Readers tend to interpret Lewis's garden imagery in the Narnia stories as allusions to Eden, whether in its Biblical, Miltonic, or Spenserian iterations. I would like to suggest that reading Narnia itself and the gardens within it as an allusion to the "children's garden" of nineteenth century literature opens up new interpretations of exactly what Lewis is doing; namely, Lewis uses Golden Age garden imagery to highlight the child's imagination, agency, and radical growth potential.

Next, I will turn my attention to two nineteenth-century concepts that play a major role in Narnia. On the one hand, Lewis utilizes the trope of the talking animal, as employed by Carroll, Burnett, Grahame, and others. The child's ability to communicate with animals represents the Romantic notion that innocence enjoys a special communion with the natural world. On the other

hand, Lewis also alludes to the Victorian fear of degeneration, frequently calling badly behaved children "beasts" and threatening Narnia's talking animals with the loss of their speech. In introducing degeneration motifs into his fantasy world Lewis most prominently follows the footsteps of George MacDonald, and—like him—employs degeneration not merely as a warning or a punishment, but as an example of regression and an encouragement towards progressive movement. In this way I will argue that Lewis empowers both the innocent child, through her ability to enter Narnia and communicate with its inhabitants, and even empowers the child that moves into experience by suggesting that experience must be countered by the forward momentum of higher innocence. In this, I will once again examine Lewis's use of evolutionary narratives. As demonstrated with the space trilogy in chapter three, I will highlight the ways in which Lewis relies on nineteenth-century Darwinian thought (and anxieties) to depict spiritual growth and regression in Narnia.

Having hinted that experience is a form of stasis, I will then examine Lewis's allusions to the conundrum of *Peter Pan*. I will suggest that Lewis embraces the fantasy landscape of Barrie's work, while rejecting his fixation on the un-aging child. While both Barrie and Lewis present the reader with dead children, Barrie's dead child is static, and Lewis's are dynamic. In particular, his depiction of Susan is a condemnation of the Peter Pan complex, and suggests that experience, rather than innocence, encourages detrimental stasis.

Finally, I will demonstrate the influence of MacDonald's depictions of higher innocence on Lewis's own portraits of that state. Focusing specifically on *The Last Battle* (1956), I will argue that Lewis builds on MacDonald's Victorian Romantic pictures of higher innocence, and produces the most successful representation of Christianized Coleridgean polarity to date. As in chapters two and three, I will demonstrate how Lewis invokes Christ's incarnation through his

depiction of higher innocence, once again employing this Christian image as the ultimate instance of polarity, and therefore of higher innocence.

These pursuits resonate with Laura Miller's sentiments in *The Magician's Book*: "while religion is an unavoidable subject when considering Narnia, my goal has been to illuminate its other, unsung dimensions, especially the deep roots of the Chronicles in the universal experiences of childhood and in English literature" (14-15). Miller is perhaps over-ambitious in attempting to focus purely on non-religious ideas, yet it is often most productive to approach Lewis's religious meanings and themes *through* his more immediate literary strategies. In other words, the religious meanings in Narnia become most powerful only when we read Narnia as story, rather than allegory. This is the argument of most Christian Lewis scholars. Hooper, Downing, Schakel, and others concern themselves with refuting claims that Narnia is allegory, largely because of the way this belief impacts (or, rather, detracts from) the experience and enjoyment of reading. My project, however, is the first to promote such a reading of Narnia through the lens of Golden Age texts.

"A World All Her Own": Narnia as Secret Garden

Although gardens have a long history in England, they rose to particular prominence in the Victorian era. While the Renaissance garden served as an emblem of scientific, technological, and social progress,[103] Victorian gardens embodied the nostalgic, pastoral longings of the Romantics, and increasingly offered respite from the chaos and fog of the "satanic mills" of industrialized city life. They also become ideological landscapes for popular thought: "Victorian concerns […] found in gardens a useful metaphor—control of the landscape, gendered roles, and competing philosophies of education and child development" (Jenkins 427).

[103] See Amy L. Tigner's *Literature and the Renaissance Garden from Elizabeth I to Charles II*.

Perhaps most prominent was the association of the garden (and/or its floral inhabitants) "with young girls and the cultivation of desired female conduct" (Jenkins 427).[104] As a feminized, domesticated space, however, gardens were also seen as the province of children more generally, particularly because of the Romantic associations between child and nature. Pierce notes: "The garden became a way for the Victorians to bring something of the natural world into their domestic spheres, a way to bring something of the country into the towns and the cities" (473); in this way, the garden represented the perfect place for the child's imagination. In the garden the child had free rein to play and enjoy the natural world, to engage in imagination and creativity outside of the formal constraints of the mother-dominated house.

Perhaps the touchstone of the Victorian "child's garden" is R. L. Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885). This poetry collection consists of poems addressed to the child, and written in a child's voice. While the focus of the poems varies considerably, they are all concerned with capturing the experience of childhood, and most frequently the child's power of imagination, which is repeatedly located in the garden. One such instance, "Pirate Story," repeatedly parallels a real garden scene with a child's imagined sea voyage: "waves are on the meadow like the waves there are at sea" (9). Colley notes:

> In these verses the dualities of home and distant skies, land and sea, trees and ships, are not alienating; they do not exile the child, for the child belongs to a larger perspective that collapses the distant and the contiguous. With ease, he journeys back and forth between modes of consciousness and terrain without the experience of difference and duality that can complicate the adult experience and exacerbate the sense of difference. [….] These verses […] recover what Carlyle termed the 'elasticity' of childhood. (304)

[104] Pierce, Price and Jenkins all discuss Victorian gardens as spaces of female cultivation and (limited) power. Price, in particular, stresses the manner in which John Sedding's *Garden Craft—Old and New* (1891) describes the garden in female terms, while characterizing the gardener with masculine language. Also see Lynch's article on Austen and "Greenhouse Romanticism" to trace this concept back to earlier nineteenth-century roots.

The garden provides the child a "subjective," "self-contained," and "malleable space" (Colley 307, 308), in which the child's imagination paradoxically experiences the freedom of nature and the cultivation of nurture. Stevenson's garden exists in dual forms as both the collection of verses itself and the space in which the child protagonist of many of the poems plays, and both are depicted as the province of childhood, to the exclusion of adults. Thus the narrator wistfully reflects that he "has grown up and gone away," leaving only "a child of air"—the memory of his childhood—"that lingers in the garden there" ("To Any Reader" 101). This nostalgic memory of the child in the garden represents a Victorian iteration of Romantic longing for lost innocence, and appears not only in Stevenson, but throughout Golden Age literature, often to the detriment of the child's agency.

Victorian nostalgia for childhood too frequently manifests itself in surveillance of the child. Even though the garden provides relative freedom for imaginative play, Stevenson admits that "from the house your mother sees / You playing round the garden trees" ("To Any Reader" 101). Many Golden Age authors have been accused not merely of surveying, but of controlling, punishing, even kidnapping the child, and this colonization extends to the garden motif in literature. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* a garden is placed before Alice not as her special domain, but as "the loveliest garden you ever saw," from which she is exiled, despite her "longing" to enter (21). While she is big, Alice cannot fit through the door into the garden, yet, while she is small, she cannot reach the key to open the locked door into that garden. Apparently, though the garden is a perfect fit for the child's smallness, only the larger adult can retrieve its key. Thus Alice is punished both for being a child, and for growing up. In hopes of entering the garden, Alice willingly changes her size and shape through the consumption of various foods and drinks, but the result is confusion about age and identity. While trapped in the rabbit's house she

reflects, "when I grow up, […]—but I'm grown up now, […] at least there's no room to grow any more *here*" (55), and when questioned by the Pigeon she "doubtfully" replies, "I—I'm a little girl," as if she were no longer sure whether she is a child or not (79). Even when Alice finally *does* get into the garden, she does not find the idyllic setting of "bright flower-beds and cool fountains" that it appeared to be from without (113). Instead, Alice finds that the garden is already tainted—the pure whiteness of the roses being besmirched with red paint by "three gardeners" (115). Despite its initial appearance of innocence, the garden is actually under adult rule, and the gardeners are an extension of that power. Furthermore, the "play" that takes place in this garden is neither childish, nor innocent, but a bad-tempered and confusing game of croquet, which is subject at all times to the Queen of Hearts' whims.[105] In Carroll, therefore, we find that the garden only initially appears to be an empowering child's space, but cannot be properly enjoyed while under the surveillance of the adult. [106] As long as the adult controls access, the supposed "child's garden" cannot offer true freedom, empowerment, or imaginative agency.

The child's garden must therefore be hidden from adult surveillance, an innovation introduced by Frances Hodgeson Burnett in *The Secret Garden* (1911). In Mary's case, a garden that was once closed by adult hands is re-opened into her sole control. Nature, rather than an adult figure, holds the garden key, and nature—via the robin, the wind, and the natural magic of happenstance—entrusts Mary with access. Monica Hughes perceives a shift in children's

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[105] It is highly likely that Carroll is here parodying Ruskin's "On Queens' Gardens" by showing the Queen of Hearts to be an inept tyrant. For a more in-depth exploration of the relationship between Carroll and Ruskin's work, see Pierce and White.

[106] There are over twenty references to the Alice books in Lewis's letters (for some examples see *Collected Letters Vol. I* 185-86; 226-27; 272; 276; 439; 440; 570; 628; 693; *Vol. II* 687; 992; *Vol. III* 221; 403-04; 769; 824; 922; 1498). Carroll's books were clearly dear to Lewis and he also took an interest in Carroll's biography, for he read R. L. Green's *Lewis Carroll* (1952) at least twice, and also wrote approvingly of *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll*, written by Stuart Dodgson Collingwood (*Vol. II* 687). There is also evidence to suggest that *Through the Looking-Glass* may have been a model for *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. The books share some key scenes, a common jovial atmosphere, and a similar monarchical theme.

literature with *The Secret Garden*. While Burnett's early books, such as *A Little Princess* (1905), portray children as virtuous victims, "her last book, *The Secret Garden*, […] is the beginning of 'empowerment.' Most importantly, this book acknowledges the need for a secret and imaginative life for the growing child" (154).[107] Having understood the Victorian Romantic associations of childhood and gardens, it is appropriate that Burnett should choose a garden as the central image in her story. The garden is the space in which Mary takes action, makes decisions, learns to engage her imagination. The budding and growth within Mary's secret garden represents (and mirrors) her own internal development. Unlike Alice, whose innocence (embodied through smallness) keeps her from the garden key, Mary's innocent ability to connect, even communicate, with nature leads her to recovering the garden's lost key. Furthermore, the garden is a space in which Mary and her friends have complete autonomy; the secrecy of the garden walls means they are hidden away from regulative adult influence. In *The Secret Garden* it is the children themselves who foster the growth of the garden, who better themselves and strengthen themselves within the garden walls. They deliberately cultivate the power of nature and successfully achieve their aims.

Despite movement towards empowerment, however, Hughes notes that Edwardian, like Victorian children's fiction offers only fake, imaginative worlds for children—"an unreal world, with no real empowerment" (155). While Mary and Colin enjoy the secrecy of their garden for some time, the novel ends with a restoration of the garden to its original owner, Archibald Craven. Critics have scorned the movement of narrative focus from Mary, to Colin, to Mr. Craven's reclamation of son and garden as a "capitulation to androcentric values" (Jenkins 426), and it is likewise a final homage to adult power. Mary and Colin only imagined that the garden

[107] Hughes lists Edith Nesbit as similarly encouraging child empowerment (154). Nesbit is another famous influence on Lewis's writing for children, but I have chosen to exclude her from this chapter, as her influence on Lewis has been widely discussed. For one such example, see Nicholson.

somehow belonged to them—it really belonged to Mr. Craven all the time—and they only imagined that "magic" made them happy and strong—healthy diet and exercise did the real work. All of the fun, in other words, was only in the children's heads; their imaginative world and experience is ultimately undermined by social and scientific reality.

In Narnia, Lewis takes the "child's garden" concept a step further. Rowan Williams observes that "one feature of the Edwardian style which Lewis reproduces to great effect" is his capacity for "creating a sense of collusion between author and young reader at the expense of the adult world" (Williams 35). Even more than the narrator of *The Secret Garden*, Lewis manages to ally himself with his child readers, to place them truly outside of adult surveillance. More than this, however, Narnia is a turning point, because the landscape is a real place, and "the juvenile protagonists suffer, are afraid and have real interior and external conflicts" (Hughes 155). Thus Laura Miller recalls, "The girl I was fast growing into fiercely seized upon the idea of possessing an entire, secret world of my own. And the seeds of the adult I would become reveled in the autonomy of Lewis's child heroes and the adventures that awaited them once they escaped the wearying bonds of grown-up supervision" (25). Unlike Alice, whose disillusioning garden experience is further undermined upon her realization that it was merely a dream, or Mary and Colin, who must exchange their childish fancies for adult realities, Lewis's child protagonists embark on real quests in an actual parallel world. This also explains Lewis's insistence on the portal quest fantasy (as discussed in chapter three), rather than a wholly independent fantasy world. In order for the child's experience of its "secret garden" to be real, it must begin in the real world, rather than some dreamscape or fantasy land—thus necessitating the passage between

England and Narnia.[108] Somewhat similarly, Norris argues that the portal structure of the Narnia stories keeps them from being escapist, and instead allows the children to face real world problems, fears and trauma, but in a liminal space, thereby avoiding the unbearable ugliness of reality, and simultaneously engaging the imagination. She asserts that Lewis "believed children have the capacity to overcome the horrors to which they are subjected in the outside world—that they, too, are survivors" (76). Narnia thus becomes the perfect secret garden, for it is a world hidden away from the real world and adult authority, yet the return to the real world does not undermine Narnia's reality so much as confirm it. Thus the Pevensies can enjoy discussing their secret world even whilst living fully in the real world.

At the beginning of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952) Lucy and Edmund are "talking about Narnia, […] their own private and secret country" (*VDT* 3). Lewis as narrator admits that "for us it is only an imaginary country," but significantly explains that "Edmund and Lucy were luckier than other people in that respect. Their secret country was real" (3). Even in *The Last Battle*, when all of the protagonists—except for Eustace and Jill—have grown too old to visit Narnia, they still meet to secretly reminisce about their adventures, calling themselves "the seven friends of Narnia" (43). Clearly Narnia is more significant as a secret garden for the sole purpose that it is a real place and exists not only in the imagination, but in reality.

Lewis also alludes to Burnett's work more directly within the text of the Narnia stories.[109] One significant instance is in the manner that the Pevensies discover Narnia. In Burnett's story,

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[108] Tolkien was famously displeased with Narnia, taking particular exception with the portal structure of Lewis's romances. Tolkien felt that a created world should be self-sufficient, and should exist without any reference to the real world. This is one possible answer to Tolkien's disapprobation.

[109] There is surprisingly scant archival evidence that Lewis owned or read *The Secret Garden*. It is not mentioned in his letters or notebooks, and if he owned a copy of it, the C. S. Lewis Library Collection at the Wade Center did not inherit that copy. The only positive evidence of Lewis's familiarity with Burnett's masterpiece is through R. L. Green, whose scholarship on Victorian children's authors made them of enduring interest to Lewis. Green discusses *The Secret Garden* in his work, *Tellers of Tales: Children's Books and Their Authors* (1946), of which Lewis's copy is retained by the Wade Center.

Colin and Mary take advantage of "wet days" (153) to explore Misselthwaite Manor. On a similarly rainy day in *The Lion*, Peter announces, "I'm going to explore in the house" and the narrator explains, "Everyone agreed to this and that was how the adventures began" (*LWW* 3). Like Misselthwaite Manor with its large "galleries where you could run" and examine portraits, its exotic Indian knick-knacks, and its "weird old things they did not know the use of" (Burnett 154-55), the Professor's house has "a very long room full of pictures" and curiosities such as "a suit of armor," "a harp," and "a room all hung with green" (*LWW* 3). When Mary suggests that they explore the unused rooms in the house, Colin replies, "A hundred rooms no one goes into, [….] It sounds almost like a secret garden" (Burnett 154). When the Pevensies, like Colin and Mary, are denied a day outdoors in "the garden" (*Lion* 3), they also embark on a search, which leads Lucy to the wardrobe, and thus into their own secret garden: Narnia. For Colin, and thus for Burnett, the thrill of the "secret garden" clearly has to do with a state of mind, an awakening of the imagination, which is why the gothic sublime of endless empty rooms engages the same romantic wonder as the isolation, beauty, and mystery of the garden. In the Pevensies case, this gothic curiosity leads to the more tangible sublime of stepping into another world, and thus into the most truly secret of gardens.

The greatest wealth of allusions to Burnett's *Secret Garden* appears in *The Silver Chair* (1953). The entrance to Narnia in this particular story is through a door not unlike that into Burnett's secret garden—a door that has long been locked: "at the top of the shrubbery was a high stone wall and in that wall a door[….] This door was nearly always locked. But there had been times when people had found it open; or perhaps there had been only one time. But you may imagine how the memory of even one time kept people hoping, and trying the door" (*SC* 8). Just as Mary yearns to enter the secret garden, Eustace longs, "If only the door was open again"

(*SC* 8). By a strange series of events (in both cases too remarkable to be labeled anything less than destiny), he, like Mary, finds that "the handle turned and the door opened" (8).[110]

Finally, *The Silver Chair* is the first of the Narnia stories in which a single boy and a single girl enter Narnia, and it is surely no coincidence that Eustace and Jill both start out as rather unattractive subjects, mirroring Mary and Colin. Jane Darcy observes that *The Secret Garden* "brings together a neglected garden and two neglected children and shows how their growth is interdependent" (77). This is similar to the process by which Lewis's protagonists are always brought to Narnia to solve major problems in that world, and experience personal growth through the accomplishment of their various quests. "Most of Lewis's children are quite unattractive before they visit Narnia, and they come back much improved," notes Hooper (*Past Watchful* 85), and this is nowhere more true than in the case of Eustace and Jill.[111] Just like Mary and Colin in *The Secret Garden*, Eustace and Jill begin their journey with constant bickering and general crossness, but they return to the real world as allies and friends.

In both Burnett and Lewis the child's improvement is based less on strict moralism and instead on an expansion of imagination. In *The Way Into Narnia* (2005) Peter Schakel suggests that "[t]he sheer imaginativeness of such stories, like that of much poetry, adds to life, creates sensations we never had before, and enlarges our conception of possible experience" (34). Susan Sowerby expresses this when she says that "there's nothin' children likes as much as play actin'"

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[110] Additionally, the character of Puddleglum bears a striking resemblance to Ben Weatherstaff. Both characters are initially unattractive to the eyes of the children, and have a gruff, pessimistic manner, yet are ultimately sentimental, optimistic and endearing. Biographers frequently mention (and Lewis's letters confirm) that Lewis consciously based Puddleglum on his gardener, Fred Paxford, who has been described as "inwardly optimistic, outwardly pessimistic" (Hooper, *Collected Letters, Vol II* 213). Striking, however, is the fact that Paxford, like Ben Weatherstaff, was a gardener; Lewis may have, in this case as in so many others, fused a real-life inspiration with a fictional one, for Puddleglum is not only reminiscent of Weatherstaff in appearance, personality and narrative function, but his habitation in the northern Marsh, near Ettinsmoor, is certainly more akin to Weatherstaff's Yorkshire moorland's than to Paxford's Oxfordshire.

[111] They also participate in a ritual similar to that which Colin leads in the secret garden. While Colin commands everyone to sit in a circle and chants about his "magic"—saying "Magic! Magic! Come and help!" (Burnett 141)—Eustace makes Jill stand with arms outstretched in a chant of "Aslan, Aslan, Aslan! […] Please let us two go into" Narnia (*SC* 6-7).

and "[t]h' more they laugh th' better for 'em!" (Burnett 145). Clearly the key to the secret garden's success as a moral enrichment is the imaginative play involved. By engaging their imaginations Mary and Colin learn to be more responsible and pleasant human beings, friends, family members. But perhaps the improvements of Narnia as a secret garden are weightier than those of Burnett's garden. Miller admits, "I don't believe that my appreciation [for Narnia] amounts to mere nostalgia or a yearning for my own lost innocence. […]the child I once was […] prized the Chronicles" based on "her belief (correct, I still think) that they educated her on the nature of evil as well as good, and that she was the better for it" (Miller 15). In response to critics who perceive Narnia as too overtly Christian, moralistic and narrow-minded, Heather Meacock proposes that "the Narnia Chronicles […] transcend genre specification," and "lend themselves to a broad and inclusive concept of spirituality" (96). Ultimately, Meacock argues that this openness of interpretation and application represents an empowerment of the child's ability to read, interpret, and even discourse with the author and ideas: "Within this dialogue [between writer and reader], meaning is neither fixed nor absolute. Children are able to locate themselves in culture and in history, in dialogue with a teacher or in silent dialogue with the writer. For this hidden relationship to flourish, freedom to imagine is needed; this space is provided by writers such as Lewis" (99). In this way Narnia provides a secret garden space where the child reader does not passively receive the story, but is an active imaginative participant, shaping and interpreting the story he or she reads. Notably, this echoes Marah Gubar's argument about Golden Age authors, who, she claims, were "Self-conscious about the fact that adult-produced stories shape children" and therefore "represented children as capable of reshaping stories, conceiving of them as artful collaborators in the hope that—while a complete

escape from adult influence is impossible—young people might dodge the fate of functioning as passive parrots" (6).

By equipping the child as active reader and interpreter, Narnia also intertwines the concept of the secret garden with reading. Miller notes this connection both in Lewis's stories, and in his early experience of Joy with Warnie's toy garden; she furthermore states:

> Gardens are man-made concentrations of the natural world, places where nature is trained to seem more itself than it is when left to its own devices. In a way, the artificiality of gardens is like the artificiality of stories, which take the components of life and arrange them into forms that intensify and order them, saturating them with meaning. (43)

Narnia as a secret garden is repeatedly tied up also into the metaphor of reading. Adventures in Narnia are secret garden experiences that teach one to be a good reader, and, in turn, Narnia reveals the power of stories and reading as a preparation for true adventure.

In the same scene of *The Voyage* where Edmund and Lucy discuss Narnia as "their own […] secret country" we are also introduced to Eustace, who serves as a foil for the Pevensies. Eustace refers to Narnia as the Pevensies' "old game" and the narrator informs us, "He thought […] they were making it all up; and as he was quite incapable of making anything up himself, he did not approve of that" (*VDT* 4-5). Even when he arrives in Narnia, Eustace cannot appreciate it because he has no imaginative capacity, and he has no imaginative capacity because, we are told, he has not read "the sort of books those Pevensie kids read," which are "the right books" to prepare one for adventuring (*VDT* 61, 68). Yet, the very experience of being in Narnia apparently has the same impact as the books Eustace has hitherto failed to read, for in Narnia "he began to be a different boy" (*VDT* 92). It is no leap to suggest that the experiences of the child protagonists are meant to mirror the experience of reading itself, and many scholars have noted as much. Downing aptly observes, "Each Narnia book is like a little wardrobe. It contains a

looking glass in which readers will see themselves in surprising new ways" (*Wardrobe* xvii). But this concept is further enriched when adding a layer of metaphor, when considering the connection between the book and the garden. Perhaps the best textual blending of these concepts appears at the beginning of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.* When all four Pevensies finally arrive in Narnia, the first creature they encounter is, significantly, a robin:

> They were all still, wondering what to do next, when Lucy said, "Look! There's a robin, with such a red breast. It's the first bird I've seen here. I say!—I wonder can birds talk in Narnia? It almost looks as if it wanted to say something to us." Then she turned to the Robin and said, "Please, can you tell us where Tumnus the Faun has been taken to?" As she said this she took a step towards the bird. It at once hopped away but only as far as to the next tree. There it perched and looked at them very hard as if it understood all they had been saying. Almost without noticing that they had done so, the four children went a step or two nearer to it.
> [….]
> "Do you know," said Lucy, "I really believe he means us to follow him."
> [….] "We're following a guide we know nothing about. [….]Why shouldn't it be leading us into a trap?" [said Edmund.]
> "That's a nasty idea." [said Peter] "Still—a robin you know. They're good birds in all the stories I've ever read." (*LWW* 48-49)

Just like Mary's robin in *The Secret Garden* looks "as if he were talking" (40), so this bird appears to have a high level of consciousness and to communicate with the children, and just as the robin leads Mary to the secret garden's key, so this robin leads the Pevensies deeper into their own secret country. Yet, this is also a moment in which reading is a literal and metaphorical guide. Peter knows to trust the robin because he has read stories about them (presumably he has even read Burnett),[112] but the very exchange represents a moment of interpretation. The children must read this new world in its complexity and determine correct meanings and loyalties. The garden becomes a text that requires interpretation, and rewards good reading.

[112] This is only one of many cases where characters make good decisions based on stories. Downing illustrates this: "Throughout the Narnia Chronicles, good characters pay heed to nursery stories and rhymed messages, while evil characters ignore them. Both Caspian and Reepicheep turn out to be wise in believing their nurses; but Miraz, the usurper in *Prince Caspian*, dismisses the idea of Talking Beasts as 'fairy tales' and 'nonsense . . . only fit for babies'" (*Wardrobe* 90).

Not only does Narnia itself represent a secret garden, however, but there is one particularly important garden that appears twice in the series. This is the walled garden of both *The Magician's Nephew* (1955) and *The Last Battle* (1956), which plays a significant role in Narnia's beginning and end. In *The Magician's Nephew* Digory is sent on quest to this walled garden to retrieve a piece of fruit for Aslan. This garden is, without a doubt, an echo of Eden, and strongly relates to Spenser and Milton's gardens, but it is also reminiscent of Burnett's secret garden. The narrator observes, "You never saw a place which was so obviously private. You could see at a glance that it belonged to someone else" (*MN* 140). Just as Mary enjoys Craven's garden, so Digory enters with the knowledge that he is enjoying another's special place. The garden also represents an interpretive task for Digory, as he must read its inscription, interpret this along with Aslan's instructions, and act accordingly. Inside the garden, Digory chooses obedience and the good of others over his own selfish desire for the fruit. When he returns to Aslan with the fruit, he is rewarded—the improvement of his own secret garden experience then pours out into his real life, when he is allowed to take the fruit he retrieved from the garden to his sick mother. Again, this garden is a picture of the garden as book, and the fruit Digory retrieves represents the benefit of reading, of visiting a secret garden.[113] The metaphor grows more complex in *The Last Battle*.

In *The Last Battle* Digory, along with the friends of Narnia, returns to the walled garden. When Jill, Eustace, and Tirian are thrown through the stable door during the last battle for Narnia, they find themselves not in a dark stable, but in a new, more vibrant Narnia. They are reunited with Digory, Polly and the Pevensies, and by looking back through the stable door they witness Narnia's judgment and destruction. Turning away from the door, they travel "further up

[113] It is also pertinent that unlike the fruit of Eden, which represents the knowledge of good and evil, the fruit Digory picks from the Narnian garden is the "Apple of Youth" (*MN* 162). Clearly there is some link between this garden and eternal youth, or higher innocence.

and further in" to this new land, and eventually find themselves at the gate of the walled garden. Once inside the garden, "Lucy looked hard at the garden and saw that it was not really a garden at all but a whole world" (*LB* 170). She exclaims, "This is still Narnia, and, more real and more beautiful than the Narnia down below, just as *it* was more real and more beautiful than the Narnia outside the Stable door! I see . . . world within world, Narnia within Narnia" (170-71). In this way the garden, like a book, is bigger on the inside. Just as enclosing the child in the garden actually results in an expansion of their imagination and perception, so enclosure within a book expands the mind that reads it. For this reason, Lewis provides one more metaphor to explain this Heavenly Narnia: not only is this Heavenly reality like a garden—expanding as it encloses—but it is also like a never-ending story. Thus, upon entering this garden, Digory, Polly, Jill, Eustace, and the Pevensies find that "at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before" (174). In this climactic ending of the series, Lewis once again utilizes the concept of the nineteenth century children's garden, specifically Burnett's secret garden, to express the invocation of Joy through reading, and thus the perfect textual image of the ascent towards higher innocence. The lineage of the Romantic child, as translated through Golden Age garden imagery, clearly informs Lewis's own construction of Romantic metanarrative.

Talking Animals and Beastly Children

It seems fitting to move from a discussion of the child in nature to one about the child's ability to communicate with the animal world. One of the most iconic and memorable characteristics of Narnia as a fantasy world is its talking animal inhabitants. Child readers tend to relish the idea of animals that speak and act like humans. Lewis himself was interested in "dressed animals" as a child, inventing the fictional world of Animal Land. Unlike the dressed

animals of Lewis's Boxen stories, however, Narnian "animals appear in their natural beauty and interesting differences. They are the real thing" (Hooper, *Dragons* 75). Walter Hooper suggests that talking animals were well suited for the brevity of Lewis's fairy tale genre, because he could quickly and efficiently characterize them without copious amounts of description or event (81). Also, "They do not have to be children or adults. There is no struggle for existence, no domestic worries" (83). Lewis's decision to place talking animals in the Narnia stories was thus based not merely on his own tastes, but also on literary tradition, and narrative concerns. Lewis speculates that talking beasts are useful as "an admirable hieroglyphic which conveys psychology, types of character, more briefly than novelistic presentation and to readers whom novelistic presentation could not yet reach" ("On Three Ways" 27). Morgenstern notes that the talking animal is often an innocent being that is given the adult attributes of language and culture, yet retains its child-like-ness through its "flatness" or simplicity as a character (119). In other words, the talking animal is a useful tool for the type of fiction Lewis wanted to write, because different animals naturally suggest certain qualities, and require less narrative exposition to establish character. As Morgenstern suggests, the talking animal is also a perfect fit for a children's story, as there is an innate connection between the child and the animal world. Children are imagined to be closer to animals than adults because they have not yet mastered speech, and, indeed, the very young among them are completely without speech. This concept, which posits the child as a sort of missing link between animal and adult human, echoes recapitulation theory, and opens the door to the same Darwinian ideas discussed in chapter three. As we shall see, Lewis once again employs evolutionary narratives in Narnia, just as he did in the Ransom stories, hearkening back, once more, to Victorian interest in both evolution and degeneration.[114] Furthermore, Lewis is not

[114] Cosslett's investigation of the talking animal story in British fiction suggests a divide between two types of stories for children. On the one hand, fairy tales were meant to delight or frighten the child into increased

the first to recognize this connection between child and animal, but once again steps into a long-standing tradition that was popular in Golden Age children's literature.

The child's connection not only to the natural world but specifically to the animal world is a clear feature of Romantic innocence. Blake's children in *Songs of Innocence* converse with lambs and even resemble them—the poems as well as the illustrations depict the child frolicking in England's "pleasant pastures." Wordsworth similarly describes his child self as "a roe […]bound[ing] o'er the mountains" ("Tintern Abbey" 67-8). Victorian and Edwardian children's authors took this Romantic imagery to heart and wrote stories in which animals talk and/or children enjoy special communication with animals. Tess Cosslett is quick to note that, though "differently expressed," the Romantic idea "that children are somehow 'nearer' to nature and to animals than adults" was also embraced by Darwin (2). In the Victorian stories, therefore, the Romantic connection between child and nature also adopts an evolutionary subtext, with the child, in its early stage of development, often being more clearly linked to the animal world than to adult human society.

In *Alice and Wonderland* as well as *Through the Looking-Glass* Alice converses with various animals including the white rabbit, the Cheshire cat, mice, dodos, lizards, pigeons, puppies, unicorns, and the list goes on and on. Significantly, however, that communication happens only in the imaginary dream worlds Alice enters, and not in the real world. In *Wonderland* Alice's older sister demonstrates this point by recognizing that awaking from the dream state means that "all would change to dull reality—the grass would be only rustling in the wind, and the pool rippling to the waving of the reeds" rather than rustling "as the White Rabbit

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"superstition," while animal stories were traditionally more like fables, and meant to instruct: "Animals, even when talking, were allied with science, ethics and truth" (1). In this light, we can see Lewis enacting the same sort of genre blending in Narnia that we explored in the space trilogy in chapter three. By combining the animal fable and the fairy tale in Narnia, Lewis is once again combining a characteristically spiritual narrative with a scientific one, just as he is combining the delight of the fairy tale with the instruction of the beast fable.

hurried by—the frightened Mouse splashed his way through the neighbouring pool" and "the sneeze of the [pig] baby, the shriek of the Gryphon, and all the other queer noises, would change (she knew) to the confused clamour of the busy farm-yard—while the lowing of the cattle in the distance would take the place of the Mock Turtle's heavy sobs" (190-91). Being more grown up than Alice, her sister recognizes animal noise as no more than "confused clamour," while Alice's innocence still allows her to enter the imaginary, evolutionary state in which she converses with animals. In *Looking-Glass* the frame story actually provides an even clearer contrast, for Alice interacts with the kittens on both sides of the looking-glass. Before she enters the looking-glass world, she interacts with the kittens in a common dynamic of human vs. animal, or even adult vs. child. She scolds the black kitten for being "wicked" (8), and talks to the kitten with no anticipation that the kitten will answer back. At this stage, the kittens are subject to her will as the dominant, more highly-evolved creature. While in the looking-glass world, however, the kittens become the queens with whom Alice has multiple conversations and interacts as an inferior and aspiring equal.[115] Because her quest in the world is to become a queen herself, she is instructed by the red and white queens. As Alice begins to wake, however, the queens diminish in size, and become once again kittens. As soon as this transformation is complete, and Alice is awake, she once again relates to the kittens from a position of authority, and they are no longer able to communicate with her. Thus, Alice finds that the kitten cannot answer her questions: "If they would only purr for 'yes,' and mew for 'no,' or any rule of that sort […] so that one could keep up a conversation! But how *can* you talk with a person if they always say the same thing?" (145). Once again, outside of the dream world, Alice cannot communicate with the animals, and their purring becomes only a sound without meaning. Also again, we find that it is not so much

[115] Catherine Elick makes a similar observation about the animals in *Alice in Wonderland*: "Wielding the power of the word in Wonderland, they now compete with Alice as equals, especially since most of them speak in the same privileged sociolect that Alice and her creator Carroll use" (36).

the distinction between waking and sleeping, but between childish imagination and adult prosody that determines whether animals can speak or not. When Alice pretends to be a grown up and treats the kittens as inferiors, as children, she cannot communicate with them, but when she engages in the imaginative play of the looking-glass world, she is able to communicate with them quite fluidly.

Similar connections appear in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, wherein the child's innocence is mingled with a lack of evolutionary development, therefore bringing the child closer to the animal than the adult. Nana the dog is a perfect nursery maid to the children, but she is, of course, doubted by Mr. Darling, who cannot see her value as the innocents around him do. Even Peter Pan he writes off as "some nonsense Nana has been putting into their heads" (7), once again suggesting that to the grown man Nana can only offer nonsense, while the children somehow share meaningful communication and imagination with her. Another instance of child/animal interaction is in the incident of the Never bird. Barrie narrates, "In fanciful stories people can talk to the birds freely, and I wish for the moment I could pretend that this was such a story, and say that Peter replied intelligently to the Never bird; but truth is best, and I want to tell only what really happened. Well, not only could they not understand each other, but they forgot their manners" (92). Peter and the bird continue in a quarrel, he misunderstanding that she wishes to save him from drowning, and she finding him rude and ungrateful. Finally, however, they make themselves clear and "The Never bird […] screamed her admiration of him; and, alas, Peter crowed his agreement with her" (93). Although Barrie playfully parodies the trope of the talking animal, he nevertheless demonstrates a special relationship between Peter and the bird, emphasizing Peter's "crowing" as a form of animal language.

In *The Secret Garden* we also see the connection between child and animal. As previously discussed, it is Mary's relationship with the robin that leads her into the secret garden, and it is repeatedly suggested that the robin can communicate with Mary, Ben Weatherstaff, and particularly with Dickon. Dickon is the quintessential Romantic nature child in the story, and thus when he speaks to the robin it "listened for a few seconds, intently, and then answered quite as if he were replying to a question" (58). When Mary asks, "Do you understand everything birds say?" (59), Dickon answers: "I think I do, and they think I do. […] I've lived on th' moor with 'em so long. I've watched 'em break shell an' come out an' fledge an' learn to fly an' begin to sing, till I think I'm one of 'em. Sometimes I think p'raps I'm a bird, or a fox, or a rabbit, or a squirrel, or even a beetle, an' I don't know it" (59). In Dickon's case, the Romantic child is empowered by its innocence and its place in the evolutionary hierarchy to such an extent that it cannot be fully distinguished from the animal world at all.

Finally, Kenneth Grahame's masterpiece, *The Wind in the Willows* is one of the most celebrated talking animal stories in Golden Age children's literature, and particularly well-known as a romantic text.[116] It is also widely celebrated as one of Lewis's favorite books.[117] Grahame's story does not demonstrate animals and children interacting, but concerns itself purely with animal characters in an animal society. While Toad, Rat, Mole, Badger and their other acquaintance are highly anthropomorphized—they wear clothing, attend picnics, engage in complex social battles—they are also somewhat infantilized, at least in the sense that their stories

[116] The other obvious examples of talking animal stories from this era are the tales of Beatrix Potter. Potter had a considerable influence on Lewis as a child—Squirrel Nutkin in particular—but I have chosen not to discuss her here, as Grahame and other authors more directly influenced Lewis as an adult.

[117] In "On Three Ways of Writing for Children" Lewis provides Grahame's book as an example of the type of children's book that can be read with pleasure by an adult: "I never met *The Wind in the Willows* […] till I was in my late twenties, and I do not think I have enjoyed [it] any less on that account. […] a children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story" (24). He makes extensive reference to *The Wind in the Willows* in many of his essays and critical works. See his two reviews of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* in *Image and Imagination*, as well as "Membership," "On Stories," "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," *The Four Loves*, etc.

are wholly unconcerned with adult worries and problems. Their society is in many regards a childish one, separate and safe from the "wild wood" and the "wide world" (Grahame 22). Mole in particular illustrates this fact, as he is characterized by the warring of his two childish impulses: a longing for home and hearth, and a longing for adventure. Although the animals seem grown up in their attire and conversation, their animal realities provide a certain freedom that is enjoyed in humanity only by children. In his essay, "On Stories," Lewis explains it thus, "it paints a happiness under incompatible conditions—the sort of freedom we can have only in childhood and the sort we can have only in maturity—and conceals the contradiction by the further pretense that the characters are not human beings at all" (14). For instance, when the Otter ducks underwater mid-conversation, "Mole recollected that animal-ettiquette forbade any sort of comment on the sudden disappearance of one's friends at any moment, for any reason or no reason whatever" (25). Although Mole notes this like an adult societal convention, in reality it is a rule of conduct that protects any creature following its animal impulses—something that is acceptable in childish and animal society, but certainly disallowed in regulated adult society. In this way the talking animals of Grahame's story become empowering representatives of the child reader, for they simultaneously enjoy the dignity and agency of adults, as well as the protected freedoms of children. Furthermore, it is the childish innocence of Grahame's animals that opens them up to experiences and longings that can only be identified as romantic, and which certainly translate into Lewis's own understanding of Joy as sublime. In the much-beloved chapter "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn" Rat and Mole encounter the god, Pan, and experience intense, romantic longing. Rat describes Pan's music thus:

> "So beautiful and strange and new! Since it was to end so soon, I almost wish I had never heard it. *For it has roused a longing in me that is pain, and nothing seems worthwhile but just to hear that sound once more and go on listening to it for ever.* No! There it is again!" he cried, alert once more. Entranced, he was

> silent for a long space, spellbound. "Now it passes on and I begin to lose it." He said presently. "Oh […] the beauty of it! The merry bubble and joy, the thin, clear, happy call of the distant piping!" (Grahame 132-33; emphasis added)

Rat and Mole here represent both the animal and the child in their innocent ability to commune with nature, and with Pan. Their innocence, like the other children in Golden Age stories, empowers them not only to have such commerce with the natural and animal world, but it opens them up to the ecstatic experience of romantic transcendence, of higher innocence, of Joy.

There can be no doubt that Lewis was deeply influenced by the Golden Age tradition of children and talking animals. He clearly saw anthropomorphized animals as not only a narrative expedient, but also the best means of embodying the Romantic metanarrative in Narnia, employing evolutionary narratives of child development to demonstrate the innocence, experience, or higher innocence of respective characters. The clearest instance of this, however, is not actually in the published versions of the stories. The Romantic child of nature appears most vividly in the so-called Lefay fragment.

The Lefay fragment is a handwritten manuscript fragment in one of Lewis's notebooks, now held by the Bodleian Library.[118] Hooper and others believe it to have been written shortly after *The Lion*,[119] and it is clearly an abortive attempt at *The Magician's Nephew*, which Lewis abandoned in favor of *Prince Caspian* (1951). The manuscript tells the story of a boy named Digory who lives with his busy, bossy, bullying Aunt, Gertrude, who is a member of Parliament. Gertrude thinks that trees are unhealthy and wants to cut down what Digory calls "The Wood"—a clump of trees in the garden ("Lefay"). Digory is clearly a romantic child, in the sense that he loves nature, can converse with trees, and is able to "understand all beasts" ("Lefay").

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[118] Walter Hooper quotes the fragment in full in *Past Watchful Dragons* (48-65). The book is now out of print.
[119] R. L. Green recalls "Lewis read the fragment to him in June 1949" (Hooper *Dragons* 65).

Digory speaks with an Oak, which he then climbs, and then talks to a red squirrel. The squirrel (named Patterling) says, "If it was no offence to the present company, […] I'd like to ask what Humans are there for at all. I never could see what they did except killing animals or putting them in cages or cutting down trees. No offence, Digory: we all know you're different" ("Lefay"). The Fir suggests that, "Whatever it was, [that humans were meant for…] They've forgotten it too. I mean, they can't be doing whatever they were meant to do now" ("Lefay"). About this time Digory sees Polly in the next garden. They meet, and she asks him if the squirrel is tame, to which he says, "almost," and Patterling angrily remonstrates, "Tame, indeed! What do you mean by calling me tame?" ("Lefay"). Instead of exploring the attic passages, as they will do in *The Magician's Nephew*, Digory and Polly are making rafts to explore a stream that goes into a tunnel in Polly's garden. Digory, after being shamed and slightly bullied by Polly, cuts off a branch from the oak for the raft.

The next day the trees refuse to talk to Digory and birdsong has now become "meaningless chatter" to him ("Lefay"). He worries: "Supposing the trees and beasts and birds were still the same and that the change was in him, that he had lost his gift and become like everyone else" ("Lefay"). "What a fool I've been—oh what a fool!" he exclaims ("Lefay"), for he seems to have lost something irreplaceable—his innocence.

This is the point where Madame Lefay comes into the story. She instantly knows that something is wrong with Digory, and says, "I'll tell you how you look. You look exactly like what Adam must have looked five minutes after he'd been turned out of the Garden of Eden" ("Lefay"). She also suspects that Digory has "lost something […] in the last day or so" ("Lefay"). Lefay has a handbag with a rabbit in it (named Coiny), and speaks about him in a way

that suggests both that he is rational and communicative. She gives Digory her address, begins relaying directions to her house, and here the fragment ends.

Exactly why Lewis abandoned this manuscript is unclear. Hooper believes that "Lewis decided against having talking animals and trees in England—thus causing, as I think he intended, a sharper contrast between our world and that of Narnia" (*Dragons* 67). It seems equally likely, considering the overwhelming romanticism of Digory's characterization, the very obviousness of the talking animal trope as a picture of innocence, and the lack of nuance in Lefay's comments about Digory's loss of that innocence, that Lewis probably discarded this out of a wish for greater complexity. Lewis, who was famously secretive about his aims and his influences, may easily have felt that this particular fragment was too openly romantic, too openly invoking the Victorian Romanticism of the children's talking animal.[120]

What Lewis did publish in the Narnia Chronicles are much subtler homages to the Golden Age talking animal tradition with all its allusions to innocence and experience. Thus, in *The Magician's Nephew* Digory and Polly enjoy Aslan's creation song, while Uncle Andrew can "hear nothing but roaring" (113); The children hear Aslan say "Narnia awake," while Andrew hears "only a snarl" (*MN* 113); and the children hear how "the Beasts spoke in answer," while Andrew "heard only barkings, growling, bayings and howlings" (*MN* 113). The children, in their innocence, understand the animals' speech, but Andrew—who is soaked in the trappings of experience, such as greed, materialism, ambition, lust—is severed from the animal world and from Aslan. Another such instance is the robin's appearance at the beginning of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.* Peter Schakel notes this scene, arguing that, "Recognizing conventions, particularly conventions borrowed from the romance tradition, can help prevent misreading or

[120] It is also possible that Lewis felt this draft was too openly environmentalist—another ideological commitment which is not frequently associated with Lewis, yet has been well proven. See Dickerson and O'Hara. Lewis was famously opposed to vivisection and argued against cruelty to animals in many of his essays and letters.

misunderstanding of the Chronicles" (*Reading with the Heart* 13). While Schakel interprets this interchange as an homage to the romance tradition—supposing that we are meant to trust the robin because they are often good in romances—I would argue that this is not so much a recognition of romance as of *The Secret Garden*; as previously discussed, the robin in that story communicates with the innocent child, and leads it into secret, magical places, just as this robin leads the Pevensies. In *The Horse and His Boy* (1954) Lewis performs a reversal of normal ideas about animal ownership by suggesting that Bree, the talking horse of Narnia, actually steals Shasta, the boy, rather than the other way around: "it there's been any stealing, you might just as well say I [Bree] stole *him* [Shasta]" (*HHB* 25). Most significant, however, is the fact that both Bree and Hwin reveal their identity as talking beasts only to Shasta and Aravis while in Calorman. Outside of Narnia, therefore, the animals appear to speak only to the child, and trust in the children's assistance for their deliverance from bondage. There are endless references of this kind throughout the Chronicles, but it is perhaps most effective to simply note that Narnia itself, as a land of talking animals, is open only to the innocent child. For this reason each child protagonist is warned that they will not be allowed to return to Narnia when they are "getting too old" (*VDT* 185). This circumstance has led to much criticism of Narnia as a world that punishes the child for growing up, a world that attempts to force the child into innocent stasis. While I will answer some of this criticism in detail later, for the moment, it is worth pointing out that Lewis does not limit those who talk to animals exclusively to children.

In Lewis's view, communicating with animals is not merely the province of innocence, or childhood, but also of higher innocence, and therefore of true adulthood, true evolutionary progress. Morgenstern picks up on this when he notes that Ransom's communion with the *hrossa* (a form of talking animal) in *Out of the Silent Planet* is "a moral awakening that is presented as

an initiation, a passage into adulthood. […This offers] an interesting reversal of the conventional view in children's literature that only children can talk to animals" (111). In the Narnia stories as well there are instances of true grown-ups who can communicate with the talking beasts of Narnia. For instance, the London cabbie, Frank, and his wife Helen—who are made the first king and queen of Narnia—are able to understand the Narnian beasts' speech. Frank is pleased to hear his old cab horse, Strawberry, speaking, and says, "Strike me pink. I always did say as that 'oss 'ad a lot of sense, though" (*MN* 104). Finally, too, Lewis brings all of his child characters[121] back to Narnia as adolescents and adults in *The Last Battle*. In this "new" Narnia the humans once again commune with the talking animals of Narnia.

Just as Lewis emphasizes innocence and higher innocence's ability to communicate freely with animals, he also characterizes experience as not only an inability to understand animal speech, but a potential loss of speech altogether, or a regression into a less-evolved form. He borrows on nineteenth century paranoia about degeneration to demonstrate that experience can become an agent of regression rather than growth. For this reason, badly behaved children in the Narnia stories are repeatedly referred to as "beasts." Elizabeth Hale acknowledges both the Romantic and Darwinian roots of this term, explaining:

> Particularly when they write about children, [many Edwardian authors…] characterize bad behavior as wild, natural, and even honest. They do this by associating wildness with animal behaviour; in doing so, they draw on Romantic ideals of the child's purity and honesty (in the face of corrupt adult society), as well as ideals of animality. The term 'beastly' is thus useful here. Bad behavior can be termed 'beastly,' in the sense of 'acting in any manner unworthy of a reasonable creature,' but it can also simply mean 'resembling a beast in conduct or in obeying the animal instincts.' (191)

In *The Lion* Edmund is described as "being beastly to anyone smaller than" himself, and is called a "poisonous little beast" for betraying his siblings (*LWW* 36, 45). Lucy also calls all three

[121] The glaring exception to this is Susan. Lewis's controversial choice to exclude Susan will be examined in greater detail later in the chapter.

siblings "beasts, beasts" when they refuse to believe her story about entering Narnia (*LWW* 37). Digory calls Uncle Andrew "a beast" for kidnapping Polly and both children call Jadis a "beast" for her infamous villainy (*MN* 22; 54; 73). The list could continue to include comments about other evil-doers, including Eustace, who actually turns into a beast—a dragon—before reforming and improving (*VDT*). By suggesting that humans who act wickedly are "beastly," Lewis taps into the popular nineteenth century idea of degeneration as being not merely a potential biological reality, but also a potential spiritual one. The concept of degeneration as a sort of backwards evolutionary progress, linked with a creature's moral character, is popular in Golden Age children's writing, and perhaps nowhere clearer than in George MacDonald.[122]

Degeneration is a major theme in George MacDonald's Curdie stories—*The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883). Reiter notes that MacDonald "employs biological retrogression as a trope for spiritual retrogression" (222). Indeed, the Goblins in *The Princess and the Goblin* are depicted as a degeneration of humanity, not merely in form, but in their wickedness as well. The Goblins, who plot against the humans above the surface—in a manner too similar to the witch's Underland plot in *The Silver Chair* to be coincidental—are not merely wicked in manner, but manifest their wickedness in their degenerate form. For instance, the goblins have neither fingers or toes, and "One of the miners, indeed, who had had more schooling than the rest, was wont to argue that such must have been the primordial condition of humanity" (*Princess and Goblin* 55). One of the goblins states, "we excel [the humans] so far in mental ability as they excel us in stature" and acknowledges that the humans "look upon us as a degraded race and make a mockery of all our finer feelings" (62). Curdie notices the "subnatural ugliness of their faces" (88), and the narrator suggests that the Goblins "had sunk towards" the

[122] See also my previous discussion of Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* in chapter three. Kingsley employs evolution and degeneration to express spiritual change.

animal world, and away from the human (90). The Goblins therefore represent a regression in stature and beauty, alongside a movement towards nefarious craft and cunning—certainly a spiritual degeneration. Similarly, in *The Princess and Curdie* Princess Irene grants Curdie the ability to sense degeneration by the touch of a person's hand. She explains, "Since it is always what they *do*, whether in their minds or their bodies, that makes men go down to be less than men, that is, beasts, the change always comes first in their hands [….] Hence […you] will always be able to tell, not only when a man is growing a beast, but what beast he is growing to, for you will know the foot" (71). In this way, Curdie is able to discern whom to trust and whom to distrust when he reaches the King's city and court. When shaking the hand of one man he feels "the cold, smooth, leathery palm of a monkey" (99), of another "the belly of a creeping thing" (134), and by thus discerning the King's enemies, he is able to save the Kingdom.

Like MacDonald, Lewis frequently employs the grotesque theme of degeneration as a warning against spiritual decay. After creating and granting speech to the Narnians in *The Magician's Nephew*, Aslan tells them to, "Treat [the Dumb Beasts] gently and cherish them but do not go back to their ways lest you cease to be Talking Beasts" (*MN* 105). This warning against degeneration plays out at various moments throughout the Narnia stories. In *Prince Caspian* the talking animals who turn away from Aslan have simultaneously "gone enemy and gone dumb," losing their speech—turning into beasts (100). Lucy whispers to Susan, "Wouldn't it be dreadful if some day in our own world, at home, men started going wild inside, like the animals here" (*PC* 101); and, indeed, human degeneration also appears in *Prince Caspian*. Aslan frees a schoolmistress from a class of priggish male students who "looked very like pigs" (*PC* 168), and who threaten to "tell the inspector" on her (*PC* 169). These boys, who are insinuated as being the worst sort—no doubt the sort that terrorized Lewis in his own traumatic schooldays—

supposedly degenerate into the pigs their actions so resemble: "it was said afterwards (whether truly or not) that those particular little boys were never seen again, but that there were a lot of very fine little pigs in that part of the country which had never been there before" (*PC* 169). In *The Silver Chair* the Lady of the Green Kirtle also embodies degeneration in her identity as lamia. Witnessing the transformation of her human body into the "loathsome body" of a snake causes the protagonists such disgust that "their hair nearly stood on end" (*SC* 156; 155).

Finally, in *The Last Battle*, we once again witness the talking animals of Narnia "moving beast-ward" (to borrow Reiter's phrase) by turning their backs on Aslan. The more the Narnians succumb to the deception of Shift, Rishda Tarkaan, and Ginger, the more their reason itself seems to wane. Manlove notes this process, and suggests that it has the flavor of H. G. Wells:

> These disorganized bemused figures are not those we saw in the prime of Narnia. They have in a sense devolved, been diminished. Perhaps that is why *dwarfs* and their poverty of attitude are so present in this book[…]. The ape, by contrast, claims to be a man, in a reversal of Darwin he says that he is so old and wise a man that he has come to look like an ape; it is the rest who are 'a lot of stupid animals' (32). Indeed, to a large extent the Narnian Talking Beasts are bereft of the intelligence that distinguished them from mere brutes. Increasingly they are referred to collectively as 'beasts.' (*Chronicles* 106)

Ginger the cat provides a perfect instance of this degeneration. Ginger, who has betrayed Aslan and joined with Rishda Tarkaan to dupe the Narnians, loses his ability to speak:

> What followed was rather horrible. Tirian felt quite certain (and so did the others) that the Cat was trying to say something: but nothing came out of its mouth except the ordinary, ugly cat-noises you might hear from any angry or frightened old Tom in a backyard in England. And the longer he caterwauled the less like a Talking Beast he looked. [….]
> "Look, look!" said the voice of the Boar. "It can't talk. It has forgotten how to talk! It has gone back to being a dumb beast." [….] then the greatest terror of all fell upon those Narnians. (*LB* 103)

Although the Narnians do not fully understand it, Ginger has just demonstrated to them the physical degeneration that accompanies spiritual decay in Narnia. For Lewis, like MacDonald,

employs the Victorian paranoia of devolution to suggest that not all "growth" is beneficial. Ginger, possibly the most skeptical Narnian in all the Chronicles, believes himself to espouse progressive ideas, and to be "more enlightened" than the rest of the Narnians, because he believes that "there's no such person" as Aslan (76); however, his is the disenchantment of experience, and his growth is not the progress he believes it to be, but a regression, a dumbing, which eventually manifests in his lost voice. Thus Lewis first employs the Golden Age trope of the talking animal as a sign and gift of innocence and higher innocence, and second he applies Victorian notions about degeneration to his talking animals as a warning against experience, and specifically against experience's tendency to reverse or suspend growth.

The Problem of Peter Pan

Having suggested that degeneration may represent experience in Lewis, I would furthermore suggest that Lewis portrays experience in a unique light in the Narnia stories. Unlike many who seem to view experience as necessary, even good, Lewis suggests that experience is not so much a growth, as a regression, or a form of stasis. This is particularly significant because innocence is typically seen as the stage in which stasis is most threatening; many Golden Age authors are accused by critics of attempting to keep the child character and/or reader from growing up, of denying the child growth. Peter Pan is the iconic example of suspended childhood, and Lewis deliberately plays upon the Peter Pan convention, while focusing on experience, rather than innocence. In this way he both borrows from Barrie and critiques the Golden Age fetishization of innocence. He proposes that only through higher innocence can a person truly "grow up."

Lewis was certainly familiar with *Peter Pan*, for he owned a copy of Barrie's plays, which is now housed in the Lewis Library Collection at Wheaton College. In notes on a

manuscript of R. L. Green's *The Wood That Time Forgot,* Lewis makes reference to something or someone as "a sort of Peter Pan" (Handwritten Manuscript; also in *Collected Letters*). In fact, his friendship with Green suggests a familiarity with Barrie's most famous character, for Green published a history of the play in 1954, entitled *Fifty Years of Peter Pan*, which is also present in Lewis's library collection at Wheaton. Lewis also references Peter Pan in the essay, "Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem?".

In light of Lewis's familiarity with Barrie's creation, it is notable that the main character of the Narnia stories was originally meant to be Peter, who shares a name not only with the Biblical disciple, but also with the eternal boy. What is supposed to be the first manuscript of Narnia dates back to 1939 and begins, "This book is about four children whose names were Ann, Martin, Rose, and Peter. But it is mostly about Peter who was the youngest" (qtd. in Hooper, *Dragons* 29). Lewis probably considered the connection to Peter Pan when naming the similarly alliterative Peter Pevensie, and there are striking differences between them. First, Lewis seems to have made a conscious decision to decenter Peter, and to give the spotlight to a girl, Lucy, instead. Another difference is that Peter Pan remains eternally young, while we watch Peter Pevensie grow up over the course of the Narnia books. Peter Pevensie's adventures are also more concretely real than Peter Pan's; Neverland is interwoven with children's dreams and make-believe, while Narnia is an incontrovertibly real world. Furthermore, Pan remains in Neverland, while Peter leaves Narnia. Again, this is connected with the obvious fact that one child grows up, while the other does not. Neverland keeps children from growing, while Narnia assists their growth and then sends them back to the real, or adult, world.

Strangely, however, Peter Pevensie finishes the Narnia series with a striking affinity to Peter Pan: both characters are presumably dead. In the case of Peter Pan, it is commonly believed

that J. M. Barrie based the character on his dead brother, David, whose tragic childhood death left him "frozen forever in time" as his mother's remembered "golden boy" (White 26). Because of this connection to the dead child, Peter Pan enjoys all the playfulness and splendor of endless childhood, yet his story is laced with sadness and forgetting. Peter can never understand the love that Wendy or Tinker Bell feel for him, he is "gay and innocent," but he is also "heartless" (Barrie 164), and he is often to be found "cr[ying] in his sleep" because of his "dreams" (146). Growing up, it seems, is "the one joy from which he must be forever barred" (156), and while eternal youth is Peter Pan's special gift, it haunts the text with a pervasive melancholy.

Peter Pevensie, on the other hand, grows into adolescence, from which time he is no longer allowed to visit Narnia, moves into adulthood, and returns to Narnia only after dying in a train accident. Edmund, Lucy, Digory, and Polly, who have also outgrown Narnia, are similarly killed in the rail accident and thus also return to Narnia. The fact that Lewis kills of all his main characters troubles many critics, and has often been cited as a misplaced Peter Pan strategem on Lewis's part—wishing to bar his child characters from growing up. Philip Pullman lambastes Lewis for this decision in his 1998 *Guardian* article, saying, "To solve a narrative problem by killing one of your characters is something many authors have done at one time or another. To slaughter the lot of them, and then claim they're better off, is not honest storytelling: it's propaganda in the service of a life-hating ideology" (Pullman). Perhaps the root of Pullman's disagreement with Lewis rests in their very definitions of what "death" and "life" entail. While Pullman suggests that death is the enemy of life—thus killing one's characters betrays a "life-hating ideology"—Lewis depicts death not as an absence of life, but as more and greater life. What Pullman interprets as a rejection of life itself, Lewis understands to be a rejection of

experience in exchange for higher innocence. This becomes obvious when tracing the distinctions between Barrie's "dead child" and Lewis's "dead children."

Lewis's protagonists find death dynamic, while Peter Pan's death is static. Peter Pan undergoes no change over the course of the text, and Barrie emphasizes this so far as to point out that "he still had all his first teeth" when he revisits an adult Wendy (165). Peter cannot remember anyone or anything for long, he cannot learn—we are told that he is "the only boy on the island who could neither write nor spell" (73)—and he does not experience the passage of time, for to him "the past year was but as yesterday" (162). Even Pan's movement becomes a perpetual, non-progressive cycle, for he is continually travelling back and forth between London and Neverland, taking Wendy, her daughter, and her daughter's daughter, to Neverland in a never-ending cycle; Neverland's very name becomes a tragic reminder that Peter can never land, the he must be perpetually on the move to nowhere. In direct contrast to the stasis that Peter Pan represents, Lewis's protagonists experience death as a constant movement "further up and further in" (*LB* 162). Upon finding themselves in Aslan's country, the company begins running and find that "[t]he air flew in their faces as if they were driving fast in a car without a windscreen. The country flew past as if they were seeing it from the windows of an express train. Faster and faster they raced, but no one got hot or tired or out of breath" (*LB* 162). Unlike Neverland, which is an island prison for Peter, Aslan's country is an ever-expanding land, so that every time the company enters a place they find it "far larger than it had seemed from outside" (169); indeed, Tumnus asserts that "the further up and the further in you go, the bigger everything gets" (170). Finally, we are told that Lucy, Edmund, Peter, Jill, Eustace, Digory and Polly will not share the fate of Peter Pan—to be always replaying the same make-believe over

and over for eternity. Instead, their fate in death is a continual forward movement, a never-ending story "in which every chapter is better than the one before" (174).

Lewis's choice to depict death in this way has, as mentioned, been critiqued, yet it has also been lauded. One such analysis concludes that "Lewis is concerned […] to remind us that death is not the worst thing that can happen. [….and that] it is the passion to avoid death at all costs that is commonly the root of the worst evils" (Williams 127). Perhaps when Lewis chose to portray death and Heaven as the final destination of his characters he was thinking of Tolkien's words in "On Fairy Stories":

> The process of growing older is not necessarily allied to growing wickeder, [….] Children are meant to grow up, and not to become Peter Pans. Not to lose innocence and wonder, but to proceed on the appointed journey: that journey upon which it is certainly not better to travel hopefully than to arrive, though we must travel hopefully if we are to arrive. (44-45)

Lewis would certainly have appreciated Tolkien's proposed alternative to the stasis of Peter Pan: that innocence can actually be maintained, even expanded in the "hopeful journey" towards higher innocence.

According to Margaret Esmonde, because of the shift of the 19th century, and its promotion of deep time and Darwinian theory, which bestow cosmic insignificance on humanity, and make death "the end of all things, rather than a new beginning" (34), "Death, which had been a staple of children's literature in earlier centuries, became taboo in children's fiction by mid-twentieth century. In his desire to protect children from all unpleasantness, twentieth-century man suppressed their experience of death" (35). Lewis, it seems, breaks the taboos against death in his own age's fiction (and Pullman's ire evidences as much); instead of embracing twentieth-century norms, therefore, he falls in line with both of the competing nineteenth-century trends to which Esmonde alludes—that of death as the unavoidable and, and

that of death as "new beginning." Lewis makes the death of Narnia and of its visitors the end of the Chronicles; yet, he also refuses to let it be the end, instead providing Aslan's dynamic country as the perfect "happily ever after" for his fairy tale.

While this provides some answer to complaints about the protagonists' deaths in *The Last Battle*, perhaps the most important complaint against *The Last Battle* has yet to be addressed: Susan's absence. Upon meeting all the former Kings and Queens of Narnia in Aslan's country, Tirian asks, "Where is Queen Susan?" and learns that she "is no longer a friend of Narnia," because "she's interested in nothing now-a-days except nylons and lipstick and invitations. She always was a jolly sight too keen on being grown-up" (*LB* 126-27). Seemingly for these reasons Susan has been cast out of the paradise her siblings and friends enjoy.

This scene has outraged fans and critics alike, who assume that Susan is denied entrance back into Narnia—and, essentially, into Heaven—because she has grown-up, discovered sexuality, and no longer wishes to remain a child. Goldthwaite rages that Narnia is driven by "a debilitating animus" (223), and that Lewis "literally […] damn[s Susan] to hell" (226). Dorwick sums this up when he states that "being grown-up is not only uninteresting; for Lewis, it is damnable. As […] Neil Gaiman and Philip Pullman[…]have noted, Susan so wants to be an adult that she is no longer a friend of Narnia" (58). Furthermore, the damning of Susan, and particularly with reference to her lipstick, has led scholars to conceive of Lewis as not only resistant to growing-up, but to women more generally. Pullman attributes to Lewis the belief that "boys are better than girls," Laura Miller suggests that the only way to escape Lewis's misogyny is to die young, and thence "to remain a child forever, as Lucy does" (142), and Rodriguez bemoans the fact that "Narnia is a boy's world" (191). Perhaps taking the matter further than anyone else, Goldthwaite draws the rather extreme conclusion that "Lewis feared women and

disliked them categorically. Femininity he saw as an imperfection, the sin of Eve, unspiritual and sinister" (230). He even goes as far as suggesting that the Narnia stories themselves are a predatory attack on young female readers:

> The voice of the hall proctor stalks these pages, monitoring the children's every move and thought. [….] If the books had quite so regimental a feel to them as I am here making out, of course, they would not be as popular as they apparently are, especially with girls. Lewis is sly. [….] The method is one of innuendo. [….] I do not pretend to understand why girls like these stories as much as they do. As far as I can tell, boys have not cared for them much. It may be that boys are quicker to sense when another boy is making a grab for the whistle and clipboard. Insofar as girls today can more readily take their intellect and talents as a given, I suppose it is natural that they should be attracted to the challenges being offered them in Narnia. Lewis does court them with the occasional bouquet. [….] The seduction here for girls, I suspect, is their implicit induction into a private club previously reserved for boys only. (226-27)

The result, then, of Susan's absence from the end of *The Last Battle* is a disgust with Lewis that leads critics to revile him as psychologically stunted by nostalgia and misogynistic, even to the point of targeting young female readers in the manner of a sexual predator. [123] It also led to Neil Gaiman's story, "The Problem of Susan," which describes Susan's life after the traumatic loss of her entire family. She recalls, "A god who would punish me for liking nylons and parties by making me walk through that school dining room, with the flies, to identify Ed, well…he's enjoying himself a bit too much, isn't he? Like a cat, getting the last ounce of enjoyment out of a mouse" (Gaiman 178). Essentially, people accuse Lewis (through Aslan and Narnia) of mistreating the child: "damning them to Hell, killing them, bullying them, spying on them, and so on" (Eldridge 47). These are, of course, similar to the types of attacks that have been leveled at nearly all Golden Age children's authors—particularly Carroll, who is often accused of bullying Alice in his text. All of these complaints ultimately arrive at Kincaid's thesis about

[123] Critics have spent extensive time and energy refuting these claims with varying success. See *Women and C. S. Lewis* (2015), edited by Carolyn Curtis and Mary Pomroy Key. The arguments against Lewis's supposed sexism range from tenuous to convincing. Perhaps it is most accurate to suggest that Lewis was not consciously misogynistic, but did embrace hierarchical views (of gender, among other things) that are now hugely unpopular.

child-loving, suggesting that the author is somehow predatory, deriving pleasure from colonization of the child's innocence: "By insisting so loudly on the innocence, purity and asexuality of the child, we have created a subversive echo: experience, corruption, eroticism" (Kincaid 5). The problem of Susan thus raises important questions about the Narnia stories: is Lewis no better—and perhaps worse—than his Golden Age precursors in his relationship to the child? Does he wish to entrap the child and fetishize, even prey on, its innocence? Does Lewis punish the child for growing up?

While these accusations of Lewis, Narnia, and Aslan are not to be taken lightly (and can never, perhaps, be altogether dismissed), they can be moderated through close reading. To accusations that Lewis kills his child characters in order to keep them from growing up, one need merely point out that they have, in fact, already done so—at least by Lewis's own definition of romantic growth. The individuals who return to Aslan's land at the end of *The Last Battle* are, indeed, not children. Digory is 61, Polly 60, Peter 22, Edmund 19, Lucy 17, and Jill and Eustace both 16.[124] Though it is certainly an early death for most of them, all are past the age of sexual maturation, which so commonly represents one's departure from innocence.[125] In Lewis's own vision of the Romantic metanarrative in *Surprised by Joy*, the onset of experience was earlier even than puberty. Lewis distinguishes childhood from boyhood, and boyhood from adolescence. Boyhood was the stage in which Lewis's innocence was lost, and adolescence was the time in which he had fresh visions of "Joy," or intimations of higher innocence. Lewis did not consider the death of adolescent characters an attempt to retain them as an innocent, sexless children. On

[124] See Lewis's outline of Narnian/Earthly time in Hooper, *Past Watchful Dragons* (41-44).
[125] This is an openly grey area in children's literature scholarship. Lucy, Jill and Eustace, in particular, would probably fall into the category of young adult, which is sometimes categorized as belonging to childhood, and at other times as belonging to adulthood. Hintz suggests that adolescence is a liminal space between innocence and experience, in which the individual can both "achiev[e] the autonomy of adulthood and keep[…] the clarity of vision held by a child" (263). This stage has become increasingly associated with the teenage years, and is generally seen as beginning with the onset of puberty.

the contrary, he gave his child protagonists time to mature beyond the state of innocence and decide whether they still believed in their childhood adventures in Narnia.[126]

These questions about adolescence lead naturally into the question of Lewis and sexuality. Specifically, whether Susan is damned for liking lipstick and nylons—in essence, for embracing adult sexuality. Close reading suggests that this is not the case. In fact, there are many instances in the Chronicles where child characters are allowed, even encouraged to grow up, and to engage in romantic relationships. All four of the Pevensies grow into adulthood in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and Susan in particular is said to be courted by many men. One particular instance of this courtship appears in *The Horse and His Boy*, and although it is a failure, the narrative does not suggest that sexuality is the problem so much as incompatibility. In fact, the same story ends with the marriage of Shasta and Aravis, who began the narrative as children. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* even details the beginning of a courtship between Caspian and Ramandu's daughter; Caspian later grows up to marry Ramandu's daughter, who becomes "a great queen and the mother and grandmother of great kings" (*VDT* 210). In all of these examples, it appears that Lewis despises neither adulthood, nor sexuality, granting them to many of his characters.

Another answer to these popular criticisms of Lewis is in the fact that scholars' very arguments tend to incriminate them as guilty of the sort of colonization Jacqueline Rose attributes to J. M. Barrie. Rose argues that *Peter Pan* "shows innocence not as a property of childhood but as a portion of adult desire" (xii), and further explains, "I am using desire to refer to a form of investment by the adult in the child, and to the demand made by the adult on the

[126] One must also acknowledge how present death was to Lewis's own childhood and adolescence; he lost his mother as a child and watched many of his companions—who were, like himself, no more than adolescents—fall in the Great War. Lewis very likely found the death of his protagonists less shocking than the modern reader does. Though this does not make the narrative decision more defensible, it certainly makes his choice of ending more understandable.

child as the effect of that investment, a demand which fixes the child and then holds it in place" (3-4). Just as Barrie colonizes childhood by keeping *Peter Pan* young, Pullman and Goldthwaite position child readers as powerless victims who must be protected from Lewis's "seductive adult" narrative voice, in "a kind of Christian stranger danger" (Eldridge 45). Unfortunately, Eldridge points out, this assumption not only alienates and belittles the discernment of the child reader, but it's rhetoric also tends to evince sexists attitudes—assuming that boys sense the danger, while girls are complicit in their own seduction by the dogmatic text. Furthermore, it is interesting that Pullman, who draws such a distinction between the child self who was in danger from Lewis and the adult self who sees through his "seduction," would accuse Lewis of killing *children*, when the protagonists are adolescents or adults by the time of their deaths. Ultimately, we must return to the fact that Lewis not only allows, but encourages his child protagonists to grow beyond childhood, as previously discussed.

Additionally, even in her supposed banishment from Narnia, Lewis is providing Susan with a power that many child characters lack: the power of choice. Susan *chooses* not to return to Narnia at this time, because she has chosen not to associate with the others in their gatherings as "friends of Narnia" (126). Eustace reports that "whenever you've tried to get her to come and talk about Narnia or do anything about Narnia, she says, 'What wonderful memories you have! Fancy your still thinking about all those funny games we used to play when we were children'" (126). Thus, Susan chooses not to be present with the party who are all travelling together on the train at the time of their death. To deny this reality would be a defiance of narrative rules, but also a tyrannical move on Aslan's part, forcing Susan to re-enter a world in which she no longer has any interest. It is not Aslan's wish that Susan be absent; instead Susan wishes to be absent, and Aslan honors that wish. In contrast, Alice repeatedly works her way into the fantasy world

only to be kicked out, Peter is allowed only to remain in the fantasy world at the price of imprisonment in childhood, and Mary and Colin's magic is, of course, only a childish ignorance of natural processes. While children are banished from Narnia at a certain age, they are welcomed back in the end, should they choose to come. Lewis is not seeking to punish the child, like many of his Victorian precursors seem to do; instead, he employs Golden Age tropes in order to build upon them, and make them more progressive by granting his child protagonists the freedom of choice. He is, in essence, subverting the authority of "grown-ups" in a more real way than Nesbit or Burnett ever did.

Most important in understanding the problem of Susan, is putting it in perspective as an allusion to Peter Pan. What most critics ignore in *The Last Battle*, and indeed, throughout the Chronicles, are repeated conversations about age and growth that evince Lewis's own unique understanding of the Romantic metanarrative, and particularly his emphasis on higher innocence. Judith Plotz suggests that a "relentless focus on an unchanging child forever fixed in childhood is an important Romantic trope" (xiii), and this trope certainly influenced Victorian depictions of the child, but Lewis advances and improves these Romantic notions by emphasizing higher innocence rather than innocence. Higher innocence makes sense of the rhetoric of age in *The Last Battle*, because it is repeatedly suggested that there is a difference between being "grown-up" in Susan's sense and truly "grown-up." When Jill says that Susan is "a jolly sight too keen on being grown-up," Polly adds, "Grown-up, indeed, [….] I wish she *would* grow up. She wasted all her school time wanting to be the age she is now, and she'll waste all the rest of her life trying to stay that age. Her whole idea is a race to the silliest time of one's life as quick as she can and then stop there as long as she can" (127). Susan, it seems, has a strange sort of Peter Pan complex: she wishes to be always a certain age, but the age is not that of innocence, but of

experience. Susan's problem, in fact, is not that she wishes to grow-up, but that she resists growing up. Like Peter Pan trapped in an eternity of Neverland make-believe, Susan traps herself in a construct of "grown-up-ness," an adolescent make-believe. Lewis specifically addresses this problem in "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," and specifically attacks it as arrested development:

> To be concerned about being grown up, to admire the grown up because it is grown up, to blush at the suspicion of being childish; these things are the marks of childhood and adolescence. [….] When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am fifty I read them openly. [….] I now enjoy Tolstoy and Jane Austen and Trollope as well as fairy tales and I call that growth: if I had had to lose the fairy tales in order to acquire the novelists, I would not say that I had grown but only that I had changed. [….] I think my growth is just as apparent when I now read the fairy tales as when I read the novelists, for I now enjoy the fairy tales better than I did in childhood: being now able to put more in, of course I get more out. (25-26)

The comparison to Peter Pan in particular is overt in a similar comment in his essay, "Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem?":

> You must not think I am setting up as a sort of literary Peter Pan who does not grow up. On the contrary, I claim that only those adults who have retained, with whatever additions and enrichments, their first childish response to poetry unimpaired, can be said to have grown up at all. Mere change is not growth. Growth is the synthesis of change and continuity, and where there is no continuity there is no growth. To hear some critics, one would suppose that a man had to lose his nursery appreciation of Gulliver before he acquired his mature appreciation of it. It is not so. If it were, the whole concept of maturity, of ripening, would be out of place […]. (105)

Susan's abandonment of Narnia is not a sign of "growth" in Lewis's terminology, but simply a sign of "change." By contrast, the other characters have aged, grown in the wisdom of that transformation, and yet embraced an allegiance to Narnia—their own true fairy tale. This, for Lewis, is higher innocence, and true growth.

The true problem of Susan is therefore most fully understood in light of the problem of Peter Pan—particularly as set forth in Rose's *The Case of Peter Pan*. While Peter is arrested by

adult desires to capture, even colonize, childhood, Susan's growth is similarly interrupted by her own childish desire to capture and colonize "adulthood." Susan's mistake is not in the embrace of parties and sexuality, but in the denial of all else. Just as Peter Pan is trapped in a stasis of dead, unchanging innocence, Susan has willingly barred herself from higher innocence because she clings to stagnant experience.

George MacDonald and the Agelessness of Higher Innocence

In discussing higher innocence in the Narnia stories, one must necessarily turn to George MacDonald. MacDonald, who influenced Lewis so deeply in so many ways, originates the primary image of higher innocence that Lewis takes up in the Chronicles: that of agelessness. McGillis affirms that, for MacDonald, "Childlike innocence is a quality inherent in everyone (like poetry); it may be latent or muted by sin and age, but it cannot be annihilated, and it partakes of God" ("Childhood and Growth" 153). In "The Golden Key" MacDonald anticipates Lewis by connecting higher innocence with a Christian notion of afterlife. In the story, higher innocence is clearly linked to dying to the world, and waking to a better one. When the Old Man asks Mossy, "is [death] good?" Mossy answers, "It is good, […] it is better than life" (302). The Old Man corrects him, saying, "it is only more life" (302). Furthermore, the process towards "more life" is depicted as an attainment of agelessness, for the children encounter a number of sages along their journey, and the older these men are, the younger they appear, so that the oldest and final man is "a little naked child" (295). The point is not that one must regress to childhood; instead, MacDonald's characters of this sort blend all the best qualities of innocence and experience—the beauty of youth and the wisdom of age.

Another notable instance of agelessness in MacDonald is in the higher innocence of the elder Princess Irene in *The Princess and the Goblin*. Although Princess Irene is extremely old,

she appears to be paradoxically youthful and beautiful as well. She says to the younger princess, "it is so silly of people to fancy that old age means crookedness and witheredness and feebleness and sticks and spectacles and rheumatism and forgetfulness! It is so silly! Old age has nothing whatever to do with all that. The right old age means strength and beauty and mirth and courage and clear eyes and strong painless limbs" (106). For MacDonald, therefore, true growth manifests itself not in age and decay, but in eternal, ageless beauty.

My claim that Lewis embraces growth, even through the paradoxical agelessness of MacDonald's higher innocence, must necessarily confront a disagreement with one of the best articles yet written on Lewis and the Victorians. In "Kidnapped Romance: From Walter Scott to C. S. Lewis," Elsie Michie argues that Lewis appropriates and revises a Victorian theme of children's literature: kidnapping. This kidnapping theme—begun by Scott and carried on by Stevenson—represents a process in which the child is stolen away from the present moment of technological and economic progress and instead placed in a world where time does not move forward with the real world. Michie believes that this kidnapping represents a suspension of growth that bars the child from puberty or adulthood. She notices that many Victorian stories involve an adult looking back at childhood, and argues that this process of looking back is one of romance, in contrast to history; romance focuses on a suspended event of adventure and intrigue, while history is concerned with details of the forward progress of time. According to Michie, Lewis, revising the Victorian trope, represents kidnapping as similar to the reading of romance: children are whisked away into another world, from which they cannot and do not wish to escape. She also notes that Lewis takes this kidnapping a step further over the course of the series, for while most Victorian stories end with a return to real time, adulthood and inheritance, Lewis's protagonists ultimately inherit the fantasy world, and their deaths eternally protect them

from adulthood. While the death of Lewis's protagonists certainly sets him apart from the Victorian tradition to which he ascribes, I believe it does so not by suspending the child's growth, but by aligning with George MacDonald in advocating not only adulthood, but growth beyond adulthood, into higher innocence. The "neo-Victorian child" in Lewis is, therefore, not only an actual child, but a higher innocence that can apply to any and all ages by erasing the distinctions between child and adult.

This idea of growing ageless appears first in *The Silver Chair,* and arises most clearly in *The Last Battle*. At the end of *The Silver Chair* Jill and Eustace find themselves on Aslan's mountain, mourning King Caspian, who has died at a very old age. We are told, "all three stood and wept. [….] And Jill noticed that Eustace looked neither like a child crying, nor like a boy crying and wanting to hide it, but like a grown-up crying. At least, that is the nearest she could get to it; but really, as she said, people don't seem to have any particular ages on that mountain" (*SC* 203). Lewis is clear that Eustace, in this foretaste of higher innocence, should have neither the innocence of the child, un-self-consciously crying, nor the cynicism of experience, hiding his tears like an embarrassed boy[127]; instead, he is ageless, and thus most truly "grown-up." Similarly, Caspian begins undergoing a transformation, growing younger, until "suddenly he leaped up and stood before them—a very young man, or a boy. (But Jill couldn't say which, because of people having no particular ages in Aslan's country[…])" (*SC* 204). Again in *The Last Battle* Tirian finds Jill ageless in Aslan's country: "at first he thought she looked older, but then she didn't, and he could never make up his mind on that point" (125). Even "the eldest of the Queens," Polly, who is 60 years old at the time of the train accident, is "not old, and there were no grey hairs on her head and no wrinkles on her cheek" (*LB* 126). When contrasted with

[127] "Boyhood" often represents experience for Lewis. By "boyhood" he generally refers to the onset of self-consciousness, of adolescence. This is the time of life in *Surprised by Joy* when Lewis was first tempted by lust, snobbery, priggery, etc., and the time at which he turned away from the faith of his childhood.

Susan's wish to be unchangeably "grown-up," Polly, Jill, and Lucy evince a growth that embraces the best elements of childhood *and* adulthood.[128] For indeed, "Even in this world, of course, it is the stupidest children who are most childish and the stupidest grown-ups who are most grown-up" (*SC* 204); [129] higher innocence, therefore, reflects both a growing younger—an inward journey—and a growing older—an upward journey, so that the call to move "further up" and "further in" itself is a reference to the polar logic of the ageless state.[130]

In this agelessness, we must return once more to the genre of Lewis's writing in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. As his dedication of *The Lion* to Lucy Barfield suggests, the Narnia stories are meant to be themselves ageless, and therefore accessible both to the innocent child, and to the higher innocence of maturity. Lewis discusses the need to break down barriers between children's and adults' reading in "On Juvenile Tastes." He argues that, "the specifically childish taste has been generally held to be that for the adventurous and the marvellous. Now this, you may notice, implies that we are regarding as specifically childish a taste which in many, perhaps in most, times and places has been that of the whole human race" (40). Because "children read only to enjoy," Lewis asserts that "juvenile taste is simply human taste, going on from age to age, silly with a universal silliness or wise with a universal wisdom, regardless of modes,

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[128]Pauline Baynes's illustration of Tirian's reunion with the seven Queens and Kings of Narnia depicts them not as children, but as young adults. All seven are fully physically mature and appear to be in the prime of life (*LB* 125).
[129] Manlove, like many others, believes that Narnia reveals Lewis's nostalgic wish to re-enter childhood, and that therefore "grow[ing] younger […is] the ideal of development in the *Chronicles*" (*Chronicles* 63). While Manlove pinpoints an important concept in this argument, I believe he has slightly misread Lewis's pervasive rhetoric about age, "childishness," and being "grown-up." Characters are just as frequently accused of being too childish as they are of being too adult, suggesting that it is not a return to childhood that Lewis desires, but the best of both worlds.
[130] This perhaps supplements Elsie Michie's argument: "In Lewis's novels transport to that other world is always an inward journey. When the children in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe are forced to play in the house because it is raining, this circumstance drives them to hide in the wardrobe through which they enter Narnia. His stories have to do with what he calls, in the case of the child hero of The Magician's Nephew, 'indoor exploration' (Lewis 1998: 7). This strategy creates an absolute boundary between worlds and between child and adult" (Michie 168). It should come as no surprise that boundaries of age and between worlds simultaneously dissolve in Aslan's country. The Pevensies not only find themselves ageless in the new Narnia, but they find that new Narnia linked to a new England. Tumnus explains, "That country and this country—all the *real* countries—are only spurs jutting out from the great mountains of Aslan. We have only to walk along the ridge, upward and inward, till it joins on" (*LB* 172).

movement, and literary revolutions" (40-41).[131] The description of the literary taste for fairy tale as both silly and wise, both childish and adult, is undeniably akin to his descriptions of human agelessness in the Narnia stories themselves. It also bears out Miller's belief that "[i]n Narnia, the boundary between childhood and adulthood […] could be elided" (61).

This agelessness, higher innocence, or universal appeal of the Narnia stories (particularly as fairy tales) applies equally well to their moral, even spiritual, impact. When viewed through the lens of higher innocence—and thus seen to be equally applicable to child and adult—one can set aside the notion that children and adults read the Narnia stories differently. Critics such as Pullman and Goldthwaite tend to suggest that children are naïve and miss the underlying morals of the Chronicles, while adults notice Lewis's religious strategies and recoil. Yet the reality is that adults and children often find the stories similarly meaningful. Miller explains the universal nature of Lewis's Narnian morals in contrast with a nineteenth-century American children's text by Martha Finley—*Elsie Dinsmore* (1867):

> It was precisely the propaganda aspect of *Elsie Dinsmore* that offended me, the subservience of the story and characters, of the entire book, to the task of instructing me morally. I recognized that the Chronicles also sometimes spoke to me about virtue—in fact, I regarded those parts of the books as among their most thrilling and important moments. The difference was, as I saw it, fundamental. The morality of Elsie Dinsmore was the morality of childhood, where the choice was between obedience and naughtiness. The morality of Narnia was grown-up, a matter of good and evil. […] Adult readers, who detect the Christian symbolism of the Chronicles so readily, often can't see the distinction. (Miller 61)

The fact that Miller characterizes the moral gravity of Narnia as "grown-up" is yet one more proof of the Chronicles' higher innocence not only of form, but of message. For the moral lessons of Narnia are not the sorts of lessons that only adults can teach to children, but moral

[131] McGillis and Nodelman are similarly outspoken in the opinion that "the pleasures of children's literature are essentially the pleasures of all literature" (Nodelman qtd. in McGillis, *The Nimble Reader* ix).

imperatives that apply to all people of all ages. Lewis suggests as much in "On Three Ways of Writing for Children":

> I feel sure that the question "What do modern children need?" will not lead you to a good moral. [….] It would be better to ask "What moral do I need?" [….] But it is better not to ask the question at all. Let the pictures tell you their own moral. For the moral inherent in them will rise from whatever spiritual roots you have succeeded in striking during the whole course of your life (33).

The spiritual insights in Narnia are not, therefore, messages tailored to children, but messages Lewis himself needed to hear. And, indeed, Lewis wrestles with deep philosophical questions in Narnia—the same questions with which he wrestled in his adult science fiction novels, and the same questions he would approach in his most mature novel, *Till We Have Faces*. In this way the universal philosophical and moral messages in the Chronicles, as well as their fairy tale form, echo the central theme of higher innocence that so permeates the texts.

Clearly, for Lewis, fantasy (or fairy tale) as a genre represents a sort of literary higher innocence, that must be embraced, and this, in and of itself, is not only a continuation, but a progression of the Victorian fantasist's project:

> What the Victorians could not readily admit was their own <u>personal</u> involvement with fantasy and the longings that fantasy stirs. [….] They began therefore by collecting and classifying fairy tales or by reading them to their children and moved then to creating original fairy tales for the entertainment of children. Only slowly did fairy tales become a form admittedly aimed at adult readers" (Burns 9).

As MacDonald and Morris are the only well-known Victorian fantasists who wrote openly for adults (Burns 10), it comes as no surprise that Lewis builds upon MacDonald's characterizations of higher innocence as agelessness. In following MacDonald, Lewis both embraces and rejects certain aspects of the Golden Age tradition, just as did his Victorian precursors. In fact, many Golden Age children's authors like Lewis Carroll were critiqued for writing books that were simultaneously for children and adults—supposedly missing the true intellect of children and

pandering to the adult audience by "failing to endorse the new ideology of innocence, which aimed to erect a firm barrier between adult and child." (Gubar 6). Marah Gubar champions this dual audience awareness as a sign of progress; instead of singling out the child reader as a socially-Othered innocent, these authors recognized that children and adults could read the same things and enjoy the same things, even if they did so on different levels (22). By writing for the delight of child and adult alike, therefore, Lewis firmly places his fairy tales in a line of descent from Golden Age fiction.

Thus Narnia represents a neo-Victorian romantic vision of innocence and experience, and it also fulfills that vision by offering an excellent fictional and formal embodiment of higher innocence. Specifically, Lewis presents higher innocence as a polarity of innocence and experience, childhood and adulthood, faith and doubt. Monika Hilder argues that Lewis achieves "consolation with the tenuousness of an un/certain hope, a belief in ultimate wholeness in the face of adversity and brokenness and plain lack of understanding" (236). He "allow[s] for both/and—doubt and […] the determination to counter this with defiant hope" (Hilder 236). Schakel similarly remarks that, for Lewis,

> The imagination, by making connections and establishing relationships between ideas, enables one to grasp and internalize the truths apprehended by the reason; through metaphor, myth, and symbol, it renders them in concrete ways we can understand, or begin to understand. [….] The imagination bridges the divide, reconciles the opposites, allows us to experience the abstract concretely. (*Imagination and the Arts* 11)

In this we find that Lewis is still deeply indebted to Coleridgean polarity, even as he follows Victorian and Edwardian children's writers. Furthermore, the incarnational emphasis of Coleridgean polarity is still resonant in the Narnia stories.[132] Children in the Narnia books are, like Aslan's country, "bigger on the inside." They are allowed to be children, yet they are

[132] See my argument about incarnation, polarity, and the Ransom stories in chapter three.

empowered to make weighty moral decisions, to fight adult battles, to govern and rule lands. It is fitting that Lewis should throw in a single incarnational reference at the end of *The Last Battle*. Being thrown into the stable, Tirian, Eustace and Jill find themselves not enclosed or entrapped, but released into an expansive and beautiful country. Digory confirms that "It's inside is bigger than its outside," and Lucy comments, "In our world too, a Stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world" (*LB* 133). Christ's incarnation is the key example of polarity both as an instance of myth become fact *and* an instance of the powerful child. It may very well be because of his own associations between higher innocence and Coleridgean polarity that Lewis chooses to invoke the man who preached "faith like a child" and called little children to himself at the close of the Narnia stories. Yet Lucy references Christ not in adult form, but in his initial entrance into the Biblical story—divinity in the vulnerable body of a child. While the Biblical story provides the substance of this central allusion, it is the Romantic associations that give it power to transform reader and text. The splendor of that incarnational polarity drives the Chronicles and emboldens Lewis to empower individuals of all ages, inspiring them to move "further up and further in" on a captivating quest for higher innocence.

CONCLUSION

Passing Down the Romantic Metanarrative: Narnia Revised in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and Lev Grossman's *Magicians Trilogy*

As previous chapters established, Lewis's legacy in twentieth and twenty-first century fantasy writing, particularly that for children, is undeniable. In Narnia Lewis extended and revised a tradition of fantasy that originated with the Romantics and flowed through Victorian and Edwardian children's writing via the Romantic metanarrative. Today, fantasy writers are continuing that Romantic and Victorian legacy, as passed down by Lewis. Yet many of his literary descendants are now complicating Lewis's view of fairy lands in general, and Narnia in particular. Specifically, contemporary fantasists are using their fiction to explore some of the very questions that Lewis raises in his essays on fantasy and children's literature.

In "On Three Ways of Writing for Children" Lewis sets out to defend fairy tales against charges of escapism. He acknowledges that fairy stories are "accused of giving children a false impression of the world they live in," but counters, "I think no literature that children could read gives them less of a false impression" (28). Instead, Lewis suggests that it is actually real world stories, stories about becoming successful or popular in school, stories about being athletic or attractive to the opposite sex, that will lead children astray. Such stories, Lewis contends, elicit a "ravenous and deadly serious" longing in the reader, sending him or her "back to the real world undivinely discontented" (29). On the other hand, he posits, the

> longing […] for fairy land, is very different. In a sense a child does not long for fairy land as a boy longs to be the hero of the first eleven. Does anyone suppose that he really and prosaically longs for all the dangers and discomforts of a fairy tale?—really wants dragons in contemporary England? It is not so. It would be much truer to say that fairy land arouses a longing for he knows not what. It stirs and troubles him (to his life-long enrichment) with the dim sense of something beyond his reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth. He does not despise real woods because he has read of

> enchanted woods: the reading makes all real woods a little enchanted. This is a special kind of longing. [….] there are two kinds of longing. The one is an *askesis*, a spiritual exercise, and the other is a disease. (29-30)

This "spiritual exercise" in longing is Lewis's version of higher innocence (as discussed in the previous chapters), and fantasy landscapes thus play an important role in Lewis's Romantic metanarrative.

While Lewis suggests that the longing Narnia enlivens is Joy, a hint of higher innocence, and ultimately a taste of Heaven (as argued in chapter four), his heirs have begun to question whether such longing has any "spiritual" element, whether it is not simply another "disease." Jack Zipes sums up this twenty-first century concern:

> It is through fantasy that we have always sought to make sense of the world, not through reason. Reason matters, but fantasy matters more. Perhaps it has mattered too much, and our reliance on fantasy may wear thin and betray us even while it nourishes us and gives us hope that the world can be a better place. (2)

Neil Gaiman and Lev Grossman—two giants of twenty-first century literary fantasy—both question this "reliance on fantasy" by openly revising Narnia in their own fantasy stories. Gaiman's *Coraline* (2002) and Grossman's *Magicians Trilogy* (2009-14)[133] employ the Romantic metanarrative as a frame for their protagonists' character development, and both deconstruct a concept that Lewis readily employed in *The Chronicles of Narnia*: the fantasy world as an object for Joy, something that evokes longing for, and thus a taste of, higher innocence. In doing so, both authors could be using Lewis's question, "Does anyone suppose that he really and prosaically longs for all the dangers and discomforts of a fairy tale?," as a narrative prompt, writing stories that explore exactly what it would mean for a real person to find themselves in the sort of fantasy world for which they have always longed.

[133] The series includes *The Magicians* (2009), *The Magician King* (2011), and *The Magician's Land* (2014).

Clearly Gaiman and Grossman admire Lewis, just as Lewis admires his own nineteenth-century precursors; yet, these twenty-first century authors, like Lewis, enact tesserae on their literary forefather, furthering his vision by making the fantasy world more real and more realistic. Ultimately, both authors redefine higher innocence. For Lewis, higher innocence is essentially the divine presence, Heaven itself, or a foretaste thereof. For Gaiman and Grossman, higher innocence is an embrace of things as they are, of beauty in the midst of brokenness, of both innocence *and* experience. It is also an embrace of the self, a putting aside of divine discontent in exchange for self-contentment.

Gaiman and Grossman's protagonists, Coraline Jones and Quentin Coldwater, both step into fantasy worlds (open revisions of Narnia) in hopeful innocence, longing naively for something better and more magical than their current, boring lives. Both Coraline and Quentin begin their stories as innocent believers, fully trusting that a fantasy other-world could solve their discontent with the real world. Instead, however, they find that the other-worlds—the Narnias—they encounter are consistently no better, and often much worse, than their own worlds. This disenchantment with the fantasy world propells both protagonists into experience, their innocent dreams turning to nightmares before their eyes. In a reversal of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Coraline* and *The Magicians* depict fantasy worlds whose creators are not benevolent beings, but selfish, wicked or childish tyrants, necessitating overthrow. For Coraline and Quentin, therefore, higher innocence is attained not through submission to benevolent authority and embrace of a Heavenly fantasy-scape, but by defeating the creators of the other-world, destroying the fantasy world, and remaking their own worlds in which the fantasy is not pitted against reality, but united with it.

Gaiman's *Coraline* is the story of a young girl who finds a parallel world in her family's new home. Coraline begins her story in a state of naïve innocence, longing for imaginative stimulation and excitement. Like Lucy of the Narnian Chronicles, she stumbles upon this other world while she is exploring a new, seemingly endless, "very old house" (1). Coraline finds a locked door and becomes curious about where it goes. In her innocence she imagines it will lead somewhere exciting. Instead, once she convinces her mother to unlock the door, she finds that "Her mother was right. The door didn't go anywhere. It opened onto a brick wall" (7). Much like Lucy, whose entrance into Narnia is at first denied by Edmund and her other siblings, Coraline's innocent fantasy about the door is put firmly to rest by the experienced voice of her mother and the prosaic reality of the bricks. This, and other instances early in the book, emphasizes Coraline's wish to cling to innocence in the face of encroaching experience. The result of her denial of experience, and thus of the real world, is that "Coraline was bored" (22). Therefore, in a moment of imaginative rebellion, she steals the key and reopens the door, finding this time that "It opened on to a dark hallway. The bricks had gone as if they'd never been there" (24). Like the unreliable magic of Lewis's wardrobe, Gaiman's door has opened unexpectedly for the innocent child to enter the other world, and Coraline steps willingly through the portal.

What Coraline finds on the other side is an affirmation of her innocence. In this "other world" everything appears to be a better, less boring, and more fun version of the real world—a child's fantasy. The old women who live downstairs are transformed into young beauties who put on an endless theatre show for Coraline's "forever and always" entertainment (42). Even the dogs in this world report that "Maybe where you come from [chocolate is bad for dogs…but] Here, it's all we eat." (41). Such wish-fulfillment leads Coraline to reflect that things in the other

world are “much more interesting than at home” (43); however, this fantasy world comes with a high price.

Coraline’s innocence is short-lived in the other world. Her dreamscape turns into a nightmare when her “other mother and her other father” explain what she must do to remain in the fantasy world “for ever and always” (44). They ask Coraline to let them sew black buttons onto her eyes, an action that would make Coraline a metaphorical doll, a puppet of the other world, in which her innocent self will be the other mother’s play thing. Coraline’s refusal to undergo this operation represents her transition from innocence to experience. She is no longer enchanted by the fantasy world, but finds it uncanny and retreats back through the portal.

The fact that Coraline’s fantasy world requires symbolic death is another probable nod to Lewis, taking aim at *The Last Battle*, in which Lewis’s protagonists are pleased to learn that they are in Narnia for good, being dead and in Heaven. Gaiman, whose “The Problem of Susan” was discussed in chapter four, has a deep distaste for Lewis’s supposition that higher innocence is something fully attainable only beyond life. He makes this particularly clear when Coraline returns to the real world, only to find that her real parents have been kidnapped by the other mother, and are held hostage in the hall mirror, a mirror that “had been, a long time before, the inside of a wardrobe door” (51). Gaiman, who sees Narnia as holding the Pevensies hostage, paints the fantasy world in *Coraline* as dangerous and threatening. Clearly the other world is not a means to higher innocence; instead, higher innocence can be achieved in Gaiman’s story only by toppling the fantasy world and its wicked hierarchy.

The other mother, who “made” the other world and then “waited” in it like a spider in its web (69), “wants something to love” or eat least “something to eat” (63). She is, like Aslan, the creator of the fantasy world, but unlike Aslan (or perhaps, Gaiman believes, exactly like Aslan)

she uses the world to lure innocent children in so that she can consume them; in essence, she is the White Witch and Aslan rolled into one.[134] The other mother is experience, employing fantasy to seduce and consume innocence. In a subversive allusion to Lewis's Joy, the ghost of a formerly consumed child warns Coraline that the other mother will "take your joy. And one day you'll awake and your heart and your soul will have gone" (84). In order to achieve Gaiman's version of higher innocence, Coraline must therefore defeat the other mother, destroy the fantasy world, and release herself and her parents back into the real world.

Unlike Lewis's protagonists, who must embrace the fantasy landscape, Coraline's first step towards higher innocence is a rejection of the fantasy world. When an other-world man tells her, "Your other mother will build whole worlds for you to explore[….] Every day will be better and brighter than the one that went before. [….] If you stay here, you can have whatever you want," Coraline counters: "You really don't understand, do you? […] I don't want whatever I want. Nobody does. Not really. What kind of fun would it be if I just got everything I ever wanted?" (117-18). She then acknowledges that the man, like the fantasy world he inhabits, is merely a "bad copy" (118). This is a clear reversal of Lewis's *The Last Battle*. Coraline is rejecting Aslan's proffered "Great Story, […] which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before" (174), and while Lewis refers to the real world as a "shadowland" (174) of Aslan's country, Coraline instead dubs the fantasy world a "bad copy." Increasingly now, Coraline recognizes the fantasy world's artificiality, noticing that it "reminded her of a photograph […], not the thing itself" (119). This recognition is a step towards higher innocence, for she increasingly sees the fantasy as fake and longs, in turn for the real.

[134] "The Problem of Susan" again backs up this reading of *Coraline*. In that story Gaiman depicts Aslan and the White Witch engaging in sex acts after consuming the corpses of the Pevensie children.

Coraline defeats the other mother, beating her in a game of hide and seek. This coup destroys the fantasy world and returns Coraline and her parents to the real world, which she now reinvests with meaning. Having returned victorious, Coraline reflects on her world:

> The sky was a robin's-egg blue, and […] beyond the trees, green hills, which faded on the horizon into purples and grays. The sky had never seemed so *sky*, the world had never seemed so *world*. Coraline stared at the leaves on the trees and at the patterns of light and shadow on the cracked bark of the trunk of the beech tree outside the window. Then she looked down at her lap, at the way that the rich sunlight brushed every hair on the cat's head, turning each white whisker to gold. Nothing, she thought, had ever been so interesting. (136)

By giving Coraline newfound ownership of the real world, Gaiman revises Lewis's fantasy conventions to suggest that higher innocence is not an ultimate escape from experience, but a co-mingling of innocence and experience. For Coraline, this higher innocence means she has the ability to discern the fancy of innocence from the reality of experience, but also to re-invest the reality of experience with meaning, meaning that Lewis's higher innocence supposedly threatens to diminish. The result is a self-empowerment that Gaiman no doubt considers beyond that of Lewis's protagonists, and the story concludes with Coraline's realization that "there was nothing left about school that could scare her anymore" (159). By overcoming the allure of the fantasy world, Coraline has reached a higher innocence in which she can master and enjoy the real world, secure in her own capacities.

At heart, Gaiman's children's story is akin to Lewis's, for the child travels to the fantasy world to overcome evil, to progress through experience towards higher innocence. Just as Lewis's child reader is meant to find reality enchanted because of her reading, so Gaiman's protagonist finds her interest in the real world re-enlivened. The point at which Gaiman corrects and completes Lewis's version of the Romantic metanarrative is in his depiction of higher innocence. While Lewis spiritualized the Romantics and Victorians, Gaiman demystifies Lewis,

rooting higher innocence in deeply humanistic, rather than spiritual, terms, in mundane, daily life rather than a distant, Heavenly existence. Gaiman, who admits in a speech to the Mythopoeic society that "C. S. Lewis was the first person to make me want to be a writer" and that throughout his life he "read other books […] only because there wasn't an infinite number of Narnia books to read," clearly steps into the legacy of Lewis with *Coraline*, revising Lewis's Romantic metanarrative to fit a new era, a new worldview.

Grossman's *Magicians Trilogy* performs a similar revision, though perhaps an even more self-conscious one. In the series, Quentin Coldwater, like Coraline, struggles with a sort of divine discontent and boredom. He finds that reality cannot make him happy because he longs for the fantasy world of his childhood reading: Fillory. The narrator describes Fillory thus:

> Christopher Plover's *Fillory and Further* is a series of five novels published in England in the 1930s. They describe the adventures of the five Chatwin children in a magical land that they discover while on holiday in the countryside with their eccentric aunt and uncle. [….] every summer for three years, the children leave their various boarding schools and return to Cornwall, and each time they do they find their way into the secret world of Fillory, where they have adventures and explore magical lands and defend the gentle creatures who live there against the various forces that menace them. (*The Magicians* 6)

The comparison between Narnia and Fillory is obvious, down to the Baynes-esque illustrated map of Fillory in the front matter of *The Magicians* (2); Plover is a revision of Lewis, the Chatwins are his Pevensies, and Fillory is his Narnia, for which Quentin longs as for "a book that did what books always promised to do and never actually quite did: get you out, really out, of where you were and into somewhere better" (7). Although Quentin often reminds himself that life is not "a Fillory novel" (8), he cannot keep from innocently wishing that it were, and, like Coraline, he eventually finds that his wish comes true.

Quentin experiences two wish-fulfillments in the first book of the series, *The Magicians*. First, he is accepted to a Hogwarts-style college of magic, called Brakebills. Second, he learns

that Fillory is, in fact, a real place. Like Coraline, however, he discovers that these supposedly magical places are no improvement on his normal life, and, at times, they are much worse. At Brakebills Quentin finds the work taxing, often boring, and struggles to fit in socially. After graduating he is listless and as discontent as ever. He wastes his time partying with his fellow graduates and destroys his only legitimate relationship by cheating on his girlfriend in a moment of drunken weakness. Despite all of this, Quentin continues to innocently long for Fillory, assuming that Fillory can salve his discontent with the real world, and with his now lusterless Brakebills society. In a stupor, Quentin ponders an excursion to Fillory, and the narrator reports, "He was like a kid on Christmas morning who couldn't wait for the grown-ups to waken. Santa was here, and he was going to fix everything" (278). Despite one cycle of innocence shattered through his experience of Brakebills, Quentin still places naïve trust in Fillory as an escape from the real world.

Upon entering Fillory Quentin thinks, "This was his life now, the life he had always been waiting for. It was finally here" (288), but he is soon disillusioned once more. Within pages of Quentin and his friends arriving in Fillory, the narrator reports:

> The novelty of actually, physically being in Fillory was wearing thin. In spite of everything a mood of general grumpiness was growing, a spoiled-picnic mood. Every time a bird perched overhead for more than a few seconds Josh would say, "Okay, this is the one," or "I think it's trying to tell us something," or eventually, "Hey asshole, fly away from me, please." (296).

Instead of embarking on a noble quest, led by a robin like Lewis's Pevensies, Quentin and company wander aimlessly through the fantasy world, as bored and bad-humored as ever. Even worse, when they finally undertake the quest to become Kings and Queens of Fillory, they find the battle even more horrifying. Upon sight of first blood, Quentin ruminates that "He wasn't ready for this. This wasn't magic. This was the opposite of magic" (322). By the end of the

novel, approximately half of their company has been slaughtered, including Quentin's girlfriend, and Quentin is left totally bereft of the innocent longing he once felt for Fillory.

In *The Magician King* Quentin undergoes a similar, repeating cycle of innocent enthusiasm crushed by experience. Even now that Quentin rules Fillory as King, he longs for something more. He sets out on a sea voyage, akin to that in Lewis's *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, seeking a golden key that is supposed to open a door to another world. Having secured the key, he opens "a door in the air" and observes, "It was bright in there, and there was warmth, and sunlight, and green. This was it. Already the gray stone of the After Island looked insubstantial. This was what he'd been missing—call it adventure or whatever you wanted to. He wondered if he was going somewhere in Fillory or somewhere else entirely" (104). Having built this excited tension, Quentin steps through the magical door and finds himself "on the warm concrete sidewalk in front of his parents' house in Chesterton, Massachusetts" (104). Once again, his clutching at innocent wonder is quelled by prosaic reality, shattered by the experience inherent in real life and the real world. This cycle repeats a number of times in *The Magician King*, Quentin attempting to re-enchant himself or his surroundings, and finding them nevertheless dull, real, disappointing. Yet, Grossman does not leave Quentin to wallow in experience.

Quentin reappears in *The Magician's Land*, weathered but also softened by his experiences in the first two books. Older and wiser than he once was, Quentin returns to Fillory, which appears to be dying in a manner very similar to Narnia's decline in *The Last Battle*.[135] Quentin learns that the death of the ram gods, Ember and Umber could save Fillory, but unlike Aslan, who nobly lays down his life for Edmund in the Narnia Chronicles, Ember and Umber are

[135] For instance the inhabitants of Fillory are engaged in an all-out bloodbath at the gates of Castle Whitespire (the Fillorian Cair Paravel).

weak, selfish, limited, and unable to sacrifice themselves. As he kills them, he thinks, "Die, you selfish bastard, you miserable coward, you old goat. Die and give us life" (380). By killing the gods, Quentin is transformed into a god himself, and restores Fillory to some of its former glory, re-sculpting the land, healing the inhabitants, setting the sun "back on its eternal track," and then "rest[ing]," before "allow[ing] the power to leave Him" (384). Like Coraline, Quentin thus defeats the rulers and creators of the fantasy world, but unlike Coraline, Quentin does so to restore and save that world. Nonetheless, it is not in Fillory that Quentin finds higher innocence.

As a reward for Quentin's salvific work, he is taken to the "Drowned Garden" on the far side of Fillory. In that garden a demi-goddess explains to him that the plants are all feelings, and points out one particular plant, saying:

> This is a feeling that you had […] Once, a very long time ago. A rare one. This is how you felt when you were eight years old, and you opened one of the Fillory books for the first time, and you felt awe and joy and hope and longing all at once. You felt them very strongly, Quentin. You dreamed of Fillory then, with a power and an innocence that not many people ever experience. That's where all this began for you. You wanted the world to be better than it was.
> Years later you went to Fillory, and the Fillory you found was a much more difficult, complicated place than you expected. The Fillory you dreamed of as a little boy wasn't real, but in some ways it was better and purer than the real one. That hopeful little boy you once were was a tremendous dreamer. (389)

Upon hearing this description of his past innocence, Quentin reflects on how experience has shaped him:

> He felt full of love for that little boy he'd once been, innocent and naïve, as yet unscuffed and unmarred by everything that was to come. [….] He wasn't that boy anymore, that boy was lost long ago. He'd become a man instead, one of those crude, weather-beaten, shopworn things, and he'd almost forgotten he'd ever been anything else—he'd had to forget, to survive growing up. But now he wished he could reassure that child and take care of him. (390)

This nurturing urge to protect and comfort his past, innocent self is the beginning of higher innocence for Quentin, for it whispers of a new creative capacity within him. Taking a seedpod from the plant, Quentin returns to Earth and takes up a new project: building his own world.

Having completed his new world, Quentin fully embodies higher innocence, and the text explains, "The curse was lifted. [He] really had made a land, alive and brand new" (397). In this moment of creative achievement, Quentin finally realizes that the longing he had always felt for Fillory was wrong, that higher innocence must come from within himself, rather than from any fantasy world. He recalls himself as a disillusioned teen and concludes,

> He'd been right about the world, but he was wrong about himself. The world was a desert, but he was a magician, and to be a magician was to be a secret spring—a moving oasis. He wasn't desolate, and he wasn't empty. He was full of emotion, full of feelings, […] that's what being a magician was. [….] Magic was wild feelings, the kind that escaped out of you and into the world and changed things. […He had] the power to enchant the world. (399)

Like Coraline, Quentin realizes that higher innocence is a power within himself, a power to re-enchant the real world, to make it better than the fantasy world. He finds that the world he has created is not an "island," but a "bridge connecting Fillory and Earth" (401). The real world, or Earth, is now united to the supposed magic of the fantasy world, and Quentin is himself re-enchanted.

In a revision that is ultimately more sympathetic to Lewis than Gaiman's, Grossman traces Quentin's development through the Romantic metanarrative and finally recommends that it is not the fantasy world in-and-of-itself that holds the key to higher innocence. Just as Lewis suggests that Narnia was only attractive because "it sometimes looked a little like" Heaven (*LB* 196), Grossman posits that Quentin was attracted to Fillory not for itself, but because he "wanted the world to be better than it was" (*Magician's Land* 390). Unlike Lewis, however, Grossman does not requisition higher innocence to an afterlife, or a mystical union with the divine (in fact,

Quentin personally places the dead of Fillory into an eternal sleep when he remakes the world). Instead, like Gaiman, Grossman's higher innocence manifests itself within the individual, and within the real world, transforming and reshaping that world.

In conclusion, Gaiman and Grossman represent the continuation of a literary heritage, passing from the Romantics and Victorians, through Lewis, and into the twenty-first century. Lewis revises the Romantic metanarrative to expand its spiritual implications, while Gaiman and Grossman revise Lewis's metanarrative to bring it back to Earth. Lewis builds on nineteenth-century texts to craft his "enchanted woods," and the twenty-first century fantasists extend his vision, making "all real woods a little enchanted."

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