NECTAR AND AMBROSIA FOR TEA:
THE BRINGING HOME OF MYTH IN C. S. LEWIS

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The peculiar talents and sensibility of C.S. Lewis have commended him to one of the broadest and largest audiences of the twentieth century, an audience spanning international boundaries and comprised of the young and old, academic and average citizen, and Christian and secularist alike. Lewis' universal appeal arises from the universality of his vision, rooted in a fundamentally mythological cosmology. Such a view sees everything as having its own profound quiddity, yet also as heralding some greater and deeper reality. Ultimately, Lewis' mythological cosmology finds its ratification and fulfillment in the Christianity which he came to embrace, and to espouse ever more deeply.

Lewis' whole life was of a piece, and its mythological keynote was the product of personal experience, informing every aspect of his entire ethos. The mythological timbre of his literary aesthetic is therefore as integral to his works of inexorable logic as it is to his works of primary imagination, comprising the very grain of his pattern of thought. His mythological sensibility is not the extraneous adjunct of theory, nor does it comprise a remote or transcendent romanticism; rather, it is characterized by a peculiar "homeness" and a visceral nativeness. The fantasy worlds of Lewis' planetary romances lend concrete expression to this mythological aesthetic, providing a graphic framework for the duet of 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' which heralds the Lewisian strain. Each of the three novels repeats in microcosm the principal structure of his mythological ethos, as does the tri-partite
structure of the planetary trilogy as a whole.

In the first chapter, this thesis thoroughly investigates the nature, scope, and inner consistency of the expansive Lewisian ethos. Each treating one of the planetary romances, the three subsequent chapters explore the reiteration of that mythological ethos in theme, parabolic symbol, and paradigmatic method. The knitting together of theme and technique in the trilogy is judged to be successful, both in creating meaningful self-contained works of art, and in providing a powerful exponent of the Lewisian ethos.
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Chapter I

Introduction: The Lewisian Ethos

In the final analysis, all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.

Frederick Buechner

Clive Staples Lewis was an extraordinary man with an uncommon affinity for the ordinary. Several observers agree with Lewis that even his personal appearance was resolutely commonplace. He had a florid aspect and never cut a very dashing figure. New suits would resign themselves into hapless heaps once draped on his rather dumpy frame. Mr. John Ensor, who arranged for Lewis to talk to the Christian Fellowship of the Electric and Musical Institute in Middlesex in 1944, gives us this description of the man he met at Paddington Station: "He was dressed in well worn tweed jacket and corduroy trousers with fawn raincoat, and would seem undistinguishable in appearance from scores of other ordinary folk."1

The aura of commonness which clung to the presence of one of the outstanding men of letters of the twentieth century in a manner characterizes Lewis the author as much as the personage. For example,

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Lewis' literary distillation of the catholic elements of faith, *Mere Christianity*, is a comprehensive yet concise and lucid document, easily grasped by the ordinary man on the street. His original presentation of this material on radio, broadcast in several series of brief ten-minute addresses on the BBC, further testifies to his penchant for what is basic and readily accessible to the common man. *The Problem of Pain*, one of Lewis' earlier books, confirms his gift of speaking to everyman, even on topics of deeper understanding. Before addressing the main subject of his book, Lewis is willing to tackle, "on the scale of a pamphlet in a church porch, . . . the origins of theism."\(^2\) "The chapter, slight as it is, provides an excellent example of the author's good management," Austin Farrer judges. "Without reserve or affectation he does what he can," continues Farrer, citing Lewis' "pastoral concern" for his readers ("Christian Apologist," p. 34).

This ready ability to discern and appreciate basics characterizes the whole of Lewis' life and oeuvre. The man and his work stand rooted within the solid matrix of a down-to-earth reality, which provides the bracing sense of a firm groundwork. "Sane," a word used lovingly by Lewis,\(^3\) is a term also often employed by his critics and reviewers. Lewis' profundity comprises a disarming and forthright simplicity—the
polar opposite of naive simplism. As literary critic and scholar, as well as Christian apologist and moralist, Lewis was always ready to cut through sentiment, suave rhetoric, and unwarranted castle building. With deft and piercing strokes he would expose the skeletons shivering beneath false sophistication.

Such simplicity, qualified as it is by a robust probe into meaning, characterizes the corpus of Lewis' work and endears him to his readers. Nevill Coghill applauds the "homely English" and "easy handling of clauses" standard even to Lewis' literary criticism. He also admires the "pungent simplicity" and "sudden, provocative generalizations" of his conversation and polemical prose (p. 61). In Lewis' most complex prose Coghill continues to find "weight and clarity of argument, sudden turns of generalization and genial paradox, the telling short sentence to sum a complex paragraph, and unexpected touches of personal approach" (pp. 59-60). Evan K. Gibson similarly praises the down-to-earth quality of Lewis' fiction: "The simple and oral-sounding sentences, the crystal-clear illustrations and analogies, the eye-level meeting with the reader—whether child or adult—indicate a writer with a style for all seasons. The common touch was, indeed, at his fingertips."5

Lewis' lifestyle bears the same stamp of simplicity as his literature. Thomas Howard tells us that Lewis wrote and spoke out of his experience, "most of it very humdrum experience" (Foreword, Speaker & Teacher, p. x). "I would like everything to be immemorial—to have the


same old horizons, the same garden, the same smells and sounds, always there, changeless," Lewis confesses. 6 Never a great traveller, Lewis left the United Kingdom only twice, once to serve in World War I, and once with his ailing wife to fulfill her dream of visiting Greece before her death. To Lewis' taste, an ideal day would be a "normal" day, such as began with a morning of study, preferably complemented by an eleven-o'clock cup of tea or coffee, and later followed by lunch and a solitary countryside walk. Then tea, "taken in solitude" and enhanced by light reading, and a further two hours of work until the evening meal. Such a day would end with talk or lighter reading. 7 "'You can't get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me,'" Lewis remarked. 8

A survey of Lewis criticism reveals a surprising homogeneity in various evaluations of the domestic and homely qualities of Lewis' writing. There is even agreement among critics upon Lewis' particular emphasis on the British institution of tea. In Light on C.S. Lewis, for example, Walter Hooper sums up his profound admiration for the man in his own simple desire "for one more conversation with him over tea in the sitting-room of the Kilns [Lewis' Oxford home]." 9 In discussing the


9 "A Bibliography of the Writings of C.S. Lewis," p. 118.
alternating "cosiness" and severity of Lewis' writing, Stella Gibbons, another contributor to Light on C.S. Lewis, comments on the frequency with which tea appears as "the embodiment of cosiness" in his fiction ("Imaginative Writing," p. 98). Looking to The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe for an example, Gibbons cites the tea party which Father Christmas provides for Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, the Pevensie children and "the adult reader, an almost forgotten experience for the poor soul" (p. 100). "'The Beavers aren't there to prevent you taking it too seriously, but to supply the snug & homely and to give information,'" Lewis himself says of the tea party. "'I'd have liked that chapter as a child,'" he writes to Owen Barfield. 10

Gibbons further notes that "tea . . . is mentioned with telling effect in Out of the Silent Planet, while Ransom is awaiting his interview with the Oyarsa of Malacandra" (p. 98). We read of that incident: "His old terrors of meeting some monster or idol had quite left him: he felt nervous as he remembered feeling on the morning of an examination when he was an undergraduate. More than anything in the world he would have liked a cup of good tea." 11 Tea, as well as its popular counterpart, beer, both symbolize earthiness—and Englishness no less: the first thing that Ransom does upon his return from Malacandra is to visit a pub for a pint of bitter. Gibbons finds this brand of


11 Out of the Silent Planet (Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1938), pp. 132-33; cited hereafter as Planet. All further references are to this edition.
domesticity "completely and satisfyingly English" (p. 98). Lewis' fiction is hardly provincial, she maintains, when he ranges with vivid imagination from medieval Europe to Deep Heaven. On the contrary, she discovers "native bluntness and fresh poetry" in his writing (p. 98).

Other contributors to *Light on C.S. Lewis* join Gibbons and Hooper in stressing Lewis' general appreciation for the ordinary. J.A.W. Bennett lauds his "discriminating zest for life, for 'common life,'" while John Lawlor identifies in Lewis the same quality which Lewis honoured in George MacDonald--the "'quiet fullness of ordinary nature.'" In *The Achievement of C.S. Lewis*, Thomas Howard suggests that "ordinariness" is "central to Lewis's whole vision" to the same extent that it defines T.S. Eliot's aesthetic. Howard explains:

This is his native terrain, the region we mortals were made for, the very textures of which say "home" to us... This is the very turf of Lewis's fiction. In every tale Lewis writes, we find ourselves returning and returning, no matter what glories and terrors have regaled us, to lanes and puddles and sandwiches and tea and hearths and pints of beer (p. 79; emphases added).

A.N. Wilson declares it "an extraordinary tribute to the greatness of C.S. Lewis that his genius shines out of the most trivial things he wrote and said."15

12 "'Grete Clerk,'" p. 48.


Clyde Kilby draws our attention to the influence which A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, a friend and fellow Oxonian of Lewis', had on his sensibility. In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis tells us that Hamilton taught him "a serious, yet gleeful, determination to rub one's nose in the very quiddity of each thing, to rejoice in its being (so magnificently) what it was" (p. 189). This would mean "a total surrender to whatever atmosphere was offering itself at the moment," Lewis explains; "in a squalid town to seek out those very places where its squalor rose to grimness and almost grandeur, on a dismal day to find the most dismal and dripping wood, on a windy day to seek the windiest ridge" (*Joy*, pp. 188-89). Donald Glover concludes that for Lewis "the most attractive quality" of the beauty of aesthetic experience "is, unromantically, its homeliness or homeyness" (*Enchantment*, p. 20). He reports that around 1928 "the literary theme of 'homeliness' as a topic in letters begins to assume importance" and, that while "Lewis never defined 'homeliness,' . . . he meant initially . . . a sense of settled domesticity" (p. 16). "It is not . . . the traditional home you can never get back to, . . . but rather the homeliness which underlies all later sophistication and anchors it," Glover clarifies (pp. 16-17).

In *Joy*, Lewis says that Arthur Greeves taught him to appreciate "Homeliness" in literature--"not . . . merely Domesticity, though that came into it," but particularly "the rooted quality which attaches . . . [such books] to all our simple experiences, to weather, food, the family, the neighbourhood" (p. 145). Lewis records that he learned to look for

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and love the "homely" in nature as well as in literature—"the beauty of the ordinary vegetables that we destine to the pot," or of "nothing more than a farmyard in its mid-morning solitude" (Joy, p. 150). He writes to his brother of his fondness for "all sorts of weather" (20 March 1932, Letters, 150), reminding us of the Dennistons in the third volume of the trilogy, That Hideous Strength. They similarly "enjoy things for their own sake," and share an appreciation of weather in general, rain or shine. 17

Clearly, Lewis finds nothing ignominious in the ordinary; a quality of domesticity is the keynote of his work. In the hymns which close The Pilgrim's Regress, for example, Lewis celebrates "the tether and pang of the particular" which is our human lot. 18 He does not envy the angels their grand but severely ethereal climes. He appreciates the human idiosyncracy which makes men's homes, temporal though they may be, so dear to them. In one of his Letters, Lewis sympathizes with his correspondent's "feeling about a housewife's work being like that of Sisyphus," but he goes on to encourage her: "It is surely in reality the most important work in the world. What do ships, railways, mines, cars, government etc. exist for except that people may be fed, warmed, and safe in their own homes? As Dr. Johnson said, 'To be happy at home is the end of all human endeavour'" ("To a Lady," 16 March 1955, 262).

17 Lewis, That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown-Ups (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1945), p. 304); cited hereafter as Strength. All further references are to this edition.

As a generic and ingathering metaphor, the 'tea' which so comfortably steeps Lewis' writing and lifestyle denotes more than the creature comforts or societal refinements of an advanced civilization. Along with its fellow emblems of homeliness, tea comes to connote even a moral rightness. In The Screwtape Letters, Lewis' account of Hell's devilish ranks, Screwtape advises a junior devil that he has "known a human defended from strong temptations to social ambition by a still stronger taste for tripe and onions." Screwtape explains:

Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's [God's] ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one.

The deepest likings and impulses of any man are the raw material, the starting-point, with which the Enemy has furnished him. . . . I would make it a rule to eradicate from my patient any strong personal taste which is not actually a sin, even if it is something quite trivial such as a fondness for county cricket or collecting stamps or drinking cocoa. Such things, I grant you, have nothing of virtue in them; but there is a sort of innocence and humility and self-forgetfulness about them which I distrust. The man who truly and disinterestedly enjoys any one thing in the world, for its own sake, and without caring twopence what other people say about it, is by that very fact fore-armed against some of our subtlest modes of attack. (p. 49 and pp. 68-69; emphasis added)

Critic Jared Lobdell proposes that sub-warden Curry, the only proponent of N.I.C.E. to be spared in Strength's holocaust, is similarly

"defended against the trahison des clerics," as Dimble calls it (p. 462)--or "the treason of the intellectuals," which is "a desire of the species to become the master of things"--by a taste for wire-pulling and superintending the lives of his colleagues."20 Because he "innocently produce[s] boredom rather than intentionally producing harm," Lobdell concludes, "he is almost trivially saved" (p. 12). As Curry's name suggests, he merely has a taste for spice in his life, rather than an egomaniacal hunger for power. Feverstone calls him "a man who loves business and wire-pulling for their own sake and doesn't really ask what it's all about" (Strength, p. 44). There is only a fine line between Curry's selfishness and Feverstone's own self-centredness, but the difference is crucial. "It may be the little spark of innocence and disinterestedness from which the whole man can be reconstructed," comments Lewis on a comparable situation.21

Lewis heartily endorses the prosaic, sub-Christian values of everyday life, quick only to point out the danger of resting there instead of exercising true virtue.22 He says in his sermon "Transposition":

May we not . . . suppose . . . that there is no expe-

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rience of the spirit so transcendent and supernatural, no vision of Deity Himself so close and so far beyond all images and emotions, that to it also there cannot be an appropriate correspondence on the sensorious level? Not by a new sense but by the incredible flooding of those very sensations we now have with a meaning, a transvaluation, of which we have here no faintest guess?²³

Although not inherently moral, these ordinary and sub-Christian values of the natural man can aid one en route to virtue. Hooper finds a more profound treatment of the relationship between soul and spirit in The Four Loves, a late work in Lewis' theological corpus. Here Lewis clarifies the value which he posits in homely elements:

All natural affections, including this [patriotism], can become rivals to spiritual love: but they can also be preparatory imitations of it, training (so to speak) of the spiritual muscles which Grace may later put to a higher service; as women nurse dolls in childhood and later nurse children. There may come an occasion for renouncing this love; pluck out your right eye. But you need to have an eye first.

[Sometimes] the natural loves are summoned to become modes of Charity while also remaining the natural loves they were.

One sees here at once a sort of echo or rhyme or corollary to the Incarnation itself. And this need not surprise us, for the Author of both is the same. As Christ is perfect God and perfect Man, the natural loves are called to become perfect Charity and also perfect natural loves. . . . Charity does not dwindle into merely natural love but natural love is taken up into, made the tuned and obedient instrument of, Love Himself.²⁴


"The highest does not stand without the lowest," runs a favourite maxim of Lewis', taken from Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation*.\(^{25}\) Lewis is marked by his genuine appreciation of and healthy respect for the mean and ordinary elements of life.

Yet along with his staunch taste for the English cup of tea, Lewis also evinces an unquenchable thirst for nectar and ambrosia. The down-to-earth, tweedy hearth-hugger was an outspoken spokesman for fantasy, fairy tales, and science fiction. Today he continues to be the guide for millions of readers through the fantastic worlds of his own creation, the vast realms of Narnia and Deep Heaven. Lewis' first love in literature was wholeheartedly romantic, seeking out the mythic and marvellous. In nature too he first thrilled to its vast and wild elements. Herein Lewis found "joy"--the spirit-felt longing so utterly consuming that, although to have it is a want, "that kind of desire is itself desirable, . . . the fullest possession we can know on earth" (*Joy*, p. 158). Lewis identifies "Joy" as the keynote of his life, and critics have well documented its theme in his writing.

Gibson refers to the strong colour and emphatic pictorialism of Lewis' literary style (*Spinner of Tales*, p. 5). The reasoned metaphors and analogies which so clearly explain ideas are also vivid pictures, the products of a vibrant imagination. Howard observes that "Lewis himself, when he was writing and speaking, always found apt analogies and metaphors, since he knew that we are the kind of creatures who grasp things best when they are embodied or pictured" (Foreword, *Speaker &

\(^{25}\) As quoted by Lewis, *Four Loves*, p. 12.
Teacher, p. xi). Indeed, the fervour of Lewis' imagination need hardly be chronicled nor defended in the introduction to a study of his ever popular planetary romances.

Thus, we seemingly have two Lewises, the one 'homely' and rational, and the other romantic and imaginative. In Joy, Lewis admits to these twin sides of his personality, identifying their roots in his parents' own opposite natures—the calm, critical Hamilton and the volatile Welsh Lewis. His imaginative side was fostered in childhood, leading him even then to creative writing and story-telling, and to an all-subsuming passion for Norse myth. The rational Lewis did not really develop until forged in the fierce fire of his tutor Kirkpatrick's pugilistic rationality. It is largely immaterial for our own purposes to determine just when Lewis' two natures bonded together with any intimacy and permanence. The crucial point is that his twin propensities of character did ultimately fuse. Chad Walsh testifies:

It was the combination of Old Kirk's logic and [George] Macdonald's transcendent intuitions that shaped the mature sensibility of Lewis and gave to his books their peculiar and powerful simultaneous appeal to mind and heart. Or to put it with more accuracy, these two men . . . made him recognize the two sides of his nature that were already latent. ("The Man and the Mystery," p. 4; emphasis added)

In his formative years and early manhood, Lewis seemed condemned to lead a double life between his two natures. "They have nothing to do with each other: oil and vinegar, a river running beside a canal, Jekyll and Hyde. Fix your eye on either and it claims to be the sole truth," Lewis laments (Joy, pp. 115-16). Yet he was gradually approaching a coherent—or to borrow a better term from Charles Williams, a
co-inherent—unity, to which both qualities would be vital. Warring
sometimes with his imagination and sometimes with his reason, led now by
his guiding light "Joy" and now by his faculties of logic, Lewis' halves
were eventually welded into a single, dual-faceted personality. Moving
from his original unqualified passion for nature's wild, elemental glory,
Lewis ultimately came to know his deepest pleasure "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" (Joy, p. 150). "If this new world was strange,
it was also homely and humble," Lewis explains in another context.26
"Homeliness and magic embrace one another," Lewis tells Greeves (5 Jan.
1930, Together, 327). In describing both the homely and magical
qualities of a favourite boyhood landscape, Lewis testifies: "And here we
come to one of those great contrasts which have bitten deeply into my
mind--Niflheim and Asgard, Britain and Logres, Handramit and Harandra,
air and ether, the low world and the high" (Joy, p. 147).

It is this sense of a profound contrast, universal, perpetual, and
irreducible in its binary operation, which provides for the coalition of
Lewis' disparate character elements. Homeliness and magic fashion the
yoke which he came to wear so well. A delicate conjunction of
extraordinary imagination, and "ordinary" or basic rationality, came to
be the dominant stamp of Lewis' writing. Our purpose will be to examine
the balance and operation of this union, as it characterizes and
functions in the planetary trilogy. We will watch Lewis, always at home

26 Pref., George Macdonald: An Anthology (London: Geoffrey Bles,
1946), p. 21; the volume is cited hereafter as George Macdonald.
in the unhomely climes of myth, bring this myth back home, bravely serving us its nectar and ambrosia for tea.

Critical acclaim of Lewis is loudest in hailing what Lawlor identifies as "'the singularity of his essential being'" ("Tutor and Scholar," p. 67). Lewis is not a split personality, Lawlor assures us; in him "the visionary and the moralist, commonly disjoined, are at one" (p. 82). Emphasizing "his interest in the fusion of the homely and the magical," Glover calls "the fused experience . . . the height of Lewis's achievement" (Enchantment, p. 74 and p. 82). Farrer insists that Lewis' "peculiar merit is a massive entirety of view" ("Christian Apologist," p. 29). Bennett, who informs us that Lewis valued the school of Chartres' "assertion of the wholeness of man's nature," also tells us that Lewis' "works are all of a piece: a book in one genre will correct, illumine, or amplify what is latent in another" ("'Grete Clerk,'" p. 46 and p. 49; emphasis added). Lawlor similarly stresses that "all of his work . . . is of one piece" ("Tutor and Scholar," p. 80), as does William Luther White in his own study, The Image of Man in C.S. Lewis.27 Life is a rich tapestry for Lewis, with no loose threads: one may highlight a delicate working here or focus on a certain intricacy there, but always within the context of the grand picture to which it contributes.

Critics agree that, in its far-ranging synthesis and all-encompassing nature, the "massive entirety" of Lewis' view found its rigorous roots within Lewis himself. Gibson suggests that "one who reads

his books reads his life" (Spinner of Tales, p. 10). In an essay first
published under the significantly paradoxical title, "The Elusively Solid
C.S. Lewis," Walsh echoes Gibson's observation: "The mystery of C.S.
Lewis is that there seems to be no mystery. None, at least, if one views
the man through his books. No writer in our times has been more blessed
with the gift of clarity" ("The Man and the Mystery," p. 1). Walsh goes
on to say that the Letters of C.S. Lewis, as well as the personal
testimonies of the contributing essayists in Light on C.S. Lewis, both
confirm that Lewis was indeed the man suggested by his books, and "that
the inner man and the public man were one" (p. 2). Essays in C.S. Lewis:
Speaker & Teacher further testify to Lewis' singularly unified
consciousness and his consistency of thought and conduct. In this
volume, under another meaningfully paradoxical title, "The Creative
Logician Speaking," Kilby postulates:

Now the great and I think all but unique essential
in C.S. Lewis's makeup was a remarkable combination
of two qualities normally supposed to be opposites. I
mean on the one hand a deep and vivid imagination
and on the other hand a profoundly analytical
mind. Even more remarkable, it was not that these
qualities lay in him side by side and disconnected
but that by some good alchemy they were organically
joined. . . . Actually reason and imagination are
joined in Lewis's communication--both written and
oral--because they were first joined in his thought
and life. (pp. 24-25; emphases added)

The integrative, unified sensibility which is the hallmark of Lewis'
character and writing could be analyzed according to several binary
schemata. For example, one could describe Lewis' work in terms of its
"simultaneous appeal to mind and heart," as Walsh does in "The Man and
the Mystery." Kilby uses parallel terminology above, identifying Lewis'
"vivid imagination and . . . analytical mind." Alternatively, one could discuss the merits of Lewis' writing according to its synchronal poetic and prosaic qualities. Our own examination, however, will review Lewis' composite sensibility in terms of its "natural supernaturalism." "Spirit and Nature have quarrelled in us; that is our disease," Lewis diagnoses in *Miracles*. His life-long effort was expended towards healing that gap. Of course, "natural supernaturalism" is our own peculiar term coined to refer to the Lewisian duet of ordinary and extraordinary. Lewis had been long converted to Christianity when he wrote the planetary trilogy, dismissing any question of his primary belief in Romantic pantheism. While the twin components of Lewis' natural supernaturalism are integrally related, they are nonetheless unequal. Supernature is the original and creative element, while nature is a derivative element, rather like supernature's mythological reflection.

By temperament and conviction Lewis was a man to search beneath surface appearances, ever probing for suggestions of what lies beyond. As Glover puts it, he was enthralled by "that sense of possibilities" (*Enchantment*, p. 51). Gibbons describes Lewis as a man "perpetually haunted by the realities lying behind appearances" (*Imaginative Writing,* p. 97). For Lewis, however, this never diminished the importance of surface ordinariness. He records such an insight in *Joy*: "I saw the bright shadow . . . , transforming all common things and yet itself unchanged. Or, more accurately, I saw the common things drawn into the bright shadow" (pp. 170-71; emphasis added). The ordinary is not negated

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by the extraordinary; indeed, one must first attend to it in order to perceive the extraordinary. Kilby proposes that Lewis would agree with William James that, "'When we see all things in God and refer all things to Him, we read in common matters superior expressions of meaning.'"29

Thus, while Gibbons can talk about Lewis' enchantment with "the realities lying behind appearances," Lawlor can discuss his "heightened awareness of the external world," and his appreciation of the "'quiet fullness of ordinary nature'" ("Tutor and Scholar," p. 82). Essentially, these opposed critical statements simply represent alternate perspectives on a single phenomenon, Lewis' natural supernaturalism. The converse observations merely amount to a paraphrase of Lawlor's assertion "that the transcendental was never at variance with the prosaic" in Lewis' life ("Tutor and Scholar," p. 81). Kilby explains that Lewis "was convinced that reality is more than physical objects on the one hand and abstract concepts on the other; it involves the 'concrete but immaterial' and the possibility of a naked contact with the Almighty Himself" ("Creative Logician," p. 36).

The radical extent of such concrete, universal harmony can well be seen in the following passage from Lewis' popular sermon, "The Weight of Glory":

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. . . . There are no ordinary people. You

Clearly, Lewis' perception is pervaded by his acute awareness of an ordinary world infused by the extraordinary. With holy awe Lewis recognizes our existence as the meeting place of two realities which are distinct but not discontinuous--the natural and the supernatural. In Miracles he writes:

The relations which arise at that frontier are indeed of a most complicated and intimate sort. That spearhead of the Supernatural which I call my reason links up with all my natural contents--my sensations, emotions, and the like--so completely that I call the mixture by the single word "me." (p. 40)

Although not immediately theological, Lewis' perception is ultimately illuminated for us by his religious conviction, just as it was clarified in his own life by Christian conversion. Lewis came to see "that our own composite existence is not the sheer anomaly it might seem to be, but a faint image of the Divine Incarnation itself" (Miracles, p. 134). He agrees with a critic who calls Romanticism "'spilled religion,'" and he shares the "romantic theology" of his good friend Charles Williams, who believes that romanticism needs to be theologized to avoid sterility. Nevertheless, our acknowledgment of this source of Lewis' illumination does not inhibit our examining the

30 "The Weight of Glory," Theology, 43 (1941), 263-74; rpt. in Transposition and Other Addresses, pp. 32-33.

31 Lewis, Pref. to Regress, p. 11.

32 Corbin Scott Carnell, Bright Shadow of Reality: C.S. Lewis and the Feeling Intellect (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 64; cited hereafter as Bright Shadow.
properties of his natural supernaturalism in its own right, to know the composition of the light by which we read the printed page of planetary romance.

The common distinction between natural and supernatural is artificial and arbitrary within Lewis' conjunctive vision. In Perelandra, the second volume of the trilogy, this division dissolves as the Lewis character contemplates the existence of eldila, which are real supernatural creatures. They are "not animals," yet they do have "some kind of material vehicle whose presence could (in principle) be scientifically verified." The Lewis character is confronted with almost a new dimension:

The distinction between natural and supernatural, in fact, broke down; and when it had done so, one realised how great a comfort it had been--how it had eased the burden of intolerable strangeness which this universe imposes on us by dividing it into two halves and encouraging the mind never to think of both in the same context. (pp. 9-10)

Lewis' view, in the words of Corbin Scott Carnell, "represents the impingement of the supernatural, not in any simple two-story world but rather in a world where the two kinds of reality 'co-inhere'" (Bright Shadow, p. 100). "The Supernatural is not remote and abstruse: it is a matter of daily and hourly experience, as intimate as breathing," Lewis writes in Miracles (p. 51). "Thus for Lewis as for Charles Williams (and for Plato) the Real is not ganz anders but the archetype of the

33 Perelandra (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1943), p. 9; all further references are to this edition.
Phenomenal," Carnell concludes. "Williams in fact coined the term 'arch-nature' to avoid the misleading implications of 'supernature'" (pp. 100-01).

In Miracles, Lewis describes supernature as being continuously "at home" in nature, even in the "irregular" occurrences of its miraculous interpositions: "Immediately all Nature domiciles this new situation, makes it at home in her realm, adapts all other events to it" (p. 72; emphases added). For example, in That Hideous Strength, when the bad eldila's breach of the Thulcandran quarantine enables the good planetary deities to descend into our world and invade Merlin's being, Merlin becomes empowered to inflict the curse of Babel upon the Belbury company. This result can be understood as the natural accomodation of a supernatural event, rather than an independent supernatural phenomenon. Granted authority over the animal world as well, Merlin unleashes a holocaust in the Belbury banqueting hall, which is also properly understood as one stage in a "natural" course of events. The cataclysmic earthquake which concludes the sequence of action again simply illustrates nature's accomodation of supernature's direct interposition. Ransom's miraculous ascension to the "'land of Abhalljin, beyond the seas of Lur in Perelandra'" (Strength, p. 337), involves no greater a contravention of nature, even though in assessing the probability of the event, MacPhee concludes that it "'has the disadvantage of being clean contrary to the observed laws of Nature'" (Strength, p. 457). Grace Ironwood amends MacPhee's thinking:

"You are quite right. The laws of the universe are never broken. Your mistake is to think that the little regularities we have observed on one planet for a few hundred years are the real unbreakable
laws; whereas they are only the remote results which
the true laws bring about more often than not; as a
kind of accident." (p. 457)

Miraculous events are wholly consistent with established "laws," but
they are the laws of a larger matrix of reality than we are commonly
familiar with. We catch a glimpse of this more inclusive and less local
framework, for example, in seeing Merlin's resuscitation through eldilic
eyes:

It was no wonder to them. In their eyes the normal
Tellurian modes of being--engendering and birth and
death and decay--which are to us the framework of
thought, were no less wonderful than the countless
other patterns of being which were continually present
to their unsleeping minds. To those high creatures whose activity builds what we call Nature, nothing is "natural." From their station the essential arbitrariness (so to call it) of every actual creation is ceaselessly visible; for them there are no basic assumptions . . . . That a body should lie uncorrupted for fifteen hundred years, did not seem strange to them; they knew worlds where there was no corruption at all. That its individual life should remain latent in it all that time, was to them no more strange: they had seen innumerable different modes in which soul and matter could be combined and separated . . . . (p. 247; emphasis added)

Indeed, Lewis maintains that such supernatural occurrences are merely some
of the more dramatic effects of a constant intimacy between the ordinary
and extraordinary. They simply focus "in small letters something that
God has already written, or will write, in letters almost too large to be
noticed, across the whole canvas of Nature."34 That is, the dynamic
relationship of nature and supernature which we have observed in its

34 Miracles, p. 162; emphasis added. Further page references which are documented parenthetically within the text in this and the next paragraph are to Miracles.
sensational aspects is actually ongoing at a more prosaic level. Whereas the drama might be more subtle, the poetry is equally vibrant, however, especially if one looks from the standpoint of the ordinary rather than the extraordinary.

Our apparently prosaic existence actually demonstrates the most intricate co-inherence of the two kinds of realities, physical and spiritual. Man is "a composite being," and although that state has now been damaged, it was once so completely integrated that "the spirit was once . . . fully 'at home' with its organism, . . . as the human part of a Centaur was 'at home' with the equine part" (p. 152). Even now there remains amazing evidence of our composite nature. "The discrepancy between a movement of atoms in an astronomer's cortex and his understanding that there must be a still unobserved planet beyond Uranus, is already so immense that the Incarnation of God Himself is, in one sense, scarcely more startling" (p. 134). Thus the supernatural events which occur which we call miraculous ultimately involve "only the same sort of miracle which occurs every day" (p. 153). This is the great insight of Lewis' thought and vision, and the acclaimed genius of his method: the organic combination of physical with spiritual, ordinary with extraordinary, or to return to our original metaphor, of tea with nectar and ambrosia.

"A supernatural element is present in every rational man," Lewis will frequently insist (p. 53), and then as soon go on to highlight man's natural being. The radical extent to which Lewis views the utter consonance of these two elements is seen in his poem, "Adam at Night." Here, although unfallen and therefore intensely spiritual, Adam sleeps peacefully in a transparently natural state:
... he would set ajar
The door of his mind. Into him thoughts would pour
Other than day's. He rejoined Earth his mother.

He melted into her nature. Gradually he felt,
As though through his own flesh the elusive growth,
Hardening and spreading of roots in the deep garden,
In his veins, the wells re-filling with the silver rain.35

Adam even feels the fruition of Earth's "gold and diamond in his dark womb," signalling a co-inherence of male and female as well as that of nature and supernature. Physicality and spirituality continue their interplay as we discover that Adam is the planet's guiding intelligence and as such moves Earth in her orbit, a responsibility similarly assigned to Tor at the end of Perelandra. Adam, the perfectly spiritual being, is consummately identified with organic nature as the night ends and day dawns. "Human and erect" the Lord and Lady arise, we are told, "As if two trees should arise, dreadfully gifted / With speech and motion. The Earth's strength was in each" (emphases added). Thus Lewis intimately links the "spearhead of the Supernatural" with nature--including vegetable and mineral nature as well as animal. "And this perhaps is a universal law, that the higher you rise the lower you can descend," Lewis tells us in Miracles (p. 207).

Lewis speaks to man's composite nature again in Pilgrim's Regress, his autobiographical allegory in which he "has summoned reason to the aid of imagination," as Lawlor phrases it.36 In his Preface to the Third Edition, Lewis writes, "We were made to be neither cerebral men nor


visceral men, but Men. Not beasts nor angels but Men—things at once rational and animal" (p. 13). Unfortunately, some of Lewis' critics have failed to grasp this central concept of co-inherence and have preferred to retain the traditional idea of a two-storey universe. J.B.S. Haldane complains that the apparently sinless Malacandrans have "a theology but no religion"—"no religious ceremonies, or even private prayers." His criticism continues: "Their conversations with passing angels, or 'eldils,' whom they occasionally saw and heard, were no more like religious acts than is turning on the radio to listen to Mr. Attlee" (pp. 20-21). We might answer Professor Haldane's objections with this passage from Lewis' *Miracles*, a book which was published a year after his own article appeared:

The reason why the modern literalist is puzzled is that he is . . . starting from a clear modern distinction between material and immaterial . . . . He forgets that the distinction itself has been made clear only by later thought.

We are often told that primitive man could not conceive pure spirit; but then neither could he conceive mere matter. . . . To regard that earlier stage as unspiritual because we find there no clear assertion of unembodied spirit, is a real misunderstanding. You might just as well call it spiritual because it contained no clear consciousness of mere matter. Mr. Barfield has shown [in Poetic Diction], as regards the history of language, that words did not start by referring merely to physical objects and then get extended by metaphor to refer to emotions, mental states and the like. On the contrary, what we now call the "literal and metaphorical" meanings have both been disengaged by analysis from an ancient unity of meaning which was neither or both. (pp. 93-94; emphasis added)

37 "Auld Hornie, F.R.S.," The Modern Quarterly (Autumn 1946); rpt. in Shadows of Imagination, p. 20.
It is this composite mode of being which Lewis portrays in his picture of primitive but unfallen life on Malacandra, as well as in his poem, "Adam at Night." Lewis might be saying with the apostle Paul, "Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."³⁸

Lewis' world view is thus intensely sacramental, whereby nature becomes the very domicile of supernature. His sacramentalism is akin not only to Charles Williams' "romantic theology," but also to the world view of the medievals whom Lewis, as a professional scholar, studied so extensively. Indeed, the Belbury holocaust of beasts and blood, which was mentioned earlier as an example of nature's accomodation of supernature, is timely cited because it incarnates a common exponent of medieval sacramentalism, namely the bestiary. Bestiaries were allegorical catalogues of the appearances and habits of real and imaginary animals, each detail of which was assigned both divine and demoniac spiritual correspondents. For example, a tiger would represent, in potentia, both Christ's strength and Satan's cruelty. "According as spirit exploits or fails to exploit this Natural situation, it gives rise to one or the other," Lewis explains (Miracles, pp. 141-42). Significantly, it is a tiger which precipitates the apocalyptic Belbury holocaust, although Lewis does not generally follow the one-to-one rigour of medieval allegory in such a literal manner. Sharing the same symbolism of imagination and the emblematic philosophy of the same world view, however, Lewis' sacramentalism does assume the medieval principle

³⁸ Bible, Rom. xii: 1b; emphases added. (N.A.S.V.)
of physical and spiritual co-inherence.

Essentially, sacramentalism allows that physical nature figures spiritual reality, even becoming the mode of supernatural good at times. Nature's own neutrality in the relationship, however, leaves her open to become the vehicle of supernatural evil as well. But "to call her either [inherently] 'good' or 'evil' is boys' philosophy," says Lewis.  

"Nature is by human (and probably by Divine) standards partly good and partly evil . . . . But the same tang or flavour runs through both her corruptions and her excellences. Everything is in character," he continues (p. 80). Nature's every feature is "the very idiom, almost the facial expression, the smell or taste, of an individual thing" (p. 80; emphasis added). God as Author has created a character in nature, and "every natural event is the manifestation at a particular place and moment of Nature's total character" (p. 131). With an identity independent of moral supernature, then, nature remains an amoral element. In the regular course of events she will sacramentally convey a good supernature, but it is supernature which lends its morality to that relationship. The peculiar morality or immorality of any natural state or event is determined simply by the involvement of a pure or perverted supernature.

Notwithstanding her neutral status, however, nature does steadily reflect supernature. "No natural phenomenon is really in our favour," Screwtape confesses to Wormwood (Screwtape Letters, p. 80). As a character of God's creation, nature is her Creator's living self-

39 Miracles, p. 147; further page references which are documented parenthetically within the text in this and the next paragraph are to Miracles.
expression. "Doubtless no smallest part of her is there except because it expresses the character He chose to give her," says Lewis (p. 80; emphasis added). Like supernature's hieroglyphics, as it were, nature reveals her Author. Indeed, only as one appreciates her divine Authorship can one truly appreciate her own graphic forms. "Come out, look back, and then you will see . . . this astonishing cataract of bears, babies, and bananas: this immoderate deluge of atoms, orchids, oranges, cancers, canaries, fleas, gases, tornadoes and toads" (p. 81). These aspects of nature are the concrete emblems of supernature. "For Lewis, truth equals spirit, and spirit is manifested in nature," Glover says (Enchantment, pp. 50-51; emphasis added). In The Four Loves Lewis writes:

What nature-lovers . . . get from nature is an iconography, a language of images. I do not mean simply visual images; it is the "moods" or "spirits" themselves—the powerful expressions of terror, gloom, jocundity, cruelty, lust, innocence, purity—that are the images. In them each man can clothe his belief. We must learn our theology or philosophy elsewhere . . . .

But when I speak of "clothing" our belief in such images I do not mean anything like using nature for similes or metaphors in the manner of the poets. Indeed I might have said "filling" or "incarnating" rather than clothing. . . . Nature gave the word glory a meaning for me. (pp. 29-30; boldface print emphases added)

Lewis recognizes the physical universe to be the linguistic imprint, as it were, of a greater spiritual reality. The concept of language is integral to Lewis' sacramentalism, helping to reveal the intimacy yet inherent amorality of nature's relationship to supernature. We will define language as a system of signs and symbols communicating a larger meaning. Like Lewis' natural supernaturalism, language demonstrates the
intimacy between material and immaterial. Linguistic origins reveal that meaning was once an indivisible compound of physical and spiritual components which are now regularly separated.

We have already noted Lewis' agreement with Barfield's contention that "an ancient unity of meaning" did not separate into "'literal and metaphorical' meaning." As the Centaur's human and equine parts felt perfectly at home with each other, for example, so the word "heaven" once denoted a "concrete but immaterial" reality--a reality which included the unconditioned Divine Life, and our creaturely participation in that spiritual Life, as much as the natural world of the New Creation, and the physical sky itself. It is not that the spiritual and physical senses of the word "heaven" were confused; there simply was no division (Miracles, pp. 187-88). A richer experience was wholly translated into, and accommodated by, a poorer idiom. As Kilby says, "Meaning was then unindividuated. . . . Language had a living unity that was essentially metaphoric without knowing itself to be such." Today, following the split of spirit and matter in our consciousness, we assume that language is "merely" and arbitrarily metaphoric, rather than the concrete manifestation of organic correspondences. "'Minds get more and more spiritual, matter more and more material. Even in literature, poetry and prose draw further and further apart,'" Dimble suggests in Strength (p. 350). Modern thought has even sought to derive an exclusively

"scientific" language, disinfected of metaphor and less reliant upon the material world for expression of its refined concepts. Such attempts have been utterly frustrated, however. The universe proves itself stubbornly sacramental and radically heraldic, and language continues to confess itself utterly dependent on the physical world for expression of our highest thought and most complex experience.

In "Bluspels and Flalansferes," Lewis demonstrates his acute awareness of the extent to which even discursive language remains dependent upon the metaphorical extension of sensory data. One need no longer refer to the soul as anima, a word meaning breath; nevertheless, the alternatives preferred by psychologists--complexes, repressions, censors and engrams--are no more analytical, still meaning tyings-up, shovings-back, Roman magistrates, and scratchings.41 "We can make our language duller; we cannot make it less metaphorical. We can make the pictures more prosaic; we cannot be less pictorial," Lewis writes in "Is Theology Poetry?"42 Our capacity for literal speech is strictly confined to the world of the senses; beyond that, all meaning must be metaphorical, Lewis maintains (Miracles, p. 88). Indeed, in "Bluspels and Flalansferes" Lewis goes on to suggest that, in any composition, meaning will be found in inverse ratio to the author's belief in his own literalness. Imagination is the organ of meaning, and as such it is the precondition for the judgement of truth or falsehood as

41 "Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare," in Rehabilitations and Other Essays (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 151; the volume is cited hereafter as Rehabilitations.

42 "Is Theology Poetry?" The Socratic Digest, No. 3 (1945), 25-35; rpt. in They Asked, p. 161.
determined by reason, which is the organ of truth.

Of course, Lewis admits that this posits a certain rightness in the imagination itself, and even presumes "a kind of psycho-physical parallelism (or more) in the universe," unless all the original equations of our thinking, between good and light, for example, have been arbitrary ("Bluspels and Flalansferes," p. 158). However, such "metaphysical implications," which Lewis freely acknowledges, simply point to the sacramentalism which we have already been investigating (p. 158). If they do push us somewhat beyond our previous discussion of sacramental language in a non-theological context, they only underscore the consistency and homogeneity of Lewis' entire ethos. The critical point is that language, like nature, can be examined non-theologically as a sacramental phenomenon; essentially, it comprises material elements which herald a spiritual meaning beyond their immediate being. Indeed, we might define as a sacramental language any derivative, non-univocal system which incorporates a meaning larger than the sum of its parts.

Thus, in his correspondence with Arthur Greeves, Lewis speaks even of "the actual incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection" as "a language" (18 Oct. 1931, Together, 428). Nature too he calls a "language of images": it is a sacramental system whose picture-symbols incarnate a greater though immaterial reality. Indeed, nature is as fundamentally metaphorical, in one sense, as is our own linguistic meaning. "Grammatically the things we say of Him are 'metaphorical': but in a deeper sense it is our physical and psychic energies that are mere 'metaphors' of the real Life which is God," Lewis offers (Miracles, p. 111). Lewis was haunted by the idea that nothing we are familiar with in our world is ever "merely" itself; it always bespeaks an ultimate
reality. "'You have never seen more than an appearance of anything,'" Ransom is told in *Perelandra* (p. 232). As the adjunct of supernature, nature always points from her derivative existence to its ultimate Being. Lewis learned to read the Creator's signature in all that is created, thus finding the language of nature's ordinariness extraordinary. He frequently compared God to an author or poet who has written a story in nature, so that its lines, although knit by an inner consistency, are ultimately about something else. That "something else," the ultimate reality, "proves itself to be the text on which Nature . . . [is] only the commentary," Lewis declares (*Miracles*, p. 157).

The fundamental distinction between a thing's self-contained reality and its extra-referential meaning is a Lewisian hallmark. Lewis cites Samuel Alexander's *Space, Time and Deity* as a major influence in his life for having first taught him this principle (*Joy*, pp. 205-09). "He learned that an experience and the later thought about that experience are two entirely different things that must never be regarded as one," Kilby summarizes ("Creative Logician," p. 33). According to Lewis, Alexander differentiates between two basic and synchronic activities, which he terms "Enjoyment" and "Contemplation." Thus, to see a table would be "to contemplate" the table, but "to enjoy" the act of seeing. On the other hand, Lewis continues, to contemplate optics would be "to contemplate" the act of seeing, but "to enjoy" only those contemplative thoughts. That is, to contemplate the optics which afford one's perception of the table would be an act of reflexive introspection that circumvents the table altogether. "In other words the enjoyment and the contemplation of our inner activities are incompatible," Lewis
concludes (Joy, p. 206). The phenomenon is related to man's nature as a reflexive animal (in turn due to his composite being), a characteristic frequently noted by Lewis.⁴³ He observes that religious faith can similarly be short-circuited: "The moment one asks oneself 'Do I believe?' all belief seems to go. I think this is because one is trying to turn round and look at something which is there to be used and work from--trying to take out one's eyes instead of keeping them in the right place and seeing with them."⁴⁴

Upon reading Space, Time and Deity, Lewis immediately recognized Alexander's distinction between "Enjoyment" and "Contemplation" as axiomatic. The impact on his imagination can be traced in virtually all he subsequently wrote. Simply stated, its import is that everything we know or engage in is ultimately about something else. Contrary to much popular assumption, our thoughts and perceptions are not merely the subjective phenomena of our own minds, but are integrally related to their correspondent objects. "A poet, Mr Robert Conquest, has put something like my view," Lewis writes in "The Language of Religion":

Observation of real events includes the observer, 'heart' and all;
(The common measurable features are obtained by omitting this part.)
But there is also a common aspect in the emotional
Shared by other members of the species: this is conveyed by 'art.'⁴⁵

⁴³ For example, the concept is present in Joy and Miracles. In Image of Man, p. 101, White notes its appearance in Lewis' Studies in Words.


In the essay, Lewis proceeds to differentiate between the activity of imagining and that of having mental images, the latter simply being imagination's resultant and less complex offal (in the etymological sense of off-fall). "The great error is to mistake this mere sediment or track or by-product for the activities themselves," he warns (Joy, p. 207). In Joy, he similarly insists that reflecting that Herodotus is unreliable is not as complex a process as thinking itself is (Joy, p. 206). He draws a distinction between thinking and "the succession of linked concepts" which we use to offer our 'thought' in an argument. "[The latter] appears to me to be always a sort of translation of a prior activity: and it was the prior activity which alone enabled us to find these concepts and links," he explains ("Language of Religion," p. 139). Lewis concludes:

Finally, in all our joys and sorrows, religious, aesthetic, or natural, I seem to find things (almost indescribably) thus. They are about something. They are a by-product of the (logically) prior act of attending to or looking towards something.\(^1\) . . . The very essence of our life as conscious beings, all day and every day, consists of something which cannot be communicated except by hints, similes, metaphors, and the use of those emotions (themselves not very important) which are pointers to it.

Looking towards is neither more nor less metaphorical than attending to. ("Language of Religion," pp. 139-40) \(^1\)

The essence of nature too is something else beyond, to which nature is ultimately a pointer. Something extraordinary is domiciled in the

ordinary. Indeed, simply to appreciate nature's ordinariness requires one's relative awareness of the extraordinary. Otherwise, the former will be mistaken for the latter, and "to treat her as God, or as Everything, is to lose the whole pith and pleasure of her" (Miracles, p. 81). In order to enjoy nature fully one must contemplate something through her, thereby delighting in her sheer ordinariness, as well as recognizing in it the imprint of the extraordinary. "The subordination of Nature is demanded if only in the interests of Nature herself," Lewis writes to Dom Bede Griffiths. "All the beauty withers when we try to make it an absolute. Put first things first and we get second things thrown in: put second things first and we lose both first and second things" (23 April 1951, Letters, 228).

If it is only through this experience of Enjoyment that one can truly appreciate nature, it is also the only manner in which one can come to know the sheer objectivity that exists. One cannot apprehend that "something else" to which Lewis refers through direct Contemplation. Were an intention to possess this "something else" to motivate one to idolize, or contemplate, any intermediary object, one would not only fall short of the ultimate reality, but also suffer an impaired enjoyment of the intermediary. The medium would not be enjoyed for its true identity and vital purpose, but only for its mechanics--"only [for] the pattern which that heavenly wave left on the sand when it retreated," Lewis says (Miracles, p. 110). He describes such ill-fated activity as futile temple-building:

"For it is something coming through the particularities, some light which transfigures them, that really counts, and if you concentrate on them you will find them turning dead and cold under your
hands. The more elaborately, in that way, we build the temple, the more certainly we shall find, on completing it, that the god has flown."46

One must not mistake the idolon for the god, Lewis frequently advises. "'It ceases to be a devil when it ceases to be a god,'" he is fond of repeating in his Letters and The Four Loves.

Nature, indeed the whole of our temporal existence, is sacramental of supernature, but never more than sacramental. While nature is more than ordinary because of the extraordinary we read in her, she is also less than extraordinary because of the resolute ordinariness she comprises. "Reality is 'incorrigibly plural,'" cites Lewis.47 "Real things are sharp and knobbly and complicated and different" (p. 199):

Concrete, individual, determinate things do now exist: things like flamingoes, German generals, lovers, sandwiches, pineapples, comets and kangaroos. . . . One might even say [these are] opaque existences, in the sense that each contains something which our intelligence cannot completely digest. In so far as they illustrate general laws it can digest them: but then they are never mere illustrations. Above and beyond that there is in each of them the "opaque" brute fact of existence, the fact that it is actually there and is itself. . . . This torrent [of opaque things] . . . alone gives our truest principles anything to be true about." (p. 105)

Nature is irreducibly herself, no more "the ultimate reality" than "merely a stage-set for the moral drama of men and women" (p. 81).

46 A Preface to Paradise Lost (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 47.

47 Miracles, p. 198; further page references in this paragraph which are documented parenthetically within the text are to Miracles.
The dual potential for both good and evil attests to nature's derivative status, as opposed to the absolute reality which indwells her to various degrees while she has the positive attribute of existence. Indeed, in keeping with the philosophy of medieval bestiaries, Lewis proposes in The Silver Chair that the higher something is in the natural order, the greater is not only its capacity for good but also its demoniac potential. "I have always gone as near Dualism as Christianity allows—and the N.T. [New Testament] allows one to go v. near," Lewis writes to Dom Bede Griffiths (20 Dec. 1961, Letters, 301). Nature does reflect the Creator's goodness, but she is not divine. "He is not a nature-God, but the God of Nature," Lewis points out (Miracles, p. 139). The extraordinary, while inextricably linked to the ordinary, is yet something separate and apart from its abode. "[God] is not the soul of Nature nor of any part of Nature. . . . He is not to be identified even with the 'divine spark' in man," Lewis warns (Miracles, p. 139). It is not that the finite is reprehensible: Lewis identifies contemptus mundi as "dangerous"—but simply that it is derivative. "Not bad you see; just very very small," Lewis writes, heartily endorsing Lady Julian of Norwich's "vision of 'all that is made' as a little thing like a hazel nut 'so small I thought it could hardly endure.'"

Sacramentalism, then, entails the integral co-inherence of two entities, but never their homogeneous equation. Their integrity of relationship is preserved in a profound subordination, for it is "by

48 For this and the following reference I am indebted to White, Image of Man, p. 94.

49 "To Dom Bede Griffiths, O.S.B.," 16 April 1940, Letters, 183; the next sentence contains a quotation from this same location.
refusing to identify itself with any object of the senses, . . . or anything imagined, or any state of our own minds," that supernature "proclaims itself sheerly objective" (Joy, pp. 208-09). An innate appropriateness in the unequal relationship suggests itself to Lewis, who comments in Miracles:

The total reality, both Natural and Supernatural, in which we are living is more multifariously and subtly harmonious than we had suspected. We catch sight of a new key principle--the power of the Higher, just in so far as it is truly Higher, to come down, the power of the greater to include the less. Thus solid bodies exemplify many truths of plane geometry, but plane figures no truths of solid geometry: . . . Montaigne became kittenish with his kitten but she never talked philosophy to him. (pp. 134-35; emphasis added)

In its religious phenomenon of speaking in tongues, language dramatically demonstrates this key principle of the higher investing the lower. Lewis' sermon "Transposition," which he first delivered at Pentecost, explains that God draws up the temporal into Himself, thereby investing the lesser with His own fulness of meaning. For example, "all language" is "a human thing," Lewis writes in A Preface to Paradise Lost (p. 23). Nevertheless, both the erotic language of the mystics, as well as the embarrassing gibberish of glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, can be the very "organ of the Holy Ghost," he affirms ("Transposition," p. 167). Clearly, a richer spiritual reality can transpose itself into a lesser vehicle. In the same way, supernature does regularly transpose itself into nature: "'The highest does not stand without the lowest.'"

Indeed, the key principle which we are discussing--that of the greater descending into the lesser and drawing it up--is but a facet of the profound pattern of death and rebirth. This is a pattern more
globally familiar to us, "a thing written all over the world," Lewis says: it is the model of all vegetable life, animal generation, and our moral and emotional life. These modalities of the universal death and rebirth pattern, moreover, "turn out to be but transpositions of the Divine theme into a minor key" (p. 136). That is, they participate in the greater death and rebirth of the Divine Crucifixion and Resurrection, and ultimately in that death and rebirth comprising the divine act of Creation, which is the master or "total pattern" (p. 136). In its own death-like submission of the greater to the lesser, sacramentalism comprehends this death and rebirth pattern, wherein life is gloriously rekindled to rise anew as the phoenix from the ashes.

Nature is sacramental, but for that very reason she is not to be misunderstood as greater than sacramental, for it is the higher which invests the lower. Indeed, nature has not even attained her full sacramental inheritance yet: in Lewis' eschatological world view, the conjunction of spirit and matter will not be complete until Christ establishes the New Creation and finishes the work begun by the Incarnation. On that day nature will perfectly express supernatural. The harmony of spirit and matter will then sound a full-toned diapason, and our fallen distinction between material and immaterial will dissipate, as our ancestors' perception of the "concrete immaterial" is consummated.

That archaic sort of thinking will become simply the correct sort when Nature and Spirit are fully harmo-

50 Miracles, p. 135; further page references in this paragraph which are documented parenthetically within the text are to Miracles.
nised--when Spirit rides Nature so perfectly that the two together make rather a Centaur than a mounted knight. . . . That kind of blending will accurately mirror the reality which will then exist. There will be no room to get the finest razor-blade of thought in between Spirit and Nature. Every state of affairs in the New Nature will be the perfect expression of a spiritual state and every spiritual state the perfect informing of, and bloom upon, a state of affairs; one with it as the perfume with a flower or the "spirit" of great poetry with its form. (Miracles, pp. 191-92)

Thus, while Lewis does bring home rarified nectar and ambrosia to serve us for tea, he also teaches us to appreciate its essentially transmortal substance and flavour. Our taste knows a new refinement as we learn to anticipate our being most at home in the heavens, sharing the food of the gods. Lewis emphasizes the concrete transposition of myth into our own temporal sphere, but he also proclaims an unsearchable myth which remains inexpressible, and an absolute reality which we will fully know only in eternity. The romantic yearning which Lewis calls Joy produces a sense of disorientation in us that indeed points to the supernatural in nature; it can also induce a further level of displacement, in which the subject knows a union with the supernatural, thereby "discovering his true identity and home."51 "Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation," Lewis reflects in "Weight of Glory" (p. 30).

While Lewis does reveal spirit as a fellow resident of nature, he also introduces spirit as a gracious host who invites us to banquet in a

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51 Carnell, Bright Shadow, p. 120 and p. 144; tense changed.
yet greater mansion. Domestic happiness is "the end of all human
devour," Lewis confesses, but he qualifies the importance of making a
home: "1st to be happy to prepare for being happy in our real home
hereafter; 2nd in the meantime to be happy in our houses." Even
Screwtape admits that men don't feel completely "at home" on earth, and
exhorts his protégé Wormwood to lull his human charge into regarding
earth as his heaven and final home (pp. 141-45). With deep conviction
Lewis writes in *Mere Christianity*:

> I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise,
or be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on
the other, never to mistake them for the something
else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo,
or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire
for my true country, which I shall not find till
after death."\(^{53}\)

Lewis' penetrating search into the ordinary reveals the
extraordinary at home there. Momentum carries him ever onward, however,
ever content with a mere idolon and always desiring the ultimate Object,
yet also fully appreciative of every signpost and show of hospitality
along the way. Glover describes Lewis' fiction in these apposite terms:
"This movement up and in, penetrating into the ultimate truth,
approaching the central and universal reality, returning to simple values
out of a perplexing multiplicity of choices, characterizes the
descriptive movement and the thematic structure of his fiction"
(*Enchantment*, p. 12). Lewis' boyhood habit of seeking unhomely together
with homely effects became the locomotive engine of his life and career:

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like the powerful mesh of two interlocking gears, the union of extraordinary and ordinary engenders a fruitful tension. Lewis writes to Dom Bede Griffiths:

The tension which you speak of (if it is a tension) between doing full and generous justice to the Natural while also paying humble and unconditional obedience to the Supernatural is to me an absolute key position. I have no use for mere either-or people (except of course in that last resort when the choice, the plucking out the right eye, is upon us: as it is in some mode every day.) (23 April 1951, Letters, 228)

To conclude, the sacramental domiciling of the extraordinary within the ordinary does not comprise an easy assimilation or congruency, but rather an intricate, paradoxical relationship. Insofar as she is sacramental of supernature, nature is indeed our home; insofar as she is not the ultimate reality nor yet its perfect expression, she is not our home. As this study will endeavour to show, this careful balance accounts for the depth and wholeness of the cosmic trilogy and allows for its peculiar "homeness" at multiple levels. The integral relationship provides the breadth of the trilogy's profound reaches, even while knitting those distances into an indissoluble unity.

Although Lewis' thoroughgoing natural supernaturalism clearly receives its capstone in the Christianity which he came to embrace so wholeheartedly, its basic perspective is Platonic as well as Christian. That is, although one might be challenged to probe its broader implications, the interrelationship of spirit and matter in Lewis' fiction can be examined in non-theological terms. One should recognize Lewis' deep commitment to Jesus Christ, the Man in whom God is Incarnate, but for the purpose of this literary study it remains an enriching
backdrop, and the foundation which we may safely assume for the man and ultimately the fantasy writer. This is not to minimize or disregard the preeminent effect of faith in Lewis' life and work: indeed, as we have learned, Enjoyment of any such particularity is fostered by a Contemplative gaze which is focussed on a more distant point.

Thus Gibson properly speaks of "the freedom which the sacramental method gives [Lewis]" (Spinner of Tales, p. 266). We will investigate Lewis' natural supernaturalism as a literary phenomenon, with the recognition that it is ultimately supported and enriched by his all-embracing Christianity. As Glover says, the "artistic questions are part of a larger concern which Lewis was working his way through at the same time: the question of how spirit and matter interact in life" (Enchantment, p. 42). Nevertheless, the artistic questions remain an autonomous subset within the "larger concern" of Lewis' religious and existential questions, just as nature and supernature preserve their peculiar identities within the intimacy of their own relationship.

In a non-theological context, then, we have attempted to show that the basis of Lewis' natural supernaturalism lies in the two strains of logic and romance inherent in his character. Glover suggests that "[Lewis'] earliest commitment to an almost pagan love of sensuous beauty ... brought him to recognize spirit in beauty" (Enchantment, p. 13; emphasis added). "The result of his quite rational consideration of the meaning and role of the imagination as it created images of beauty in the reader's mind was the realization that he had [previously] stopped short of understanding the aim of this delight, mistaking it for an end in itself" (p. 19; emphases added). Glover concludes that the theme of "further in and higher up" which he charts in Lewis' life and
work is rooted in an amalgam of logic and romance, comprising Lewis' pre- as well as his post-conversion ideas. Gibson follows Glover's secular patterning, pointing out that Lewis' "concept that a literary figure reflects on a lower plane something which is more real and rich at a higher level is the application of Plato's doctrine of 'Ideas' to literary theory" (Spinner of Tales, p. 264). "To lose what I owe to Plato and Aristotle would be like the amputation of a limb," Lewis confesses. Carnell confirms that "Lewis found in Platonism a comprehensive way to reconcile reason's dialectic with the reasons of the heart" (Bright Shadow, p. 67). Indeed, Carnell's assessment echoes Lewis' own keynote phrase, "the dialectic of Desire" (Pref. to Regress, p. 10).

Having gained a concept of "sacramentalism" over and above its primary theological meaning, then, we have a term still rich in connotation but also available for a more specifically literary application. "Sacramentalism" will serve as our umbrella term for Lewis' peculiar conjunction of the prosaic and poetic, homely and unhomely, and rational and mythic spheres—or for his synchronic awareness of "logic" and "romance," as Lewis designated these twin facets of his perception. Alternatively, we will introduce the term "incarnational" to characterize Lewis' natural supernaturalism. Ransom points to such a dimension of meaning for both terms in Perelandra:

Long since on Mars, and more strongly since he came to Perelandra, Ransom had been perceiving that the

54 "The Idea of an 'English School,'" in Rehabilitations, p. 64.
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. (p. 163; emphases added)

As we have seen, Lewis frequently uses such diction; in "Transposition," for example, he writes that "the [physical] sensation which accompanies joy becomes itself joy: we can hardly choose but say 'incarnates joy'" (p. 180; emphasis added). "Incarnational" suitably describes any bodying forth of spirit in matter, when "the lower reality can actually be drawn into the higher and become part of it," as Lewis says (p. 180).

With "sacramental," "incarnational" will denote the technique of wed­ding the extraordinary to the ordinary, and of serving nectar and ambro­sia for tea at the marriage feast. The marital imagery is not gratuitous: Lewis states in The Allegory of Love that "to ask how these "married pairs" of sensibles and insensibles first came together would be great folly; the real question is how they ever came apart."\(^{56}\) These married pairs will be gloriously reunited in the full redemption of the future, for "the union between God and Nature in the Person of Christ admits no divorce," Lewis says (Miracles, p. 149). Christ, the Divine Incarnation who consummates the marriage of supernature and nature, blesses the union of the extraordinary and ordinary. He too serves nectar and ambrosia for tea at the marriage banquet, just as He once transformed water into a rich wine to serve at a Hebrew wedding feast. Marriage stands as an

archetypal emblem for the composite nature of a sacramental universe.

This intimate union of natural and supernatural is "sacramental" and "incarnational"; it is also appropriately styled "mythological." Lewis confessed that co-inherent spiritual and physical reality was a phenomenon he initially "rejected without trial" on grounds of being transparent "'mythology'" (Miracles, p. 184). As he came to adopt his rigorous natural supernaturalism, however, Lewis also came to understand mythology in a new, profound sense. Given that all ordinary reality is a means rather than an end, and that it is ultimately about something extraordinary, then the entire sum of our experience might be described as mythological. Reality will ever be transcended by--but also incorporated into--a super-reality of which our present existence comprises only shadows and glimmers.

The concept of pictorially translated truth which is conveyed by the term "mythological," and by its sister adjectives "emblematic" and "heraldic," is actually a concept inherent in the meaning of "sacramental" and "incarnational." For example, in pointing to the "married pairs of sensibles and insensibles" which reflect linguistic sacramentalism, Lewis suggests that "it is the very nature of thought and language to represent what is immaterial in picturable terms" (Allegory, p. 44; emphasis added). "'Picture-thinking,'" says George Bailey, "became the modus operandi for his life work--in his speech as well as in his writing."^57

Of course, while Lewis "firmly believed in the doctrine of accomodated truth," he never mistook "the portrait for the reality," says

^57 "In the University," in Speaker & Teacher, p. 113.
Margaret Hannay. That reality differs "from the sensory life we know here, not as emptiness differs from water or water from wine but as a flower differs from a bulb or a cathedral from an architect's drawing," Lewis writes in "Transposition" (p. 177). "Our natural experiences (sensory, emotional, imaginative) are only like the drawing, like pencilled lines on flat paper," he continues (pp. 178-79). "We are the 'frigid personifications'; the heavens above us are the 'shadowy abstractions'; the world which we mistake for reality is the flat outline of that which elsewhere veritably is in all the round of its unimaginable dimensions" (Allegory, p. 45). Reality's function is not one of lending solidity to the immaterial, but rather one of mythologically sketching in fewer dimensions what is ultimately more solid and real. In That Hideous Strength, Jane is startled by just such a realization as she compares her world to the Christians':

Hers ought to have been the vivid, perilous world brought against their grey formalised one: hers the quick, vital movements and theirs the stained-glass attitudes. That was the antithesis she was used to. This time, in a sudden flash of purple and crimson, she remembered what stained glass was really like. (p. 391)

"It is the present life which is the diminution, the symbol, the etiolated, the (as it were) 'vegetarian' substitute," Lewis writes in "Transposition" (p. 179).

Just as the material world mythologically images the supermaterial, so literary constructions in their own turn herald the material world,

incarnating in microcosm its complexity of lived experience. Once more this heraldic relationship is one of integral participation, and a wedlock which yields meaning, rather than an arbitrary system of representation. Lewis particularly strives for such genuineness in his literary artifacts; that is, he attempts to work within a world of supposition that generates its own action. Any imported ideas must fend for themselves, moving freely within the fictive context and unhindered by external strictures. "It is this similarity between fiction and reality which . . . [Lewis] calls 'sacramental' rather than symbolical," says Gibson (*Spinner of Tales*, p. 263).

God as the creator writes the story of life which mythologically relays a super-reality. The author as sub-creator--an idea shared by Lewis and Tolkien--likewise writes mythological stories, stories which mythologize a three-dimensional world that is itself a picture of a greater realm. Thus the sub-creator is 'near by likeness' to his master, satisfying "the human's desire to mimic his creator" (Glover, p. 30). Of course, he may imitate content as well as form in his sub-creation. If also 'near by approach' to his creator, the sub-creator can make the substance of mythology live, and offer its nectar and ambrosia to his readers, actually assisting "in drawing home to readers the inner truths" (Glover, p. 30; emphasis added). Glover explains that "as Lewis came to see that everything in life reflected some spark of spirit, . . . he came to see art as a reflection of spirit just as life itself is" (p. 42). In *Reflections on the Psalms*, Lewis writes:

> It seems to me appropriate, almost inevitable, that when that great Imagination which in the beginning . . . had invented and formed the whole world of Nature, submitted to express itself in human speech,
that speech should sometimes be poetry. For poetry too is a little incarnation, giving body to what had been before invisible and inaudible.\(^{59}\) 

"If God chooses to be mythopoeic—and is not the sky itself a myth—shall we refuse to be mythopathic?" he challenges in "Myth Became Fact."\(^{60}\)

Lewis' aesthetics largely coincide with the traditional theory of Aristotle, Poe, and Coleridge, whereby the reader's experience of beauty, as it is manifested by a heightened response, signals the communication of spirit to the reader's own spirit, through the meaning with which it invests matter.\(^{61}\) Such an experience of beauty recalls and reinforces previous aesthetic experiences as well, thereby intensifying one's communion with spirit, but also augmenting that peculiar anguished nostalgia which Lewis identifies by its express "Joy." Through this "Joy" one suffers a poignant awareness of that absolute reality which promises itself as our final abode, but which is presently only our unobtained destiny. The bittersweet beauty of aesthetic experience testifies that nature does accommodate supernature, but that it could never be a substitute for those rarified atmospheres which it naturalizes. "Our mythology is based on a solider reality than we dream: but it is also at an almost infinite distance from that base," Ransom discovers in *Perelandra* (pp. 231-32).

Nature is supernature's own creation, yet can convey absolute reality only mythologically. Much less then can nature's sub-creations, being a


\(^{61}\) I follow Glover, *Enchantment*, pp. 19-20, in his analysis of Lewis' aesthetic theory.
step further removed, comprise or fully express this ineffable supernature. Admittedly, the sub-creator "exercises the God-like power of creativity . . . [to discover] universal truths," Glover explains, "but the human insight revealed in art can only be a weak reflection of that truth" (p. 30). He concludes:

We can never apprehend the ultimate truth, except in God, so that, taken in the largest context, art is only a tool, a rudder to steer the human skiff in the right direction. . . . Lewis, when he speaks of art, is more interested in the beauty, the imaginative creativity, . . . than in reaching the goal at the end of the penetration into the beyond. (p. 51)

Barfield, on the other hand, does trust the poets to reveal absolute truth, by conceptually restoring the ancient unity of perception which is recoverable in "true metaphors." Lewis, however, continues to look beyond to discern the absolute, which could never be more than imaged in the entire sum of knowledge and experience.

Like nature, art is a derivative, amoral entity. Because it is sparked by spirit it does reflect supernature; indeed, art's aesthetic beauty symbolizes that central, primal reality, and verily communicates supernatural meaning to man. Nevertheless, beauty remains an heraldic pointer. It is an organic and sanctified vehicle of meaning, but it is not the referent of meaning. Any true appreciation of beauty is the result of its Enjoyment and not Contemplation, says Lewis; its enjoyment is the by-product of contemplating a higher object. In a


63 The content of this and the following sentence paraphrase Glover, Enchantment, pp. 19-20.
letter to Leo Kingsley Baker, Lewis writes:

One thing is plain, that the statements continually made about Beauty's being pure contemplation, stirring no impulse, being the antithesis of the practical or energizing side of us, are wrong. On the contrary, beauty seems to me to be always an invitation of some sort: usually an invitation to we don't know what. A wood seen as "picturesque" by a fool (who'd like a frame round it) may be purely contemplated: seen as "beautiful" it seems rather to say "come unto me."64

Literature similarly beckons one to enjoy rather than contemplate it; it is not "a self-existent thing to be valued for its own sake," says Lewis.65 Of itself literary art does not yield the absolute. Lewis emphatically states that "this lower life of the imagination is not a beginning of, nor a step towards, the higher life of the spirit, merely an image (i.e. not necessarily and by its own nature. God can cause it to be such a beginning)" (Joy, p. 159).

Lewis' sacramentalism is no more dogmatic nor specifically religious in its literary application than otherwise, although ultimately understood the word originates in the Word. The difference, which is perhaps ticklish to define even though we have already examined it, is clarified by Lewis in The Four Loves:

We must distinguish two things which might both possibly be called "nearness to God." One is likeness to God. God has impressed some sort of likeness to Himself, I suppose, in all that He has made. . . . In that way all men, whether good or bad, all angels

64 July 1921, English Literature Manuscripts, Bodleian Library Lewis Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, c/220/4, No. 61 (call number), as quoted in Glover, Enchantment, p. 12.

65 "Christianity and Literature," in Rehabilitations, p. 196.
including those that fell, are more like God than the animals are. Their natures are in this sense "nearer" to the Divine Nature. But, secondly, there is what we mean, the states in which a man is "nearest" to God are those in which he is most surely and swiftly approaching his final union with God, vision of God and enjoyment of God. And as soon as we distinguish nearness-by-likeness and nearness-of-approach, we see that they do not necessarily coincide. They may or may not. (pp. 12-13; emphasis added)

Lewis deeply respects the imagination's nearness-by-likeness, and does not deny that a sacramental language can bring one nearer by approach to God. "All things, in their way, reflect heavenly truth, the imagination not the least," he says (Joy, p. 159). But sacramentalism of itself will not guarantee moral progress. Unless one responds personally to the demands of the divine will by actively submitting one's own will, no approach will be made. "I think every natural thing which is not in itself sinful can become the servant of the spiritual life, but none is automatically so," Lewis explains to Mrs. R.E. Halvorson (n.d. [1956], Letters, 268). "'No natural feelings are high or low, holy or unholy, in themselves,'" continues the Bright Spirit in The Great Divorce. "'They are all holy when God's hand is on the rein. They all go bad when they set up on their own and make themselves into false gods.'"66

Thus, where one should seemingly honour a profound correspondence between the word and the Word, Lewis affirms that Christians will generally take literature less seriously than non-Christians ("Christianity and Literature," p. 196). Art is as religious and as non-religious an experience as any other, depending simply upon its dedication to the glory of God. "The work of a charwoman and the work

of a poet become spiritual in the same way and on the same condition," Lewis writes. "We can play, as we can eat, to the glory of God" ("Christianity and Literature," p. 196).

Of course, once a personal moral response has been made, art or any other sacramental language goes beyond reflecting supernatural truth to actually become that truth. As the apostle Paul says, the person of Christ is then reflected within the mirrors of our faces, as they "are changed into the same image from glory to glory." Myth is brought home, or rather one is brought home to myth, and a new wing in its abode is unveiled. One becomes properly able to recognize the sacramental language as having all along embodied the Divine. "One of the minor rewards of conversion is to be able at last to see the real point of all the old literature which we were brought up to read with the point left out," Lewis writes "To a Lady" (29 Jan. 1941, Letters, 192).

Jane's conversion similarly equips her "to see the real point" and understand the Divine meaning of sacramental language: "There was nothing, and never had been anything, like this. And now there was nothing except this. Yet also, everything had been like this: only by being like this had anything existed" (Strength, p. 394). The portent which had always been there comes to be understood only in retrospect. When John reaches his longed-for Island in Regress, the Pevensie children discover their new Narnia in The Last Battle, and Orual finally meets the gods in Till We Have Faces, each tastes a wholly new and unexpected


68 Bible, 2 Cor. iii: 18. (K.J.V.)
experience, yet also finds that which was somehow there all along. "'Both good and evil, when they are full grown, become retrospective,'" advises MacDonald in The Great Divorce (p. 62). Thus imagination's fullest sacramental function can be discerned only in retrospect, and its potential nearness-of-approach is actualized only after one's first step. With Lewis, Chad Walsh assigns "a handmaiden-of-theology" role to aesthetic beauty, which at most opens one up to new experiences and realities, unless and until it plays a role more directly analogous to sanctification in the initiate's humanization.69 Perhaps then the Eden "temporarily recovered" in art can become "more than a backward glance," Walsh suggests, even "an eschatological sign" that "we shall know Eden again . . . and in knowing it will discover it was never at any moment totally absent from us" (p. ix). Of and in itself, however, neither art nor any sacramental language is moral or holy.

Although the primary stamp of Lewis' fiction is indeed its sacramental concept, then, "his work is significant as literature which happens also to be written by a Christian--no one now calls Eliot the Christian Poet" (Glover, p. 24). His keynote is a mythological diapason, which includes every note ever sounded by the ineffable super-reality, even those notes beyond our normal hearing range. "Lewis' own highly imagistic style addresses the whole person," Carnell offers (Bright Shadow, p. 74). Espousing both the ordinary and extraordinary, Lewis' work marries the sensible and insensible, discovering there an organic unity. Without being either theologically or ideologically

didactic, Lewis' fiction does imaginatively reflect his sacramental outlook and mythological vision, whereby everything is a truthful yet incomplete copy of ultra reality. "[Such] symbolism in the parts (I use the word in a rather extended sense) is not only methodologically and tonally compatible with myth in the whole," says Wayne Shumaker in defense of Lewis, "but is indeed the same thing on a smaller scale: elements are fitted together in such a way as to stand for more than they picture."^70

Myth is the literary language which Lewis judges to be the most directly heraldic of the core of reality. He explains that myth resolves the Enjoy/Contemplate quandary of our earthly pilgrimage:

This is our dilemma—either to taste and not to know or to know and not to taste . . . . As thinkers we are cut off from what we think about; as tasting, touching, willing, loving, hating, we do not clearly understand. The more lucidly we think, the more we are cut off: the more deeply we enter into reality, the less we can think. . . . Of this tragic dilemma myth is the partial solution. 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," pp. 268-69)

Calling mythical elements "an admirable hieroglyphic"^71 and "the expression of certain basic elements in man's spiritual experience," Lewis concludes that they are "the words of a language which speaks

^70 "The Cosmic Trilogy of C.S. Lewis," The Hudson Review, 8 (1955), 249.

In poetry the words are the body and the "theme" or "content" is the soul. But in myth the imagined events are the body and something inexpressible is the soul . . . . It is in some ways more akin to music than to poetry . . . . It goes beyond the expression of things we have already felt. It arouses in us sensations we have never had before, never anticipated having, as though we had broken out of our normal mode of consciousness . . . . (Pref., George Macdonald, p. 16; emphasis added)

Lewis defines myth "by its very power to convey essence rather than outward fact, reality rather than semblance, the genuine rather than the accidental," says Kilby (Christian World, p. 155).

By the same token, Lewis does not deem myth to be true in an historical or empirical sense: "When I talk of myths I mean myths as we experience them: that is, myths contemplated but not believed, dissociated from ritual, held up before the fully waking imagination of a logical mind," he clarifies in An Experiment in Criticism.

Nevertheless, while myth is not historical, "the great myths . . . refer not to the nonhistorical but rather to the nondescribable," Carnell distinguishes (Bright Shadow, p. 106). White even suggests that Lewis conceives of myth "as nonincarnate history" (Image of Man, p. 38). Thus, myth is neither "misunderstood history . . . nor diabolical illusion . . . but, at its best, a real though unfocussed gleam of divine truth falling on human imagination," writes Lewis in Miracles (p. 161n). Its historicity operates within what White calls Lewis' "metaphor-plus

72 Preface to Paradise Lost, p. 56; emphases added.

understanding" of the world, whereby "the reality represented in myth and metaphor is more—not less—than a figure of speech" (Image of Man, p. 41 and p. 39).

For example, we find this metaphor-plus world allegorically figured in Pilgrim's Regress. John, the doubting pilgrim who suspects that his religion is but a metaphor, has his doubts confirmed by Wisdom. Later, a Man who suddenly appears before John to rescue him tells him the same thing. He solemnly adds, however, that it is John's metaphor-prayers which have actually brought Him to his aid, and warns that the commands of his metaphor-religion are no less real than its help (pp. 143-46). A similar instance occurs when John crosses the canyon, embarking on an archetypal journey of death and rebirth. Wisdom again appears, telling John that his adventures are but figurative. Another Voice counters: "'Child, if you will, it is mythology. It is but truth, not fact: and image, not the very real. But then it is My mythology. . . . This is My inventing, this is the veil under which I have chosen to appear even from the first until now!'" (p. 171). "Myth then points," Carnell summarizes, "to realities which simply cannot be discussed in literal language." Its stories, although not literally historical, "are inspired by 'Arch-nature' impinging upon 'Nature,'" and consequently convey the largest reality (Bright Shadow, p. 107).

It is within a metaphor-plus world, then, that myth so strongly appeals to Lewis. Lewis considers that "in life and art both . . . we are always trying to catch in our net of successive moments something that is not successive."74 This existential conflict is best resolved

74 "On Stories," in Essays Presented to Charles Williams, with
by story, particularly in "those forms in which everything else is there for the sake of the story," because their series of timeless, experiential moments work to capture a non-sequential theme, indeed something "much more like a state or quality" ("On Stories," p. 90 and p. 103). Myth, "where the mere pattern of events is all that matters," is the purest form of story, and as such best meets the criterion to attain this non-sequential theme. In myth, "the meaning, the suggestion, the radiance, is incarnate in the whole story: it is only by chance that you find any detachable merits," says Lewis (p. 17; emphases added).

It is only while receiving the myth as a story that you experience the principle concretely. . . . What flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always about something, but reality is that about which truth is), and, therefore, every myth becomes the father of innumerable truths on the abstract level. Myth is the mountain whence all the different streams arise which become truths down here in the valley; in hac valle abstractionis (in this valley of separation). . . . It is not, like truth, abstract; nor is it, like direct experience, bound to the particular. ("Myth Became Fact," p. 269)

"The concrete form of myth," as Lewis calls it (Miracles, p. 53), achieves "the quality of the real universe, the divine, magical, terrifying and ecstatic reality in which we all live" (Pref., George Macdonald, p. 21; emphasis added). It "does not essentially exist in words at all," Lewis continues (p. 15), describing it as an extra-literary phenomenon in his chapter "On Myth" in Experiment in Criticism.


75 Lewis, Pref. to George Macdonald, p. 15; the next quotation is also taken from this source.
Because it rises furthest above personal and local idiosyncrasy to penetrate inner truth, Lewis values myth as "the highest achievement of the disinterested imagination," Glover discerns (p. 55). Properly occupied with the universal events of human experience, "it sets before us an image of what reality may well be like at some more central region," Lewis affirms ("On Stories," p. 101). "That is why he placed such a premium on myth," Glover concludes, "which he saw as the ultimate achievement of an author who through the force of his skillful control of form could move the reader to the highest truth" (p. 42).

Thomas Howard concurs with Lewis in discerning irreducible reality at the core of mythology:

> The maddening hint at work in all poetry is that this language speaks, not simply of our mortal feelings about the thing but catches something which we are obliged to believe is true about it, and which will not yield to measurement and analysis. Whatever this quality is . . . will not be dismantled and measured: it can only be hailed or invoked, like a god. And at this point we find ourselves in the language of mythology. (Achievement, p. 57; emphases added)

Howard goes on to observe that because this "quality" is evident in Lewis' trilogy, it must be written in the same sacramental language. Even working in the language of mythology, which "can only be hailed or invoked, like a god," however, Lewis never presumes nor aspires to present the central reality in all of its fulness, but simply to convey the fact and sense of its centrality. Lewis neither regarded aesthetic beauty as holy in and of itself, nor literary sacramentalism as a religious absolute, and he made no exception for his own writing, mythological or otherwise. "'Make it plain that it was but a dream,'"
the guide MacDonald warns the Lewis character in *Great Divorce*. "'See ye make it very plain. Give no poor fool the pretext to think ye are claiming knowledge of what no mortal knows'" (p. 117). In *Joy*, Lewis refers to "the naked Other, imageless (though our imagination salutes it with a hundred images), unknown, undefined, desired" (p. 209). His mythopoeia asserts the absolute, yet is as shy of absolute assertion as it is soaring in fantasy. "This also is Thou," but "Neither is this Thou," Lewis would say, fond of the spiritual maxims used by Charles Williams.

"Yet to discover a metaphor, however trivial, is to build a bridge and to find meaning; and all little meanings are part of the great Meaning," Charles Huttar reminds us (Introd., *Imagination and the Spirit*, p. xiv). Even though sub-creators can indeed "only re-combine elements borrowed from the real universe," as Lewis says (*Miracles*, p. 42), those elements do contain the meaning of their divine Author, so that "all is shot through with meanings which the author may never have been aware of," he attests (*Allegory*, p. 221). "In a myth he puts what he does not yet know and cd. not come by in any other way," Lewis writes to Fr. Peter Milward (22 Sept. 1956, *Letters*, 271). And to Sister Penelope Lewis writes:

We re-arrange elements He has provided. . . . And that surely is why our works (as you said) never mean to others quite what we intended; because we are re-combining elements made by Him and already containing His meanings. Because of those divine meanings in our materials it is impossible that we cd. ever know the whole meaning of our own works, and the meaning we never intended may be the best and truest one. Writing a book . . . is like planting a garden or begetting a child; in all three cases we are only entering as one cause into a causal stream which works, so to speak, in its own way. (20 Feb. 1943, *Letters*, 203-04)
Thus Lewis moves confidently within the world of myth, which best relays "the else unspeakable" in a metaphor-plus cosmos, yet which holds no historical, empirical, nor absolute pretensions.

We have established that while it is operationally areligious, Lewis' sacramental aesthetic is ultimately fulfilled in the actual Incarnation. His mythopoeia, which epitomizes his literary sacramentalism, is equally non-theological but similarly consummated in the Incarnation. In Lewis' aesthetic "the values of literature come to rest on its ability, by whatever means of art, to express what he termed the 'great myths,'" Glover reviews. But "the greatest of these myths Lewis now acknowledges is the story of Christ," he continues (Enchantment, p. 22). "His earliest longings, springing from nature and from some of the classic works of the romantic creative spirit as well as the sterner northern myths, were transformed by Christian faith into what Lewis regards as the central myth or most primal of experiences" (Glover, p. 56). In the Incarnation at "the heart of Christianity," Lewis discovers "a myth which is also a fact" ("Myth Became Fact," p. 269). He confesses: "Now as myth transcends thought, Incarnation transcends myth. . . . 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 Became Fact," p. 269). The historicity of the Christ-event indissolubly weds matter and spirit at their moment of greatest disparity, and assures the superiority of their union.

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: i.e. the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call "real things." 76

Such a definitive conjunction of nature and supernature is initially disappointing to one such as Lewis, however, for it seems as if the component elements must be mutually compromised. Reason must submit to supernatural or "Right Reason," which Lewis identifies as "the deepest thing in reality, the Fact which is the source of all other facthood" (Miracles, p. 127). "Lewis could . . . see cosmic connections everywhere by the use not of reason alone but of Right Reason" 77; nevertheless, it was reluctantly that he first confessed "that our logic was participation in a cosmic Logos," he tells us in Joy (p. 197). Such a recognition stripped rationalism of all its sparkling independence and the appeal of utter manageability which it had held for him.

It is not only reason which must bow before the preeminent Fact of the Incarnation, however; mythic imagination too must submit, yielding itself to the prosaic factuality of history. "Just as God, in becoming Man, is 'emptied' of His glory, so the truth, when it comes down from the 'heaven' of myth [of perenially dying gods] to the 'earth' of history, undergoes a certain humiliation," Lewis says (Miracles, p. 161n). "In a certain sense we spoil a mythology for imaginative purposes by believing in it," he writes in "Is Theology Poetry?" (p. 152). In Miracles and Joy,


Lewis testifies to the flatness of the historical gospels, that is, to their lack of mythical flavour, especially as compared with the richly imaginative Pagan mythologies, and even with the relatively splendrous Old Testament. Nevertheless, Lewis must conclude, "if ever a myth had become fact, had been incarnated, it would be just like this" (Joy, p. 222). He explains: "Christian theology, and quantum physics, are both, by comparison with the first guess, hard, complex, dry and repellent. The first shock of the object's real nature, breaking in on our spontaneous dreams of what that object ought to be, always has these characteristics" (Miracles, p. 102).

Further reflection, however, reveals that Christ, the divine animal rationale, does perfectly harmonize prosaic reason and lofty imagination, even bringing both these elements to their fulness of perfection. Lewis explains:

The Myth remains Myth even when it becomes Fact. The story of Christ demands from us, and repays, not only a religious and historical but also an imaginative response. It is directed to the child, the poet, and the savage in us as well as to the conscience and to the intellect. One of its functions is to break down dividing walls. (Miracles, p. 161n; emphasis added)

The ultimate conjunction of nature and supernature gloriously fulfills, rather than diminishes, its component elements. Indeed, it consummatesthe wedding of nature and supernature, Lewis says, "for this is the marriage of heaven and earth: Perfect Myth and Perfect Fact" ("Myth Became Fact," p. 270). The Christ-event is the tri-partite model from which natural supernaturalism originates and from which all sacramental systems derive their depth of meaning. Lewis concludes:
There is thus in the history of human thought, as elsewhere, a pattern of death and rebirth. The old, richly imaginative thought which still survives in Plato has to submit to the deathlike, but indispensable, process of logical analysis: nature and spirit, matter and mind, fact and myth, the literal and the metaphorical, have to be more and more sharply separated, till at last a purely mathematical universe and a purely subjective mind confront one another across an unbridgeable chasm. But from this descent also, if thought itself is to survive, there must be re-ascent and the Christian conception provides for it. (Miracles, p. 192)

In their reunion effected in the Incarnation, logic and romance are at last harmonized, and we realize that our double vision has only been the result of a false dichotomy of perception. It is not that reason and imagination were compromised in their mutual submission, but rather that our sight needed adjusting, to afford a clearer view of their wholly integrative relationship. Nectar and ambrosia have always been served for tea, but we have not had tongues to taste the transcendental fare. In his trilogy Lewis attempts to redeem our sense of taste.

In Allegory of Love, Lewis writes that the old gods of myth had to be "disinfected of belief" before "they could wake again in the beauty of acknowledged myth and thus provide modern Europe with its 'third world' of romantic imagining," "besides the actual world and the world of . . . [its] own religion" (p. 83 and p. 82). Lawlor has paralleled this three-part process to the development in Lewis' own literary scholarship ("Tutor and Scholar," pp. 82-84). Since the tri-partite structure models a sacramental relationship, we might take our cue from Lawlor and trace the same developmental pattern in Lewis' literary aesthetic. In applying the first stage, then, we recognize "the old gods of myth" being
"disinfected of belief" as Lewis' early Romanticism flees from his first rationalist enthusiasm. Any vestiges of mythic imagination are then erased by the rigour of Lewis' initial Christian commitment; "myth, in turn, flies at the touch of a colder religion," as Lawlor says (p. 83). Myth and Romanticism have thus been laid to rest, indicted as the airy fabrications of a dreamer. They are subsequently reawakened, however, recalled as if by a newly conscious dreamer, to live "in the beauty of acknowledged myth" and in the "'third world' of romantic imagining." This is a celebrative Christianity where "reason and imagination are no longer at variance," and a mythopoeic and dialectical Lewis are united, as Edward Zogby discovers, in the person of Jesus Christ. 

In characterizing this triadic integration in Lewis, Lawlor quotes from T.S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*:

> And all shall be well and  
> All manner of thing shall be well  
> When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
> Into the crowned knot of fire  
> And the fire and the rose are one.80

Using Eliot's suggestive imagery, we might once more construct our own sequence to demonstrate the fusion of myth and fact in the development of Lewis' sacramental ethos. "The tongues of flame" might first suggest the mythic figure of Prometheus, who steals fire and language from the


Olympian gods, but is subsequently forced to pay terrible dues for purloining the burning brands. When Lewis discovers the Word that has been gifted to man, however, such myth is put to rest. 'The tongues of flame' take on a new significance for him as an emblem of the descending Holy Spirit, who freely bestows His crowning tongues of fire and unites with men's spirits to utter the sacramental language. Under such inspiration, as it were, Lewis himself speaks out, and the fire and the rose are tempered in a single crowning knot.

Not only does the trilogy's structure as a trilogy duplicate this three-part process of sacramentalism, but the peculiar triadic tension of the sacramental resolution is mirrored within the microcosm of the third novel. That is, the imagery of That Hideous Strength bespeaks its own triadic process of integration, besides rounding off the larger integrative process of the trilogy itself. For example, Jane's vision of the "Huge Woman," a pagan fertility goddess, initially figures bold imagery of flame and roses, but only in a wild caricature of an integration that is still unchristened:

"Look out! Look out, can't you?" shouted Jane, for the giantess was beginning to touch various parts of the room with her torch. She touched a vase on the mantelpiece. Instantly there rose from it a streak of colour which Jane took for fire. She was just moving to try to put it out when she saw that the same thing had happened to a picture on the wall. And then it happened faster and faster all round her. The very top-knots of the dwarfs were now on fire. But just as the terror of this became unbearable, Jane noticed that what was curling up from everything the torch had touched was not flame after all, but vegetation. Ivy and honeysuckle were growing up the legs of the bed, red roses were sprouting from the caps of the little men, and from every direction huge lilies rose to her knees and waist, shooting out their yellow tongues at her. (Strength, pp. 377-78)
This ripe fruition of the sacramental language is consecrated and consummately imaged when Mercury, "the lord of Meaning himself, the herald, the messenger," later descends upon St. Anne's. Ransom finds himself "sitting within the very heart of language, in the white-hot furnace of essential speech. All fact was broken, splashed into cataracts, caught, turned inside out, kneaded, slain, and reborn as meaning" (Strength, p. 398; emphases added). In the sacramental language which is the lingua franca of an heraldic universe, meaning is the phoenix that is wrought from the fires of fact and myth.

The purpose of this study will be to examine Lewis' cosmic trilogy as such sacramentalist fiction. We will focus not on its controversial status within the eclectic and ill-defined genre of science fiction, but rather on its effective bridging of the natural and supernatural realms. Our interest is in the qualitative rather than the quantitative cosmic distance which it spans. We will explore the cosmos of this planetary romance with hopes of capturing the mythical resonance which is its primary quality. Both explicitly by theme and implicitly by form, the trilogy expresses Lewis' mythological sensibility and world view. In reading the techniques of his ethos, we hope to be able to affirm the success of his trilogy in its attempt to bring myth home.
Chapter II

Out of the Silent Planet: Learning the Language

He groped for the doorless land of faery,
that illimitable haunted country that
opened somewhere below a leaf or stone.
Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward Angel.

Because the most hastily concluded accusations are the loudest, perhaps our first business should be to dispel the idea that the science fiction trilogy is escapist or artificially transcendent fiction. 'You would trick us into swallowing your airy myths of nectar and ambrosia, by letting them steep in the tea of science fiction's pseudo-realism, and by spiking them with fantasy's intoxication!' some critics would accuse. Their meaning is, 'You are trying to hide a visceral reality from us, and seduce us into a saccharin belief in a bloodless religion.' Nothing could be further from the truth: not only is Lewis' concern immediately moral rather than religious or theological, but his morality, admittedly derived from a deeply felt Christianity—as another's might derive from his own religion or irreligion—is anything but bloodless, anything but a self-serving wish-fulfillment dream. Rather, it requires a visceral commitment, from the dogged, prosaic persistence it takes Ransom to find Harry at the cottage, to the heroic courage, raw determination, and physical anguish it costs him to finally destroy the Un-man.
Nowhere is good portrayed as flabby or lotus-like; always, it imposes demands upon those who pursue it, and discomforts those who are in its presence. Such are the feelings of the Lewis character when he first meets an eldil. "My fear was now of another kind. I felt sure that the creature was what we call 'good,' but I wasn't sure whether I liked 'goodness' so much as I had supposed" (Perelandra, p. 19). The Lewis character then realizes that the greater part of his fear has been that of being "drawn in." Similarly, Ransom's immense reluctance at the start of his adventures in Planet actually stems from a rooted dislike of getting involved; he values his walking tour as much for its treasured solitude as for the actual walking. In Strength, Jane fiercely resents her visionary dreams for their disruption of her privately ordered life. She too wants merely to be left alone. Lewis himself found Christianity to be an unwelcome imperative in his life, antipathetic to his very nature. In Joy he describes himself as one always much more insistent in his negative demands than in his positive demands: "In the course of life I could put up with any amount of monotony far more patiently than even the smallest disturbance, bother, bustle, or what the Scotch call kurfuffle" (p. 114). Goodness, on the contrary, makes inexorable demands on the personal will for positive action.

The intolerable "weight of glory" is a strong theme and recurring motif in Lewis' work. For example, the "descent of the gods" on St. Anne's is a severe experience for the residents. In the presence of the archon Malacandra, or Mars, they feel "the immense weight of their obedience" (Strength, p. 402), while the presence of Lurg, or Saturn, lies "upon the house, or even on the whole earth, with a cold pressure such as might flatten the very orb of Tellus to a wafer" (p. 403). When
Perelandra, or Venus, arrives, we discover that the sacramental language which regularly communicates super-reality to our sensitive ears actually softens a terrible thunder:

... fiery, sharp, bright, and ruthless, ready to kill, ready to die, outspeeding light: it was Charity, not as mortals imagine it, not even as it has been humanised for them since the Incarnation of the Word, but the translunary virtue, fallen upon them direct from the Third Heaven, unmitigated. They were blinded, scorched, deafened. They thought it would burn their bones. They could not bear that it should continue. They could not bear that it should cease. (p. 400)

Lewis indeed brings myth home, and serves nectar and ambrosia for tea, but "how if food itself turns out to be the very thing you can't eat, and home the very place you can't live, and your very comforter the person who makes you uncomfortable?" (Perelandra, p. 19).

Similarly, when Ransom suffers Maleldil's immediate Presence while on Perelandra, it is "as if [such] an unendurable pressure had been laid upon his shoulders" that his legs fail him: "he half sank, half fell, into a sitting position" (Perelandra, p. 68). "If flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom, that is not because they are too solid, too gross, too distinct, too 'illustrious with being.' They are too flimsy, too transitory, too phantasmal," Lewis says in his sermon "Transposition" (p. 179). Lewis' heavenly eldila are a great innovation in line with this thinking: they are invisible not because they are immaterial but because they are supermaterial and moving too quickly to perceive with our limited range of sight (Perelandra, p. 228). Supernatural eldila might compare to the natural world as the real world compares to a pencil drawing: "in reality it lacks lines because it is incomparably more
visible," Lewis says ("Transposition," p. 178). Eldila are able to penetrate walls and rocks not because they have insubstantial bodies but because mere matter is like cloud to their supersolid substance. As illustrated by this "weight of glory" motif, then, the tea that Lewis courteously offers to his readers in his fiction is not meant to lend substance to an ephemeral reality, but to dilute for us what would otherwise be too solid to drink. "'For this end I made your senses and for this end your imagination, that you might see My face and live,'" the Voice tells John in Regress (p. 171).

Our analogy must be qualified, however, to note that while the ambrosial substance is indeed 'watered down' in Lewis' fiction, it loses none of its essential quality. Like the brilliant light which Ransom drinks in in the fields of Arbol, to halve its intensity yields "merely less, not other" (Planet, p. 42).

It became certain to the comparing intellect, but it was difficult to feel what was happening as a diminution of light and impossible to think of it as "darkening" because, while the radiance changed in degree, its unearthly quality had remained exactly the same since the moment he first beheld it. (Planet, pp. 41-42; boldface print emphasis added)

In thus far answering the hostile critics' charge that Lewis simplistically peddles winsome and sterile ideas, we have uncovered an important feature of his writing, which if absent would hardly prove the charge, but which being present does disprove it. That is, we have observed Lewis transposing a weightier reality into the living language of symbol and myth. The process involves imagining or supposing the course of that higher reality's unfettered movement within a lower
medium. Such a system of supposal is not an idea-governed method of writing at all. The language of allegory, on the other hand, moves unilaterally from the givens of a lower medium to a systematic series of abstractions, and is therefore strictly idea-governed. Lewis' transpositional method, to apply his own words, "is almost the opposite of allegory," and one he "would call sacramentalism or symbolism":

If our passions, being immaterial, can be copied by material inventions, then it is possible that our material world in its turn is the copy of an invisible world. . . . The attempt to read that something else through its sensible imitations, to see the archetype in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism or sacramentalism. . . . The difference between the two can hardly be exaggerated. The allegorist leaves the given--his own passions--to talk of that which is confessedly less real, which is a fiction. The symbolist leaves the given to find that which is more real. To put the difference in another way, for the symbolist it is we who are the allegory. (Allegory, p. 45; emphases added)

The trilogy does not systematically translate phenomenological realities into feigned physical objects which are the static symbols of allegory, Lewis explains in a Letter ("To a Lady," 29 Dec. 1958, 283). As a symbolist, Lewis is not working in such a language foreign to his native thought; rather, he is composing in the idiom of his mother tongue, exploring the rich nuance, allusiveness and suggestiveness of its sacramental morphemes. "Symbolism is a mode of thought, but allegory is a mode of expression," Lewis clarifies (Allegory, p. 48). "No amount of 'explanation' will quite catch up" with mythical meaning, he suggests. "It is the sort of thing you cannot learn from definition: you must rather get to know it as you get to know a smell or a taste, the 'atmosphere' of a family or a country town, or the personality of an
individual" (Pref., Regress, p. 13). The words of the sacramental language in which the trilogy is written do not express analytical meaning; rather, they participate in the very quality of that which they represent. Their relationship of sign and meaning is not merely incidental, in the way that that of speech and writing is, for example:

The written characters exist solely for the eye, the spoken words solely for the ear. There is complete discontinuity between them. They are not like one another, nor does the one cause the other to be. The one is simply a sign of the other and signifies it by a convention. But a picture is not related to the visible world in just that way. Pictures are part of the visible world themselves and represent it only by being part of it. Their visibility has the same source. The suns and lamps in pictures seem to shine only because real suns or lamps shine on them: that is, they seem to shine a great deal because they really shine a little in reflecting their archetypes. The sunlight in a picture is therefore not related to real sunlight simply as written words are to spoken. It is a sign, but also something more than a sign: and only a sign because it is also more than a sign, because in it the thing signified is really in a certain mode present. If I had to name the relation I should call it not symbolical but sacramental. ("Transposition," p. 173; boldface print emphases added)

Because a sacramental morpheme is a sign, even though it is also more than a sign, "'the fact that you can allegorize the work before you is of itself no proof that it is an allegory,'" Lewis points out.\(^1\) Howard argues that "it is part of the force of Lewis's narrative technique that the incidents keep suggesting this [allegory] while at the same time defying allegorical interpretation" (Achievement, p. 140). Thus, Ransom does not allegorize Christ, even though he is the little Christ that

\(^1\) As quoted by White, Image of Man, p. 65.
every believer is to be, enacting and participating in the divine nature. In killing the Un-man in *Perelandra*, Ransom does not stand for Maleldil more "than any man stands for Him in doing any good action" (*Perelandra*, p. 171). Although a friend accuses Ransom of megalomania for simply predicting that such an heroic task awaits him on Perelandra's watery surface, Ransom rightly replies:

"But when you come to think of it, is it odder than what all of us have to do every day? When the Bible used that very expression about fighting with principalities and powers and depraved hyper-somatic beings at great heights (our translation is very misleading at that point, by the way) it meant that quite ordinary people were to do the fighting."

(p. 24; emphasis added)

If Ransom fulfills his representative role "more spectacularly than most," it does not prove allegory, but "only means that fiction . . . chooses extreme cases," Lewis writes. "The sacramental character receives some of his character traits from the other world which he reflects, and yet is free to be an individual and act as a well-rounded fictional person according to the 'just suppose' or 'let's pretend' of the author," Gibson says of Lewis' fictional technique (*Spinner of Tales*, pp. 263-64). "And finally the experience is present not as 'statement' but symbol and the symbol is organic to an imaginative encounter," Kilby writes with reference to Lewis' Narnia tales. "In such illustrations I believe we find the essential Lewis," he concludes ("Creative Logician,"


In the same way that Ransom suggests and yet does not represent Christ, Howard considers that St. Anne's-on-the-Hill begs identification as the Christian Church and yet simultaneously resists such pinpointing, fulfilling its meaning and functioning within the narrative as a "believable case in point" of what the Church teaches (Achievement, pp. 134-35). Lewis' aim is not to inspire any primary belief, either in the text or in orthodox Christianity. As Ransom says in Planet: "'What we need for the moment is not so much a body of belief as a body of people familiarised with certain ideas'" (p. 174). Modern man has enclosed himself "in a tiny windowless universe which he mistakes for the only possible universe," and Lewis simply wishes to open a window on other possibilities ("Christianity and Culture," p. 23). "Literature as Logos ["something said"] is a series of windows, even of doors," says Lewis in Criticism (p. 138).

Of course, allegory is an integrous art form in its own right, designed not to publish a particular set of beliefs, but to reveal and demonstrate what could not be better said in literal terms. Much less does Lewis set out to propagate a system of belief in his mythopoeia. Literature is first Poiema, or "something made," and it is this quality which Lewis designates as the source of our reading pleasure and the essence of aesthetic experience (Criticism, pp. 132-36). The single legitimate 'ulterior motive' that literature can have, beyond the sheer delight of Poiema, is that of creating for the reader an understanding of and sympathy for the fiction's world view and underlying assumptions. This is a respectable goal common to all writers and all literature, Lewis believes:
It is only by being also a Poiema that a Logos ["something said"] becomes a work of literary art at all. Conversely, the imaginations, emotions, and thoughts out of which the Poiema builds its harmony are aroused in us by, and directed towards, the Logos and would have no existence without it. . . . The mark of strictly literary reading . . . is that we need not believe or approve the Logos. . . . It is no use trying to evade the question by locating the whole goodness of a literary work in its character as Poiema, for it is out of our various interests in the Logos that the Poiema is made.

The nearest I have yet got to an answer is that we seek an enlargement of our being. We want to be more than ourselves. . . . We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own. . . . It is connaître not savoir; it is erleben; we become these other selves. Not only nor chiefly in order to see what they are like but in order to see what they see . . . . Hence it is irrelevant whether the mood expressed in a poem was truly and historically the poet's own or one that he also had imagined. What matters is his power to make us live it. . . . This, so far as I can see, is the specific value or good of literature considered as Logos; it admits us to experiences other than our own. (Criticism, pp. 135-39)

Lewis unilaterally rejects as propaganda all 'literature' which seeks primarily to teach "truths about life" (Criticism, p. 130). Ideas can be there--indeed without Logos the Poiema would not exist, as Lewis says--but they must be constitutive and subsidiarily incorporated into the work. Literary works "are all constructions: things made out of the stuff of real life; additions to life rather than comments on it" (Criticism, p. 81). Lewis advises:

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. . . . The only moral that is of any value is that which arises inevitably from the whole cast of the author's mind. ("Writing for Children," p. 27).
It is pictures which tell their own moral that Lewis invites his audience to view in the planetary romances. Out of the Silent Planet extends the emphatic invitation to that viewing, being an heraldic introduction to the more complex novels which follow. It is a tale told in mythopoeic, pictorial language, because "'the best poetry . . . comes in the roughest speech,'" Ransom discovers (Planet, p. 130). "'No one learns the sorns' speech,'" the pfifltrigg explains to him, "'for you can change their knowledge into any words and it is still the same'" (p. 130). The roughly concrete hrossan words, on the other hand, are irreducible in meaning and not at all interchangeable with other words. Their primitive forms are solidly meaningful to handle, in a way that the generalized and abstract forms of the sorns' advanced and analytical speech are not. Thus it is the furry, fervid language of the hrossa, who are the planet's "'great speakers and singers,'" which is the lingua franca of Malacandra (p. 130). It is no insignificant coincidence that the hrossan language is even akin to Old Solar, the Ur-language of the universe. Although primitive, it is a sacramental tongue, and the ultra quiddity of its knobby, rough-edged forms reveals the most profound universals. Lewis elaborates on the process of linguistic sophistication in a Letter to his brother:

In the first stage . . . [words] are bursting with meaning, but very cryptic because they are not general enough to show the common element in different things; e.g. you can talk (and therefore think) about all the different kinds of trees, but not about trees. . . . In their final stage they are admirably clear but one is so far away from real things that they really say nothing. . . . On the other hand the first really means something, really represents a concrete experience in the minds of those who use it; the second is mere dextrous playing with counters, and once a man has learnt the rule he can go on that way . . . without really using the words to refer to any concrete fact at all. (17 Jan. 1932, Letters, 147)
Thus, although we do transcend Earth, even as the hostile critics accuse us of doing, it is a "silent planet" we leave. We leave in order to learn the universal lingua franca, with an intention of conversing in the sacramental tongue upon our return to Earth. It is not that we leave to find God in His Heaven: "Space-travel really has nothing to do with the matter. To some, God is discoverable everywhere; to others, nowhere. Those who do not find Him on earth are unlikely to find Him in space. (Hang it all, we're in space already . . .)," Lewis writes in his essay, "The Seeing Eye." Only the first journey to a new planet . . . is of any interest to imaginative people" on empirical grounds, because the super-real is a spiritual phenomenon, and a merely physical voyage can never take us to the utopia of our true destiny. Even the Oyéresu, tutelary deities of the planets, are not confined to their particular realms, but rather live in the heavens at large. Nor is the Old One "'that sort that he has to live anywhere','" Hnohra tells Ransom (Planet, p. 77); therefore "mere movement in space will never bring you any nearer to Him or any farther from Him than you are at this very moment" ("The Seeing Eye," p. 168).

The trilogy holds no false hopes of reaching utopia: the quest remains a matter of the heart. "'He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry the wealth of the Indies with him,'" Lewis quotes


in "On Stories" (p. 98). He points out that in *Paradise Lost* Adam is "locally confined to a small park on a small planet," yet can find interests embracing all heaven and earth. Satan, on the other hand, "has been in the Heaven of Heavens and in the abyss of Hell, and surveyed all that lies between them, and in that whole immensity has found only one thing that interests Satan," which is Satan himself (Preface, p. 100). A similar contrast can be drawn between Ransom and Weston: as a student of the humanities, Ransom inhabits something of an ivory tower, yet can find so much to interest him on an alien planet that he leaves with real regret at how little he has learned. Weston, on the other hand, is an egotistical scientist who sneers at Ransom's "'philosophy of life . . . [for being] so insufferably narrow and individualistic'" (Planet, p. 30), yet who can see nothing more in Malacandra than territory to be conquered.

Our own goal in leaving planet Earth is not so short-sighted as to gain Heaven, but rather to penetrate the Heavens, there to study the silent planet from a new perspective. Lewis justifies this kind of memento mori for the human species in his essay "On Science Fiction," and implements the principle in *The Screwtape Letters*, where his stated objective is "not to speculate about diabolical life but to throw light from a new angle on the life of men" (Pref., n.p.). Lewis accomplishes a similar purpose in *Planet*. "All of Ransom's experiences in Malacandra constitute a sort of litmus paper, we might say, which reveals the nature of the thing we are testing, in this case what it is to be human--what it

6 Howard perceives this irony in *Achievement*, p. 74.

7 "On Science Fiction," in *Of Other Worlds*, p. 66.
really is," Howard proposes (Achievement, p. 81).

The reader first encounters an inverted perspective in Planet as Ransom is losing consciousness, having been drugged by Devine: "Devine . . . was now so far away--about a mile away, though perfectly clear like something seen through the wrong end of a telescope" (Planet, p. 20). This innocuous image begins a motif which culminates in Ransom's peering through Augray's telescope at "a bright disk about the size of a half-crown" (p. 108). The disk is Earth as seen from Malacandra, and the effect on Ransom is devastating. He has already been shocked by seeing Earth through the spaceship's skylight and learning that "the megalomaniac disk" is indeed Earth, and not simply Earth's moon as he had first presumed (p. 26). This further wrenching of perspective which he now experiences is almost too much for Ransom to bear. "It was all there in that little disk--London, Athens, Jerusalem, Shakespeare. There everyone had lived and everything had happened" (p. 109). To make things worse for Ransom, the picture is "upside down, with the North Pole at the bottom." He cannot even be certain that he is not imagining the shape of England which vaguely forms itself before his eyes. "It was the bleakest moment in all his travels" (p. 109).

In effect, we leave Earth in order to get back home. We leave to gain a universal vantage point, literally seeing Earth through the Heavens. There is a deeper sense in which we do this, however; more important than the memento mori is the new perception which the Heavens teach our eyes, and the new light they shed on our world. We leave Earth to see her more clearly, not to take her along with us as the ball and chain on our rocketships. Lewis expresses his impatience with science fiction writers who set up other worlds as a "huge backcloth" against
which "to develop an ordinary love-story, spy-story, wreck-story, or crime-story" ("On Science Fiction," p. 61). Our purpose is to penetrate the Heavens. Travelling with a sense of direction, we leave the world that we know to land upon and study another. As Howard points out, we cannot dishonour that world by making it a mere allegory of our own, although "there are certainly analogues between one world and another" (Achievement, p. 83). Malacandra exists for its own sake, as do all the worlds, Ransom finds out on Perelandra: "The new world of Perelandra was not a mere repetition of the old world Tellus. Maleldil never repeated Himself. As the Lady had said, the same wave never came twice. . . . Nothing was more or less important than anything else, nothing was a copy or model of anything else" (pp. 164-65). Like a Tolkienian "secondary world," the spiritual quality of otherness generated by the alien setting actually comprises its meaning ("On Stories," p. 98). Where "the marvellous is in the grain of the whole work," stories "are actual additions to life," Lewis reiterates in "Science Fiction" (p. 70; emphasis added). Thus the trilogy challenges us to find our footing on foreign soil and to learn a new language there.

Then what of our view of Earth? Has it been eclipsed and our utopian search for Heaven resumed? One might claim, and rightly, that this spiritual quality of otherness is ultimately religious, related to that "naked Other" who is Lewis' God. Lewis himself says, "If you have a religion it must be cosmic; therefore it seems to me odd that this genre [science fiction] was so late in arriving" ("Unreal Estates," p. 90). Madeleine L'Engle makes a similar observation in her musings on faith and art in Walking on Water, identifying science fiction as a genre particularly suited to exploration of the nature of the Creator and His
Yet to admit to religious depths in *Planet* and in the entire trilogy is not to make any compromising admission to dogma or propaganda; it is but to acknowledge the widest scope of the sacramental principle. Nor is to acknowledge the irreducible otherness of our fictional world any greater a concession to escapist, transcendentalist writing. Although "it may not be 'like real life' in the superficial sense," Lewis explains, "it sets before us an image of what reality may well be like at some more central region" ("On Stories," p. 101). Lewis contends that this "dim sense of something beyond . . . , far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth" ("Writing for Children," p. 25). The reader "does not despise real woods because he has read of enchanted woods," Lewis continues: "the reading makes all real woods a little enchanted" (p. 25). Having been at home in myth, the reader will bring myth back home. "The whole story, paradoxically enough, strengthens our relish for real life" ("On Stories," p. 100).

To penetrate that otherness is but to find the shortest route home, we discover. Our progression through another world reveals its common denominator with our own, and we learn that both worlds are images of the "imageless Other." We can examine Malacandra closely, and gain an enlightened perception which profits us on Earth, because both worlds mediate the same ultra reality. Our interests are not parochial either on Earth or on Malacandra: it is the universal language which we really wish to acquire. Lewis hits upon this principle of the universal language

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in Joy, when he tells of his experience in learning Greek. He discovered that "naus and ship both mean a thing, they do not mean one another" (p. 135). Ransom's interplanetary travel rewards him with similar revelations: at first, he marvels that Hyoi's boat is so "very like an earthly boat," but later he is struck by the thought, "'What else could a boat be like?'" (Planet, p. 65). Both Malacandrian and terrestrial boats naturally manifest the universal Idea of "boat." Ransom also wonders at the "'extraordinary coincidence that their mythology, like ours, associates some idea of the female with Venus'" (Planet, p. 126). When he actually meets the Perelandrian Oyarsa whom we call Venus, however, he realizes that an archetype lies behind this phenomenon as well. Thus the trilogy's exploration of foreign worlds brings us full circle back to our own world. "The whole art consists not in evoking the unexpected, but in evoking with a perfection and accuracy beyond expectation the very image that has haunted us all our lives. The marvel . . . is . . . that our dream stands before us and does not melt," says Lewis in Preface to Paradise Lost (p. 57).

We leave Earth to learn a new language, but just as the language of nature teaches Lewis the meaning of "glory," we also are taught the meaning of our native tongue. We similarly discover the meaning of the word "glory," although we too must go elsewhere for our theology and philosophy. In The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader", Aslan tells Lucy that she and the other children have been brought to Narnia in order that they might meet him and better know him as he appears in their own world.9 The

reader is similarly brought to the other worlds of Deep Heaven in order that he might know them as the siblings of his own, and recognize their common parentage. The fact that we live as the sole rational species on our earth "must have far-reaching effects in the narrowing of sympathies and even of thought," leaving terrible prejudices at the mercy of our blood, the sorns speculate (Planet, p. 116). To remedy this parochialism, Lewis teaches us the universal language. He succeeds in creating such a strong sense of homecoming in the worlds of the trilogy, that Stella Gibbons can testify to "a nostalgia" for the planet of Perelandra ("Imaginative Writing," p. 89).

Lewis wants to break through our iron horizons. Planet's peculiar objective is to open our eyes to the unseen realities beyond, in order to relieve that "pressure of the ordinary" so skilfully manipulated by Screwtape and his crew (Screwtape Letters, p. 12). By calling Planet a "space-and-time story," Lewis designates the parameters of a reality which we are to investigate thoroughly, and through which we are then to explore ultra reality. "God . . . created space-time, which is to the universe as the metre is to a poem or the key is to music. To look for Him as one item within the framework which He Himself invented is nonsensical," Lewis writes in "The Seeing Eye" (p. 168). The challenge to probe the primary and secondary mysteries of space-time defies the narrow attitudes of such as Weston, who gloats over man's "transport system which is rapidly annihilating space and time" (Planet, p. 153). In contrast, Lewis' personal sense of mystery and adventure led him to count it a blessing that his father had no car:

10 In the dedication of the novel.
I measured distances by the standard of man, man walking on his two feet, not by the standard of the internal combustion engine. I had not been allowed to deflower the very idea of distance; in return I possessed "infinite riches" in what would have been to motorists "a little room." The truest and most horrible claim made for modern transport is that it "annihilates space." It does. It annihilates one of the most glorious gifts we have been given. (Joy, pp. 149-50)

In Planet, Lewis calls us to explore the "infinite riches" of space with him. He extends a courteous invitation to a tea party, but it is a tea party as wondrous with its ambrosial substances as Alice's ever was mad.

Like the Pedestrian of Planet's opening pages, we are invited to put away our maps and venture out from our shelters "into the middle of the road" (p. 7)---"a road," as Lewis says in Joy, which leads "right out of the self" (p. 208). Along with the Pedestrian, we too are looking simply for a comfortable resting place, and are content to have our solitude undisturbed and our privacy uninvaded. Our author then names the Pedestrian "Ransom," however, and thereupon interrupts his peace with an importunate old woman asking for his help.

As becomes further apparent in Perelandra, one's name corresponds to the responsibility of a personal destiny, which one chooses whether or not to grow into. The fulfillment of Ransom's own destiny now depends solely on his response to this innocuous request for help, which is put forward after he has been named. Indeed, the entire trilogy awaits his decision, for only his positive moral action can move the plot forward. The mere physical inconvenience which the momentous duty entails foreshadows the dilemma of the Un-man which Ransom will face in Perelandra, a more profound moral conundrum, yet still ultimately a
matter of "mere" physical action. It is a decision which Ransom will confront because he now proves himself faithful in this lesser obedience, albeit however unwillingly and for whatever mixed motives. Complying with the old woman's wishes, Ransom does set off to find Harry, finally climbing the three steps of "The Rise" to ring the bell that will change his life. In coming to the three volumes of the trilogy, as it were, the reader ascends those stairs with Ransom. We too are about to embark on a cosmic adventure which will culminate in our mastery of the sacramental language.

The story which follows is that of Ransom's spiritual development, which Walsh discusses in his essay, "The Reeducation of the Fearful Pilgrim."11 Walsh notes a cluster of birth images in which "Ransom himself is both expectant mother and fetus," suggesting Ransom's spiritual rebirth and implying his subsequent maturation (p. 67). We notice the first birth image as Ransom is hiking down a lonely road looking for a place to lay his head, an incident which recalls the events of the Nativity. Walsh does not begin tracing the pattern of birth imagery until Ransom is en route to Malacandra, stripped naked inside the space capsule because of the intense heat. The vehicle is a womb-like enclosure, which is itself within "the womb of worlds," that creative ocean of heavens so grossly misnamed "Space" (Planet, p. 36). As they enter the Malacandrian gravity field, Ransom and his abductors gain weight rapidly and suffer excruciating pain: "They had the experiences of a pregnant woman, but magnified almost beyond endurance" (p. 43). Once

11 In Longing for a Form, pp. 64-72; the paragraph largely paraphrases Walsh's findings, p. 67.
landed on the planet, Ransom pushes his head and shoulders through the opening of the space capsule and crawls outside into the light and the chilly atmosphere. Although Walsh does not highlight the diction, Lewis' specific use of language reinforces the birth imagery: Ransom has been eagerly straining "to catch some glimpse" of the strange planet "between the labouring shoulders" of Weston and Devine as they open the lid of the spaceship (p. 45). "It might mean death, but what a scaffold!" Ransom thinks (p. 45).

On Malacandra's surface, Walsh continues, Ransom undergoes the newborn's uncertainty of vision:

He gazed about him, and the very intensity of his desire to take in the new world at a glance defeated itself. He saw nothing but colours—colours that refused to form themselves into things. Moreover, he knew nothing yet well enough to see it: you cannot see things till you know roughly what they are. His first impression was of a bright, pale world—a water-colour world out of a child's paint-box. (p. 46)

The process of acquiring a cognizant perception is painful for Ransom, since it requires that his terrestrial forms of perception first be broken. "All reality is iconoclastic," Lewis writes in A Grief Observed. Through joy and pain, the dialectic of experience, we have to learn that "the naked Other," which we first come to know through a variety of forms, ultimately "refuses to identify itself with any object of the senses, . . . proclaiming itself sheerly objective" (Joy, pp. 208-09; tense changed). In the heavens, Ransom has already come to an

initial understanding of "the naked Other." He has experienced its death-and-life rhythm, felt "'sweet influence' pouring or even stabbing into his surrendered body," and known the "severe delight" of an awesome otherness (Planet, p. 35).

Nevertheless, precast perceptions return with his fear of being on a new planet. Ransom withdraws like a snail to his shell when he overhears his captors discussing his sacrifice to the sorns:

His mind, like so many minds of his generations, was richly furnished with bogies. . . . No insect-like, vermiculate or crustacean Abominable, no twitching feelers, rasping wings, slimy coils, curling tentacles, no monstrous union of superhuman intelligence and insatiable cruelty seemed to him anything but likely on an alien world. The sorns would be . . . would be . . . he dared not think what the sorns would be. . . . But the reality would be worse: it would be an extra-terrestrial Otherness . . . . In that moment Ransom made a decision. He could face death, but not the sorns. . . . If escape were impossible, then it must be suicide. . . . It was no more in his power, he thought, to decide otherwise than to grow a new limb. (pp. 39-40; boldface print emphasis added)

Lewis achieves a fine irony and dry humour in cataloguing Ransom's fears, which expose the reader's own fantastic and childish prejudices as being chimeras without substance: "No insect-like . . . Abominable, no twitching feelers . . . no monstrous . . . cruelty." The initiated reader smiles at Ransom's immaterial fears, and at the vanity of his reiteration, "the sorns would be . . . would be," although any first-time reader must also share Ransom's terror. Lewis' satire, while not gentle, is neither self-righteous nor caustic: in Joy, he records for us his own phobia of insects (pp. 15-16), doubtless the source of Ransom's "loathing of insects, loathing of snakes, loathing of things
that squashed and squelched" (Planet, p. 40). Sheer comedy also informs Lewis' satire, such as the ludicrousness of "bulbous eyes, grinning jaws, horns, stings, mandibles" (p. 40).

Of course, the novel proceeds to debunk Ransom's conviction that he has no choice but suicide. He finally learns to yield himself to "Otherness," and in so doing discovers his own identity, as well as the profound kinship between speakers of the sacramental language. As Maleldil later tells him, when he confesses to being frightened by the Oyarsa's unlikeness, "'But do not think we are utterly unlike. We are both copies of Maleldil'" (p. 135). Now, however, upon his arrival on the planet, Ransom still feels "some fear, but more curiosity" (p. 45). He has much further to go, for Earth continues to be the reference point of his geocentric universe: "perspective was still difficult in the strange world" (p. 48). Nevertheless, Ransom does manage his first steps, with Lewis conveying much of his progress through imagery of perception: "a moment later he recognized the flat belt of light blue as a sheet of water, or of something like water . . . . He also came little by little to the conclusion that the water was not merely blue in certain lights like terrestrial water but 'really' blue" (pp. 46-47; emphases added). The Platonic diction borrowed in "recognized," "something like," and "really" reveals the underlying Platonic concept of material forms which imitate their universal Ideas. That is, Ransom is learning the sacramental language, and coming to see in the various aspects of temporal reality the "mythical" embodiment of an ultra reality.

Ransom's time on Malacandra is one of reeducation precisely because he is teachable and eager to take in his new surroundings. His nature
"is 'open'--able to appreciate and love," as Richard Purtill says. 13 "Before anything else he learned that Malacandra was beautiful; and he even reflected how odd it was that this possibility had never entered into his speculations about it" (Planet, p. 47; emphasis added). Indeed, upon arrival Ransom is so observant that his flood of mental activity erases our awareness that he is busy working at unloading the spacecraft. We are suddenly reminded when Devine interrupts, "'Time for lunch'" (p. 49). During the ensuing meal, Ransom shrewdly observes that his abductors produce tinned water from their own stores, rather than using the "'really' blue" Malacandrian water. The underlying supposition, that whatever is alien is hostile, thwarts Ransom's maturing perception and subtly reinforces his earlier preconceptions of danger. It also leaves him with the harmful notion that Malacandrian water is poisonous.

His captors' excessive caution and furtive behaviour further raise Ransom's guard: "His eyes were busy searching the ground--so obsessed was he with the reptile fears and insect fears of modern imagining" (p. 50). It is in this frame of mind that Ransom's eyes are drawn up from the ground along the length of the sorns, whom he not unnaturally perceives as "spooks on stilts" (p. 53):

Spindly and flimsy things, twice or three times the height of a man. His first idea was that they were images of men, the work of savage artists . . . . But what could they be made of, and how could they stand?--so crazily thin and elongated in the leg, so top-heavily pouted in the chest, such stalky, flexible-looking distortions of earthly bipeds

Ransom's point of reference is purely terrestrial, is indeed that of Earth's sole rational species, so that he measures the "thin and unnaturally long" faces of the "surrealistic bogey-men" with his English yardstick (p. 51 and p. 53). Consequently frightened out of his wits, Ransom screams in sheer terror, and wastes no time fleeing when a hnakra suddenly diverts everyone's attention. "Crying out not with pain but with surprise because the water was warm," he strikes out into the Malacandrian wilderness (p. 52; emphasis added).

Afflicted as he is with his geocentric point of view, Ransom has "nothing to fear--except the fact of wandering un provisioned and alone in a forest of unknown vegetation thousands or millions of miles beyond the reach or knowledge of man" (p. 52; emphases added). "At the same time," however, "the disabling panic of the first moments was ebbing away from him. The idea of suicide was now far from his mind; instead, he was determined to back his luck to the end" (p. 53). Ransom is at least able to perceive and begin interpreting the world about him as he walks, deducing from its "theme of perpendicularity" that "he must be on a world lighter than the Earth, where less strength was needed and Nature was set free to follow her skyward impulse on a superterrestrial scale" (p. 53 and p. 54). Ransom begins to see the Malacandrian landscape within its own context.

For every two steps forward, however, Ransom takes one step backward. His becalmed perspective is only a little more than stoicism, and does not relax his basic mistrust. "All was danger," he still doubts:
He noticed dully that the water seemed to be descending a little too slowly for the incline, but he was too tired to speculate about it. ... What he really wanted to know was whether he dared drink it. He was very thirsty by now; but it looked very poisonous, very unwatery. He would try not to drink it; perhaps he was so tired that thirst would let him sleep. (p. 55)

Physically as well as spiritually, Ransom's predicament is that of the Ancient Mariner: "Water, water, everywhere, / Nor any drop to drink." Only when he is delirious with thirst does Ransom finally drink the Malacandrian water, his earlier resolution overruled by the schizophrenic hysteria which now divides his self-conscious and animal selves:

No, it was only himself: he was Ransom. Or was he? Who was the man whom he had led to a hot stream and tucked up in bed, telling him not to drink the strange water? Obviously some new-comer who didn't know the place as well as he. But whatever Ransom had told him, he was going to drink now. He lay down on the bank and plunged his face in the warm rushing liquid. It was good to drink. It had a strong mineral flavour, but it was very good. He drank again and found himself greatly refreshed and steadied. All that about the other Ransom was nonsense. He was quite aware of the danger of madness. (pp. 56-57; boldface print emphasis added)

The split consciousness afflicting his reflexive being underscores the disjunctive nature of geocentric perception, which builds an impassable frontier between nature and supernature. It is when Ransom drinks the Malacandrian water, emblematic of the ambrosial nectar served for a sacramental tea, that he recovers the composite union of a whole self.

Ransom's gradual progress continues, as he next samples the vegetation for food. Considering it impossible to continue the flight "as a flight," he settles down instead to the business of survival (p. 57). One morning he comes across "a herd of enormous pale furry
creatures more like giraffes than anything else he could think of," and judges them to be "a very presentable sort of animal," although "an animal which man could probably tame" (p. 58; emphasis added). Such traditional relations between man and beast, with which Ransom is comfortably familiar, ease and reassure him into a new openness towards Malacandrian quiddity. It is through the vista which these leaf-eating creatures open in the vegetation that Ransom is able to gain a new perspective on the giant, pylon-shaped forms, which "seemed to his terrestrial eyes ready to fall at any moment" (p. 59). He finally concludes them to be mountains, "and with that discovery the mere oddity of the prospect was swallowed up in the fantastic sublime":

Here, he understood, was the full statement of that perpendicular theme which beast and plant and earth all played on Malacandra--here in this riot of rock, leaping and surging skyward like solid jets from some rock-fountain, and hanging by their own lightness in the air, so shaped, so elongated, that all terrestrial mountains must ever after seem to him to be mountains lying on their sides. He felt a lift and lightening at the heart. (p. 59)

With every new insight, however, comes a challenge to test it: the profile of a sorn now appears against the background of the mountains. "The ineffaceable image was hardly stamped on his brain before he was running as hard as he could into the thickest of the forest" (p. 59). Having put as many miles as possible between the sorn and himself, Ransom finally stops to drink from another Malacandrian lake. He no longer finds the water palatable, however, and goes back to "cursing a world where cold water appeared to be unobtainable" (p. 60). Although he spies a new creature only ten yards away from his sheltered spot among the shore weeds, he dully observes its actions, noting "in a dry, objective way that this was
apparently to be the end of his story—caught between a sorn from the land and a big black animal from the water" (p. 61). Once again Ransom's mind is stretched, however: "Then something happened which completely altered his state of mind. . . . The creature was talking. . . . A new world he had already seen—but a new, an extra-terrestrial, a non-human language was a different matter. Somehow he had not thought of this in connection with the sorns; now, it flashed upon him like a revelation" (p. 61). The "love of knowledge" brings Ransom out of himself with a thrill of excitement: "The very form of language itself, the principle behind all possible languages, might fall into his hands" (p. 61 and p. 62; emphases added). With this new commitment to the objective Other and to absolute reality, Ransom moves to a higher level in his acquisition of the sacramental language.

"Unconsciously" raising himself on his elbow to stare "at the black beast," Ransom makes the acquaintance of a hross (p. 62). In this meeting of two rational species, Ransom feels all the emotions of an entire courtship, emotions which are greatly intensified in their immediate interplay. "It was foolish, frightening, ecstatic and unbearable all in one moment" (p. 62). When Ransom perceives that the creature is offering him a drink, his acceptance demonstrates especial trust and openness, for the cup contains not only Malacandrian water but also something added from the skin bottle at the hross's waist. As he takes the shell from the creature's paws, Ransom's fingertips touch webbed membrane: "An indescribable thrill of mingled attraction and repulsion ran through him; then he drank. . . . He had never enjoyed a drink so much" (p. 63; emphasis added). Each learns the name of the other's species, and Ransom the linguist and spiritual pilgrim embarks on his career of Old Solar.
Much later, back on Earth, the linguist will lament to the chronicler of his adventures over the necessity of ruthlessly cutting "down on the philological part" of his story. "We are giving our readers a mere caricature of the Malacandrian language," he complains (p. 175). For the present moment, however, Ransom is still prone to dissociate himself from whatever seems alien. Thus, dismay suddenly grips him anew. Without warning, "the huge, seal-like creature seated beside him" becomes "unbearably ominous," and he questions its intentions, its degree of rationality, and its relation to the sorns (p. 65). Only "many days later" does Ransom discover "how to deal with these sudden losses of confidence," thereby achieving a key step in his reeducation towards a clear-eyed perception:

[These misgivings] arose when the rationality of the hross tempted you to think of it as a man. Then it became abominable--a man seven feet high, with a snaky body, covered, face and all, with thick black animal hair, and whiskered like a cat. But starting from the other end you had an animal with everything an animal ought to have--glossy coat, liquid eye, sweet breath and whitest teeth--and added to all these, as though Paradise had never been lost and earliest dreams were true, the charm of speech and reason. Nothing could be more disgusting than the one impression; nothing more delightful than the other. It all depended on the point of view. (p. 65; boldface print emphases added)

In the meantime, until he gains such an insight, Ransom's myopic terrestrial viewpoint continues to dominate and handicap his perception. He therefore confronts a critical decision when the hross beckons him into his boat. "To step on board . . . might mean surrendering himself to the sorns at the other end of the journey" (p. 66). This is the very fate that Ransom has been running from during his entire stay on Malacandra. "His whole imaginative training somehow encouraged him to associate super-
human intelligence with monstrosity of form and ruthlessness of will" (p. 66). Nevertheless, Ransom cannot seriously entertain "the thought of parting from the hross," even though "its animality shocked him in a dozen ways" (p. 66). Drawn by "his longing to learn its language, and, deeper still, the shy, ineluctable fascination of unlike for unlike, the sense that the key to prodigious adventure was being put in his hands," Ransom steps into Hyoï's boat (p. 66). He thus undertakes to trust himself to the Malacandrian river currents, as he will later trust himself to the Perelandrian ocean waves. By his conscious decision of the will, the Pedestrian reverses the direction and purpose of his journey hitherto.

The water passage affords Ransom a new and wider perspective on the lay of the land. "He rose cautiously to a standing position and surveyed the Malacandrian prospect which had opened on every side" (p. 67; emphasis added). He now sees the marshy land to be a chain of archipelagos, bordered by "pale green mountains, which he could still hardly call mountains, so tall they were" (p. 68). He also recognizes "great billowy piles of the rose-red substance which he had yesterday mistaken for cloud" (p. 68; emphasis added). Ransom acquires more hrossan vocabulary, learning that harandra and handramit mean highland and lowland, although the "peculiar importance of . . . [their] distinction in Malacandrian geography he learned later" (p. 68). Perhaps one of Ransom's most significant experiences during the water passage is his seasickness, for it erases "the distinction between Earth and other planets . . . compared with the awful distinction of earth and water" (p. 70). This humorous episode brings Ransom to experience Malacandra as a place in its own right, rather than a distorted imitation of Earth. It is upon conceding that "Malacandra was less like earth than he had been beginning to sup-
pose" that Ransom learns his first verbs in the hrossan language (p. 71).

Nevertheless, Ransom still takes it "for granted" that the hrossa are "on a low cultural level" (p. 72). When he finally stands on shore again, surrounded by dozens of the creatures, he feels them to be "more animal, less human, in their multitude and their close neighbourhood to him, than his solitary guide had seemed" (p. 72). Ransom relapses, suffering "some fear, but more a ghastly inappropriateness," and he passionately desires the company of his fellow species beyond all else--"any men, even Weston and Devine" (p. 72). "Meaningless bullet heads and furry faces" to which he can find "no response" swim before his eyes (p. 72). "The whelps, the puppies, the cubs, whatever you called them," manage to improve Ransom's disposition, but with comic irony his smiles and somewhat patronizing overtures only chase the "jolly little things" away (p. 72). From their point of view, we discover, the newcomer is a "hairless goblin" (p. 73). It seems that Ransom still has far to go in his quest to perceive aright and function properly in his new environs: "it was only long after that he learned to read the Malacandrian face" (p. 69).

In the many days which follow spent living among the hrossa, Ransom amasses the most significant knowledge of his career, though not the type that he can "remember learning" (p. 176). They are days which he comes to number as the most valuable of his journey, although it is a time "during which 'nothing happened'" (p. 176). "If we are to treat it as a story you must telescope the time I spent in the village," Ransom writes in Planet's "Postscript." "But I grudge it. Those quiet weeks, the mere living among the hrossa, are to me the main thing that
happened. I know them, Lewis; that's what you can't get into a mere story" (p. 176). In its sheer quiddity, Ransom's experience of village life anticipates *Perelandra*, constituting the personal highlight of his Malacandrian excursion, even though it precedes the novel's narrative climax. Indeed, in both *Planet* and *Perelandra*, the effective climax of the hero's inner action prepares him for the climax of the narrative conflict.

With the hrossa Ransom learns to enjoy rather than contemplate his experience, discovering much about Malacandra that could never have been conveyed by mere explanation, being "'too definite for language,'" as he says in *Perelandra* (p. 28).

Ever since he awoke on the space-ship Ransom had been thinking about the amazing adventure of going to another planet, and about his chances of returning from it. What he had [not] thought about was being on it. It was with a kind of stupefaction each morning that he found himself neither arriving in, nor escaping from, but simply living on, Malacandra; waking, sleeping, eating, swimming and even, as the days passed, talking. The wonder of it smote him most strongly when he found himself, about three weeks after his arrival, actually going for a walk. (p. 73; boldface print emphases added)

Ransom's knowledge of the sacramental language grows rapidly as he learns not to isolate the phenomenal from the noumenal, but to receive experience in its entirety. The facts and figures of his life with the hrossa, he says, he can "merely analyse . . . out of a whole living memory that can never be put into words, and no one in this world will be able to build up from such scraps quite the right picture" (p. 176; emphasis added). Each concrete facet of his experience becomes important for its individual and irreducible expression of meaning. He learns, for example,
to distinguish "a male from a female hross at sight, and even individual differences" soon become plain: his friend Hyoi is "a very different person from the grey-muzzled, venerable Hnohra," who teaches him his daily language lessons (p. 73; boldface print emphasis added).

Ransom begins to develop personal habits and to feel very much at home--so much so that he later confesses homesickness for his old Malacandrian valley, though "God knows . . . there I was homesick enough for the Earth" (p. 176). "Of the community in general his earlier impressions were all gradually being corrected" (p. 74; emphasis added). The occupations of the "people" are "mysterious" to him, for instance, until he one day sees a kind of caravan, apparently setting out on a trade expedition (p. 74; emphasis added). Ransom "discovers their agriculture in the first week," and perceives that "division of labour has been carried to a higher point than he expected" (p. 75; tense changed, emphasis added). "But the real revolution in his understanding of the hrossa began when he had learned enough of their language to attempt some satisfaction of their curiosity about himself" (p. 75). As Ransom later tells Lewis, "the Malacandrians . . . have an odd habit, sometimes, of turning the solar system inside out" (p. 181).

Ransom's geocentric viewpoint and sense of superiority now suffer a blow at their very roots, for the hrossa prove to know more about the universe and about Thulcandra itself than Ransom does. When questioned about his origin, Ransom says simply that he has come out of the sky, deliberately giving "a childish version of the truth in order to adapt it to the supposed ignorance of his audience" (p. 75). He becomes annoyed when Hnohra painstakingly explains to him how this could not be. Asked to indicate his handra, Ransom is "quite unable to point Earth out to
them in the night sky" (pp. 75-76). Ironically, the hrossa point to the orb in question even as Ransom is wondering whether they can understand astronomy. In a similar show of misconceived superiority, Ransom is "haunted by a conscientious scruple as to whether it might not be his duty to undertake their religious instruction; now, as a result of his tentative efforts," he finds the tables turned and himself the recipient of "a sort of hrossian equivalent of the shorter catechism" (p. 77). Ransom feels "once more a certain irritation" at "being treated as if he were the savage" (p. 77). With lovely effect, Lewis has the hrossa 'almost bark' in their fervent explication of the universal truths which "even a child knew," their sophisticated animality humorously contrasting with Ransom's naive pretensions (p. 76). Their explanations of spiritual realities run far beyond what Ransom even has language to follow.

Subsequent conversations further discomfit Ransom, owing to his humble discovery "of his own ignorance about his native planet," as well as to the embarrassing nature of much of what he does know (p. 79). "A sensation akin to that of physical nakedness came over him whenever they questioned him too closely about men" (p. 79). Nor can Ransom understand "a syllable" of the "heated, and apparently technical," hrossan literary debates (p. 79). Their music also remains incomprehensible to him: he can "make nothing" of it, and its "time-pattern . . . [is] meaningless to his sense of rhythm" (p. 74). Ransom's ignorance continues to show as he makes the patronizing assumption that Hriikki is merely pretending when she speaks to an eldil. On the basis of further false assumptions, Ransom conceals from the hrossa that he was to have been handed over to the sorns, an action which has grave repercussions.
His vision still clouded, Ransom continues along this false tack until the medicine of inverted perspective finally takes effect. "At last it dawned upon him that it was not they, but his own species, that were the puzzle" (p. 84). Although "unconsciously nettled on behalf of his own world," Ransom progresses to a true understanding of the sacramental language and the quiddity of its hrossan expression (p. 84). From Hyoi he first learns that "'a pleasure is full grown only when it is remembered'" (p. 82). The anticipation, actual experience, and memory of a pleasure are "'all one thing,'" he is told (p. 82). "'Every day in a life fills the whole life with expectation and memory and . . . these are that day'" (p. 84). Hyoi explains to Ransom:

"When you and I met, the meeting was over very shortly, it was nothing. Now it is growing something as we remember it. But still we know very little about it. What it will be when I remember it as I lie down to die, what it makes in me all my days till then--that is the real meeting. The other is only the beginning of it." (p. 82)

Hyoi's prophetic words about his death, which come to pass when Devine and Weston murder him, dramatically emphasize his own dialectic of quiddity in a sacramental universe, such that time merely directs the lines of what is actually the script of a continuous reality.

Ransom is discomfited by the hrossa's uniquely honest perception of pleasure, because it conflicts with his own earthly 'contemplation of the idolon.' In a weak attempt to discredit the hrossan philosophy, he suggests that because the hnakra is a threat to their ideal existence, the creature somehow disqualifies their 'enjoyment of the universal.' Hyoi only uses Ransom's complaint to strengthen his own point, however: "'How can I make you understand, when you do not understand the poets?"
The hnakra is our enemy, but he is also our beloved. . . . I do not think the forest would be so bright, nor the water so warm, nor love so sweet, if there were no danger in the lakes'" (pp. 84-85). As the Lady so well understands in *Perelandra*, the vital enjoyment of quiddity involves a little death in meeting each wave as it comes; that is, the forfeiture of the good at hand predicates the arrival of the next good. Hyoi similarly sees a quintessential death at the core of a vibrant experience. "'I will tell you a day in my life that has shaped me,'" he tells Ransom.

"I was young, not much more than a cub, when I went far, far up the handramit to the land where stars shine at midday and even water is cold. A great waterfall I climbed. I stood on the shore of Balki the pool, which is the place of most awe in all worlds. The walls of it go up for ever and ever and huge and holy images are cut in them, the work of old times. There is the fall called the Mountain of Water. Because I have stood there alone, Maleldil and I, for even Oyarsa sent me no word, my heart has been higher, my song deeper, all my days. But do you think it would have been so unless I had known that in Balki hnéraki dwelled? There I drank life because death was in the pool. That was the best of drinks save one."

"What one?" asked Ransom.
"Death itself in the day I drink it and go to Maleldil." (p. 85)

Having already learned to drink Malacandrian water and to accept a strange cup from the hand of a hross, Ransom must now learn to drink the cup of death as well. "Humanity must embrace death freely, submit to it with total humility, drink it to the dregs, and so convert it into that mystical death which is the secret of life," Lewis writes in *Miracles* (p. 157). This is the same death-and-life rhythm which Ransom has already encountered en route to Malacandra, in the severely golden beneficence of Deep Heaven's "changeless noon" (p. 33).
Evidently Ransom's life with the hrossa refines and prepares his taste for this final drink, for not only does he agree to participate in the hnakra hunt, but he also accepts "the post of honour and danger in an attack upon an unknown but certainly deadly aquatic monster" (p. 87). This would have been an impossibility "a short time ago, in England," as well as "more recently, when he had first fled from the sorns, or when he had lain pitying himself in the forest by night" (p. 87). "Perhaps ... there was something in the air he now breathed, or in the society of the hrossa, which had begun to work a change in him" (p. 87). During the hunt Ransom is soon "infected" by the strong desire which Hyoi and Whin evince: "Something long sleeping in the blood awoke in Ransom" (p. 89). At this point an eldil appears to redirect Ransom to Oyarsa, but although one part of him feels "an instant relief at the idea of any diversion from their present business," the other urges him "to hold on to his new-found manhood" (p. 90). Before the issue can be settled, however, Whin cries excitedly to announce the hnakra—"a 'bark' Ransom would have called it three weeks ago" (p. 90). The trio succeeds in killing the beast and falls to triumphant rejoicing:

They were all on shore, wet, steaming, trembling with exertion and embracing one another. It did not now seem strange to him to be clasped to a beast of wet fur. The breath of the hrossa which, though sweet, was not human breath, did not offend him. He was one with them. That difficulty which they, accustomed to more than one rational species, had perhaps never felt, was now overcome. They were all hnau. They had stood shoulder to shoulder in the face of an enemy, and the shapes of their heads no longer mattered. And he, even Ransom, had come through it and not been disgraced. He had grown up. (p. 91; emphasis added)
Tragedy suddenly strikes, however. If Ransom has tasted death in this cup of honour, he must now drink its dregs of humility, for one of his own species has shot his fellow hnakrapunt. As the hross lies dying, Ransom can "only stare into Hyoi's distorted face in speechless guilt" (p. 92). With shame he confesses the truth to Whin, that his species "would kill even a hnaa, knowing it to be hnaa, if they thought its death would serve them!" (p. 93). The tragedy ends Ransom's life in the hrossan village and precipitates the final stage of his Malacandrian journey. It is Oyarsa at Meldilorn to whom he must now proceed, to give an account of the events in the sacramental tongue which the hrosssa have taught him.

"Ransom is by no means convinced that this is the best plan either for himself or for the hrossa," but "the stupor of humiliation in which he had lain ever since Hyoi fell" restrains him from criticizing, and he sets out for his destination as soon as directions are given (p. 95; tense changed). As he walks through the forest feeling a hunted man, Ransom struggles with a strong desire simply to give up and announce his whereabouts to Weston and Devine. As a changed man, however, he no longer presumes the inerrancy of his own point of view; rather, he determines "henceforward to obey the hrossa or eldila" (p. 96). Although he is aware that his route will take him directly through the sorns' home territory, he makes "a strong resolution, defying in advance all changes of mood, . . . [to] carry out the journey to Meldilorn if it could be done" (p. 96). Still on that road leading "right out of the self," Ransom's unswerving footsteps enact the newly reversed spiritual direction of his life: "In fact he was walking of his own free will into
the very trap that he had been trying to avoid ever since his arrival on Malacandra" (p. 96). Although he suffers the resurgence of "those old terrestrial fears of some alien, cold, intelligence, superhuman in power, sub-human in cruelty," Ransom does not now yield to his fears (p. 96).

Rather, with time to think on his journey, Ransom reaches further insights. He reflects that the eldila are more than simple superstition after all, and recognizes that Oyarsa is likewise "a real person if he was a person at all" (p. 97). "Greatly chastened in mind," and proceeding "in the clear light of an accepted duty," the reeducated pilgrim brings a redeemed perception to the landscape which he passes through, a landscape which is therefore as dramatically altered as his own direction (pp. 97-98). "The silent, purple half-light of the woods spread all around him as it had spread on the first day he spent in Malacandra, but everything else was changed. He looked back on that time as on a nightmare, on his own mood at that time as a sort of sickness" (p. 97). "That is our disease," Lewis diagnoses: "Spirit and Nature have quarrelled in us" (Miracles, p. 190). As Ransom increasingly accepts the rigours of a unified perception, he experiences the healing of that breach.

Reaching the track that leads up the handramit wall, Ransom begins his ascent "instantly," even though "the top of the road was removed from him by a more than Alpine distance" (p. 99). Augray is later able to help Ransom in his climb, once the pilgrim has yielded himself to the otherness of the sorns, but for the time being Ransom must struggle alone. He battles both fierce physical obstacles and a devastating sense of alienation in his journey. Heroically, he does manage to carry on, "the old resolution ... still ... driving him" (p. 100). As he approaches the planet's surface, Ransom notices that the decreasing atmospheric pressure
dramatically sharpens the contrast between light and shadow. This chiaroscuro symbolism is later intensified when, from his perch on Augray's shoulder, Ransom is strangely able to see the stars "in any direction where sunlight did not blind him", and to watch his and Augray's shadow move over "the uneven rock unnaturally distinct like the shadow of a tree before the headlights of a car" (p. 112). Such stark imagery reflects the narrative's accelerated focussing of good and evil, which in turn demands an increasing moral maturity of the hero. Having learnt the sacramental tongue, Ransom now bears the responsibility of speaking it.

With his increasing stature of character, then, Ransom presents himself at Augray's cave, and views with "surprising indifference" the embodiment of all his former fears and phobias (p. 102). Although he stiffens when the sorn makes "a sudden movement with one of its long fore-limbs," he does not "allow himself to retreat" (p. 103). As it turns out, the sorn is merely reaching forth to give him a badly needed dose of oxygen, after which Ransom is better able to discern the sorn's form and the other shapes in the lighted cavern. Ransom retreats with this new clarity of perception; however, he reverts to his geocentric norm, observing that a man sitting in the same posture as the sorn "would have rested his chin on his knees," but because the sorn's legs are longer, its knees rise "high above its shoulders on each side of its head—grotesquely suggestive of huge ears" (p. 103; emphases added). Because Ransom persistently compares the sorn to a man, he can see it as nothing more than a distortion of the normal human form. Although it is "less terrifying than . . . expected," Ransom still takes a long time to get used to its face. "It was too long, too solemn and too colourless, and it was much more unpleasantly like a human face than any inhuman creature's
face ought to be" (p. 104; emphases added). "But it was more grotesque than horrible," and at least a "new conception of the sorns" begins to modify Ransom's preconceptions (p. 104). "The ideas of 'giant' and 'ghost' receded behind those of 'goblin' and 'gawk'" (p. 104).

After a restful night in the sorn's cave, Ransom awakens feeling reassured: "Nothing then remained to be afraid of in Malacandra except Oyarsa ... 'The last fence,' thought Ransom" (p. 109). Soon the two are on their way, Ransom supported on Augray's hospitable shoulder. Although he cannot help shuddering when the sorn first touches him, it is not long before he feels perfectly at ease. "Ludicrous and even tender associations came crowding into his mind. It was like riding an elephant at the zoo in boyhood--like riding on his father's back at a still earlier age. It was fun" (p. 111). When they meet three sorns gliding down the opposite slope towards them, Ransom is able to appreciate the grace of their movements. The experience effects "a final transformation in Ransom's feelings towards their race":

"Ogres" he had called them when they first met his eyes as he struggled in the grip of Weston and Devine; "Titans" or "Angels" he now thought would have been a better word. Even the faces, it seemed to him, he had not then seen aright. He had thought them spectral when they were only august, and his first human reaction to their lengthened severity of line and profound stillness of expression now appeared to him not so much cowardly as vulgar. So might Parmenides or Confucius look to the eyes of a Cockney schoolboy! (p. 114)

A further night spent in the company of several sorns confirms for Ransom his painful lack of knowledge about his own world. The humbled pilgrim must recognize the superiority of the séroni's knowledge. He is able to supply his inquisitors with very little of the information they
desire, although they can frequently infer much indirect information from his explanations and remarks. "His description of the steam engine," for example, "gave them a better knowledge of terrestrial air and water than Ransom had ever had" (p. 116).

With this final chastening Ransom's new perspective is properly cemented. He is ready to arrive at his ultimate destination, and only the last leg of his journey lies before him. Ransom proves his readiness by viewing the Malacandrian landscape on its own terms, rather than assuming a terrestrial norm. Because he now expects to see a different kind of terrain, he comes to a scenic prospect which looks "at first strangely like an earthly landscape" (p. 117; emphasis added). And when he and Augray come to a steep descent, Ransom at first calls it "a slope" before even mentioning that "by earthly standards [it] would rather be called a precipice" (p. 118). In this frame of mind, Ransom descends into a lovely new handramit knowing before he is told "that this was Meldilorn" (p. 118). Although having long set aside the "old dreams which he had brought from earth of some more than American complexity of offices or some engineers' paradise of vast machines," yet the exquisite, classic beauty of the valley still takes him pleasantly by surprise (p. 118). The final proof of Ransom's hard-won acclimatization to Malacandra's mythical climes comes when he is ferried to the island: "to be once more in a boat and with a hross," he tells us, feels "almost like coming home" (p. 121; boldface print emphasis added).

It is while waiting to be summoned into the Oyarsa's presence that Ransom meets his first pfifltrigg. He views it quite objectively and without his usual terrestrial prejudices, although he does admit he is
"glad that he had not met one of this third race on his first arrival in Malacandra" (p. 127). Without qualm or revulsion he notes that its build is that of a frog. Although he mistakenly thinks it is resting "frog-like, on its 'hands,'" he does soon notice "that that part of its forelimbs on which it was supported was really, in human terms, rather an elbow than a hand" (p. 127). While the tone of Ransom's earthly comparison is more cautious and much less ethnocentric than before, there is still room for growth in his perception: the pfiftrigg artisan has been sent to chisel Ransom's likeness in stone for Malacandrian posterity, but when Ransom sees the result he recoils in disgust, "even allowing for the strangeness of the subject from a Malacandrian point of view" (p. 129). It is with an odd sense of realization that he comes to understand "the odious figures" are meant to be "an idealisation of humanity" (p. 129). The diction of the "ideal" again points to the Platonic base of Ransom's education, which teaches him the mythological nature of reality.

The full extent to which Ransom's eye has adapted to the Malacandrian feature becomes apparent in his interview with the Oyarsa, when an unexpected procession breaks in upon the solemn assembly:

Two creatures [came] which he did not recognize. . . . They were much shorter than any animal he had yet seen on Malacandra, and he gathered that they were bipeds, though the lower limbs were so thick and sausage-like that he hesitated to call them legs. The bodies were a little narrower at the top than at the bottom so as to be very slightly pear-shaped, and the heads were neither round like those of hrossa nor long like those of sorns, but almost square. They stumped along on narrow, heavy-looking feet which they seemed to press into the ground with unnecessary violence. And now their faces were becoming visible as masses of lumped and puckered flesh of variegated colour fringed in some bristly, dark substance. . . . Suddenly, with an indescribable change of feeling, he realized that he was looking at men. The two
prisoners were Weston and Devine and he, for one
privileged moment, had seen the human form with
almost Malacandrian eyes. (p. 141; emphasis added)

Not only have Ransom's eyes adapted to the Malacandrian feature; "through
his knowledge of the creatures and his love for them," he also
begins, "ever so little, to hear . . . with their ears" (p. 148; emphasis
added). When a group of mourners breaks into song to honour his dead
friend Hyoi, the old meaninglessness of Malacandrian song suddenly
"lifts, as it were, one corner of the curtain that hides its mystery, and
reveals, in a burst of delight which later and fuller understanding can
hardly ever equal, one glimpse of the indefinite possibilities within"
(p. 148). The lyrics recall Hyoi's profound experience "'on the shore of
Balki the pool,'" where he "'drank life because death was in the pool'":

"Let it go hence, dissolve and be no body. Drop it,
release it, drop it gently, as a stone is loosed from
fingers drooping over a still pool. . . . Once below
the surface there are no divisions, no layers in the
water yielding all the way down . . . . Let it go
down; the hnaul rises from it. This is the second
life, the other beginning." (p. 153)

The song shows Ransom his own final home, for "as if the gate of heaven
had opened before him," it awakens a "sense . . . of he knew not what
and yet what he had always known" (p. 148; emphasis added). That is,
through truly experiencing this otherness of the Malacandrian world,
Ransom has finally learned to perceive the phenomenal and thereby
recognize the noumenal which it has always expressed.

Ransom's full-fledged status as a speaker of the sacramental language
is ultimately tested in the Meldilorn assembly, when he must translate
action into words, as well as English into Old Solar, for the Oyarsa. The
scene is an effective dramatization of the novel's broad thematic concerns. It is also an enormously successful narrative device: as Ransom interprets for the Oyarsa, Weston's cant is translated into plain English for the reader, baldly exposing its meaninglessness. Ransom even finds some of Weston's empty rhetoric simply untranslatable. In a scene which anticipates the climax of That Hideous Strength, Weston's high-flown bombast degenerates into utter nonsense as it falls against the solid morphemes of Ransom's sacramental language. In a contrast which points the thematic climax, the humble philologist comes to find his identity and achieve his calling in the Malacandrian assembly, while the great scientist merely becomes a comic butt. "Revolving like a slow motion picture of a humming-top," he "conscientiously" bobs a necklace up and down in a pretentious effort to 'conciliate the natives' (p. 145). "For all Ransom knew he was saying 'Diddle, diddle, diddle.' It was sheer exhaustion which ended the great physicist's performance--the most successful of its kind ever given on Malacandra" (p. 145).

Oyarsa rightly wonders whether Ransom's "'fellow-creatures [are] hurt in their brains'" (p. 146), but declines to "unbody" any hnau who are not of his own world. Arranging instead for their return to Earth, he gives Ransom the option of accompanying them. In an agonizing decision Ransom finally throws his lot in with Weston and Devine, a choice which Oyarsa approves. "'Love of our own kind,'" Ransom says, "'is not the greatest of laws, but you, Oyarsa, have said it is a law. If I cannot live in Thulcandra, it is better for me not to live at all'" (p. 161). The principle is fundamental to the novel; indeed it both justifies the entire extraterrestrial expedition, and accounts for its summary conclusion. As the most linear novel of the trilogy, Planet
takes us out of reality in order to show us the super-reality beyond, but it also sends us directly back to our native element. Ransom has left the silent planet in order to learn the sacramental language, but once a fluent speaker he must return to the orb that is no longer so silent for him, thereby bringing the novel full circle. There are no shortcuts to super-reality; we can only learn to decipher it in all its mythological reflections.

As the spacecraft approaches Earth, we hear of Ransom's "wild, animal thirst for life, mixed with homesick longing for the free airs and the sights and smells of earth--for grass and meat and beer and tea and the human voice" (p. 168; emphasis added). This is the humble end to which Ransom has been so stringently reeducated. "This excursion into the preposterous sends us back with renewed pleasure to the actual," writes Lewis in "On Stories" (p. 100). Having been at home in the world of myth, and having seen the noumenal through the phenomenal, Ransom is ready to return to his natural home and find there a new supernaturalism. He returns to "the human voice," but deciphers therein the sacramental language; he returns to "tea," but it is an ambrosial-flavoured substance.
Chapter III

Perelandra: Tasting the Language

This is our dilemma--either to taste and not to know or to know and not to taste. . . . Of this tragic dilemma myth is the partial solution.

C.S. Lewis, "Myth Became Fact"

It is to be noted all through this story that while Ransom was on Perelandra his sense of taste had become something more than it was on Earth: it gave knowledge as well as pleasure, though not a knowledge that can be reduced to words.

C.S. Lewis, Perelandra

The stories which precede and follow Perelandra assume a relatively linear course of action which proceeds along a regular horizontal continuum. The second novel of the trilogy, however, has a special sense of suspension which comes from its uniquely vertical orientation. Its world is aligned with the cosmic axis of Deep Heaven rather than the aslant axes of the planets. The Lewis character is introduced to this new polarity in his first encounter with an eldil:

It was not at right angles to the floor. . . . [It was as if] the column of light was vertical but the floor was not horizontal. . . . This creature had reference to some horizontal, to some whole system of directions, based outside the Earth, and . . . its mere presence imposed that alien system on me and abolished the terrestrial horizontal. (p. 18)

This important scene early in the story sets the stage tonally for the rest of the novel. Later Ransom too will encounter eldila who are "not
standing quite vertically in relation to the floor," but who appear to be
themselves vertical. "It was the valley—it was the whole world of
Perelandra—which was aslant" (p. 228). The disequilibrium we are made
to feel is crucial to our full participation in the peculiar myth-world of Perelandra.

As the enactment of a primal myth, Perelandra has the texture of
timelessness. As the reinterpretation of that myth in an unfallen world, Perelandra has an aura of dream. In its triumphant descent into the underworlds of the psyche as well as of Hell, the novel's epic character contributes to its vertical polarization and non-temporal quality. There are no horizontal anchor lines nor any traditional moorings in this world. Indeed, Perelandra might well be cast as its own floating island within the world of the trilogy. "The eyes of Perelandra opened, as it were, inward, as if they were the curtained gateway to a world of waves and murmurings and wandering airs, of life that rocked in winds and splashed on mossy stones and descended as the dew and arose sunward in thin-spun delicacy of mist" (p. 231). All the illusory security of our fixed land, the sequential meaning which we catch in our nets of everyday existence, is withdrawn, so that the reader is made to dwell in the timeless moment and to ride the Perelandrian wave.

Ransom's own acute consciousness of "enacting a myth" intensifies the reader's sense of timelessness and vertical orientation (p. 52). That is, the immediacy of the moment becomes our primary experience, because "what flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality," we recall. On Malacandra, Ransom learned that the sacramental language is infinitely incarnational, manifested in varieties of mythological images. On Perelandra, he is brought to realize the quiddity of those
images, mythological though they may be. Repeatedly, Ransom remembers "his old suspicion that what was myth in one world might always be fact in some other" (p. 115). Indeed, he begins to understand that ultimately there may be no meaningful difference: "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" (p. 163). This distinction, Ransom recognizes, "would have no meaning at all" in Perelandra. "Whatever happened here would be of such a nature that earth-men would call it mythological" (pp. 163-64). Thus we can taste myth as fact in Perelandra--and still savour its flavour of myth. "You were not knowing, but tasting; but what you were tasting turns out to be a universal principle," we discover. "While receiving the myth as a story . . . you experience the principle concretely," Lewis explains in "Myth Became Fact" (p. 269).

The story's physical setting contributes further to our sense of timeless immediacy, and of buoyancy in a new sphere of existence. The golden ocean and floating islands which usher the reader into a living idyll are the novel's predominant images, integral to its theme. Upon his arrival, Ransom is plunged immediately into the planet's watery bosom, and challenged to perform "unconsciously the actions of a swimmer" even before he is aware of being in an ocean (p. 37). Having learned to drink the blue water on Malacandra, Ransom must now learn to navigate Perelandra's golden ocean. Experience spares him a protracted lesson before he is willing to drink this foreign planet's water, however: "As he rushed smoothly up the great convex hillside of the next wave he got a mouthful of the water" (p. 38). Ransom's Malacandrian experience has schooled him also in accepting and responding to "other"; therefore he
finds himself able to negotiate the waves which rush upon him, and he patiently rides the crest of the timeless present.

Even beyond such specific images, the rhythm of the waves continues to be felt in the cadences of the novel, helping to effect its peculiar sense of timeless suspension. In the trilogy, Lewis invites us to view pictures which "tell their own moral." While *Out of the Silent Planet* represents the heraldic invitation to that viewing, however, *Perelandra's* art is cinematic. Even as it appears, each frame is swallowed by the next, constantly unfolding a new dimension of the infinite story. "Words are slow," complains the Lewis character, even though the actual plot line of this novel is shorter and less complex than that of its companion novels (p. 40). In a timeless dimension, experience is very full and can find proper expression only in the rapid nuance of a cinematic art, as it were.

There is little fixity on Perelandra, although there is abundant well-being. "On Mars the very forests are of stone; in Venus the lands swim" (p. 231). The Perelandrian hillsides are but swells of water, or the temporary swells of floating islands, whose "only shape is the inconstant shape of the water beneath them" (p. 44). Learning to negotiate the hills and valleys that change places every minute is "like learning to walk on water itself," says Ransom, identifying the same 'sacramental language' that Peter learned from Christ (p. 45). Indeed, the great forms of waves which rush onward leaving their material substance behind them might be the sacramental language in script, with its rush of morphemes temporally expressing a universal ocean of meaning. This image of flux and stasis is reversed in the corporeal body that the eldila can adopt, a defined shape which "co-exists with a
rushing movement of the matter it contains" (p. 227; tense changed). Both images express the novel's central concept of the flux which is paradoxically concomitant with the universal absolute.

The challenge presented to Ransom and the reader in learning to perceive this new world aright is to abolish the mind set nurtured by fixed land. "A photograph [of the Perelandrian islands], omitting the colours and the perpetual variation of shape, would make them look deceptively like landscapes in our own world, but the reality is very different" (p. 44). As in Malacandra, Ransom must accept this new world in its own right and confront it on its own terms: the universal is never confined to any one form of expression. Although "the land-like appearance proves hard to resist," the Pedestrian must once again stuff his terrestrial map into his pocket, because "only a cinematograph could make a contour map" of the floating islands (p. 44; tense changed). To walk here one must ever be "in readiness for sudden change of balance," responding to every ripple and undulation (p. 45). Then "when you [finally] give in to the thing, give yourself up to it," the Perelandrian ocean, like "Someone's Presence," becomes "not a load but a medium, a sort of splendour as of eatable, drinkable, breathable gold, which feeds and carries you and not only pours into you but out from you as well" (p. 80; tense changed; emphases added). In accepting this new world on its own unearthly terms, Ransom learns to "taste" the sacramental language which he has previously learned simply to comprehend.

As we relinquish the fixity of our terrestrial perception in this second novel, floodgates are opened to the quiddity of experience. "Only the actual was real; and every actual situation was new," sounds the keynote of *Perelandra* (p. 166). It is the Lady's concentrated attention
to "the actual"--the waves, fruit, trees, and animals of her existence--which makes her such an accomplished speaker of the sacramental language, able to converse directly with Maldeldil. It also allows her to understand by concrete analogy the metaphysics which Ransom teaches her. As he explains creaturely free will to her, for example, she follows his reasoning step-by-step with her own picture-thinking. Triumphantly she exclaims: "'I thought that the good things He sent me drew me into them as the waves lift the islands; but now I see that it is I who plunge into them with my own legs and arms, as when we go swimming'' (p. 78).

'Like the waves,'" the Lady constantly reiterates as she understands some new aspect of spiritual life through this reference point (p. 66). Because the waves of actual experience are a medium of "eatable, drinkable, breathable gold" for her, the Lady leads a vital, creative existence. Her physical activity is as spiritual as her spiritual activity is physical: as she is thinking, for example, Ransom finds her "doing something with her mind, perhaps even with her muscles" (p. 71). For her, as for "Adam at Night," even "sleep was not a thing that happened to her but an action which she performed" (p. 141). "There was no category in the terrestrial mind which would fit her. Opposites met in her and were fused in a fashion for which we have no images" (pp. 71-72).

Fusing fluidity and fixity, quiddity and spirit, and the material and immaterial in each facet of our experience, Perelandra's deepest meaning expresses the ultra reality which permeates every mode and moment of nature's derivative being. Perelandra's natural features are so replete with supernatural life that eating a gourd is an "almost . . . spiritual" pleasure, an experience which Ransom is never able to describe
adequately to his friends on Earth (p. 47). "It was, of course, a taste, just as his thirst and hunger had been thirst and hunger. But then it was so different from every other taste that it seemed mere pedantry to call it a taste at all... For one draught of this on earth wars would be fought and nations betrayed" (pp. 46-47). Similarly, the shower Ransom receives from some natural vegetation is a pleasure so intense that it affects his inner as well as his outer being. "Such was the refreshment that he seemed to himself to have been, till now, but half awake... All the colours about him seemed richer and the dimness of that world seemed clarified" (p. 52). Like an Adam in his Paradise, Ransom christens the vegetation, naming the plants "bubble trees."

So rich are the planet's natural beauties that "the forest landscape furnished what would have been a dozen landscapes on earth" (p. 46). "There was something in Perelandra that might overload a human brain" (p. 46). Even the air of Perelandra throbs with the living unity of spiritual and physical, so that "breathing becomes a kind of ritual" (p. 46; tense changed). This living sacramentalism can literally be tasted, and indeed creates "a new kind of hunger and thirst, a longing that seemed to flow over from the body into the soul and which was a heaven to feel... It was like the discovery of a totally new genus of pleasures" (pp. 46-47; boldface print emphases added).

With such rich spiritual meaning investing the most basic aspects of nature, Ransom can fulfill his identity and glorify his Creator even while living hand-to-mouth in paradise, waiting to learn the heroic purpose for which he has been sent. Just as with the Oyarsa of Malacandra, "you can no more call... [such a period] waiting than you can call the whole of his existence waiting" (p. 31). The
experience is valid in its own right, and is no less worthy or spiritual than Ransom's later heroic adventures. Of course, to the extent that Ransom is a fallen creature awaiting full redemption, he cannot know the same continuum of spiritual and physical reality as the Lady, but while on Perelandra it is his to enjoy to the maximum. He certainly tastes the cup of such a destiny, and as Tinidril predicts, it is impossible for him to die or even age after having known such a close integration of physical and spiritual.

The singular script of the sacramental language in Perelandra's watery element oddly focusses our attention on its flowing strokes even as they melt and swirl into the next characters. Although we have learned through "otherness" on Malacandra that no natural forms exclusively express the sacramental language, on Perelandra we are taught to respect those natural forms in their own right. The morphemes of the sacramental language are important simply because "'He utters Himself'" in all that is (p. 250). We taste the syllables and savour their voicing because everything "'utters the heart of the Holy One with its own voice'" (p. 249). The absolute unity of all things in Maleldil enhances rather than eradicates their individuality. "'Never did He make two things the same; never did He utter one word twice'" (p. 246).

Harmony is the keynote of the incarnational language; there is no room for monotone homogeneity in its vast symphony of morphemes:

"Each thing, from the single grain of Dust to the strongest eldil, is the end and the final cause of all creation and the mirror in which the beam of His brightness comes to rest and so returns to Him. . . . Thus each is equally at the centre and none are there by being equals, but some by giving place and some by
receiving it, the small things by their smallness and the great by their greatness, and all the patterns linked and looped together by the unions of a kneeling with a sceptred love." (p. 250)

The above eulogy to quiddity is actually a paean from an eldilic hymnal celebration, in which speech has somehow become as music:

For in the conversation that followed—if it can be called a conversation—though he [Ransom] believes that he himself was sometimes the speaker, he never knew which words were his or another's, or even whether a man or an eldil was talking. The speeches followed one another—if, indeed, they did not all take place at the same time—like the parts of a music into which all five of them had entered as instruments. (p. 246)

Indeed, music emerges as a major symbol of the universal harmony of quiddity. Supernature is essentially "unspeakable," Lewis suggests, "not by being indefinite but by being too definite for the unavoidable vagueness of language" (Miracles, p. 110). Where speech is insufficient, however, song can lend its strength.

Furthermore, as speech becomes song to accommodate the harmony of quiddity, conventional music becomes a quintessentially concrete form of music to accommodate the quiddity of sacramental song:

From without, most certainly from without, but not by the sense of hearing, festal revelry and dance and splendour poured into him—no sound, yet in such fashion that it could not be remembered or thought of except as music. It was like having a new sense. It was like being present when the morning stars sang together. It was as if Perelandra had that moment been created—and perhaps in some sense it had. (p. 121; emphasis added)

The solid reality at the core of our universe predicates such burgeoning forth of spiritual into physical reality. Even so, this core remains
"'too definite for language,'" Ransom complains to his listeners (p. 35). At best, the diction of 'creation' and 'newness' must serve to express ultra reality, for "only the actual was real, and every actual situation was new."

Ransom comes closer to the language that will describe his experience when the speech that becomes music and the music that becomes a trans-sensory experience together become a single phenomenon in a new dimension of reality. "And now, by a transition which he did not notice, it seemed that what had begun as speech was turned into sight," we hear in the final stanzas of the Great Hymn:

He thought he saw the Great Dance. It seemed to be woven out of the intertwining undulation of many cords or bands of light, leaping over and under one another and mutually embraced in arabesques and flower-like subtleties. Each figure as he looked at it became the master-figure or focus of the whole spectacle, by means of which his eye disentangled all else and brought it into unity—only to be itself entangled when he looked to what he had taken for mere marginal decorations and found that there also the same hegemony was claimed, and the claim made good, yet the former pattern not thereby dispossessed but finding in its new subordination a significance greater than that which it had abdicated... And by now the thing must have passed altogether out of the region of sight as we understand it. For he says that the whole solid figure of these enamoured and inter-inanimated circlings was suddenly revealed as the mere superficialities of a far vaster pattern in four dimensions, and that figure as the boundary of yet others in other worlds: till suddenly as the movement grew yet swifter, the interweaving yet more ecstatic, the relevance of all to all yet more intense, as dimension was added to dimension. (pp. 251-53)

Spiritual reality implodes the discrete senses of our normal mode of consciousness, revealing the composite unity of all temporal experience within ultra reality.
Thus, by virtue of its spiritual unity, quiddity is affirmed on a level with supernatural reality. The Perelandrian ocean is once more our parabolic model: every liquid wave comprises individual droplets, yet each droplet is suspended in a sea of unity, and each wave propelled by a single motive force. The Great Hymn celebrates: "'His love and splendour . . . flow forth like a strong river which has need of a great watercourse and fills alike the deep pools and the little crannies, that are filled equally and remain unequal'" (p. 250). As an emblem of quiddity, water no longer intimidates Ransom as it once did on Malacandra. Indeed, the pilgrim is determined not to repeat the thirst of his Malacandrian experience, and during his journey through subterranean Perelandra he does not hesitate to drink deeply of every pool he comes across.

"'Always one must throw oneself into the wave,'" advises the King in his endorsement of quiddity, sharing the wisdom hard-won in the battlefield of his soul (p. 242). While every such immersion celebrates quiddity, however, it also involves a kind of death. For example, Hyoi's draught of water from the Malacandrian pool wherein the hnakra lies hidden yields a taste of death as well as quintessential life. As he learns to navigate Perelandra's watery world, Ransom might be swimming in that same Malacandrian pool. He similarly confronts death, indeed enacts a baptism of death into life. Descending through the ocean into the expunging blackness and purging fire of Perelandra's subterranean regions, he emerges again by benefit of a stream which spits him out into a cave, is breast-fed by Venus in "a time to be remembered only in dreams as we remember infancy"--"indeed it was a second infancy" (p. 213)--and
finally ascends to the pinacled heights of Perelandra. In all of this, Ransom learns to die to himself and is reborn a new creature to a new life. "Death and Re-birth—go down to go up—it is a key principle. Through this bottleneck, this belittlement, the highroad nearly always lies," Lewis writes in Miracles (p. 136; emphasis added).

Quiddity's pattern of death and rebirth thus contributes to the novel's vertical orientation. It is also central to the novel's sense of mythical flotation. Lewis postulates that "the pattern of Descent and Re-ascent is . . . the very formula of reality," which helps us to account for Perelandra's overwhelming sense of timeless immediacy. "Then in the mystery of Death the secret of secrets lies hid," Lewis concludes, locating the source of Perelandra's secret inwardness and quintessential reality (Miracles, p. 151). In her study of fantasy and science fiction, The Language of the Night, Ursula Le Guin affirms the pivotal role that the mystery of descent and re-ascent plays in the core reality of our lives: "Even in merely reading a fairy tale, we must let go our daylight convictions and trust ourselves to be guided by dark figures, in silence; and when we come back, it may be very hard to describe where we have been." Ransom's tour through Perelandra's dark depths bears out Le Guin's conviction, for he indeed finds it difficult to describe his experience, "'too definite for language.'"

The peculiar sense of mythic suspension which Ransom's archetypal death-descent gives us is intensified by the larger narrative framework of the novel. Whereas the other two volumes of the trilogy use a

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straightforward "there-and-back-again" structure, *Perelandra* deposits us on a foreign planet but does not provide the reader with an emotionally cathartic realization of homecoming. The other two novels bracket their extraterrestrial stories with dream and vision in the opening pages, and with the solid rituals of domestic life in the closing pages, but all of *Perelandra*'s dream, vision and tea-pouring is dispensed with in the opening chapters. We then waken with Ransom in another world to see the reality which we think is a dream, and unsuspectingly spend the duration of the narrative there (p. 49).

Although it would be ridiculous to say, as Ransom notes, "'that a man had forgotten water because Niagara Falls didn't immediately give him the idea of making it into cups of tea,'" nevertheless in *Perelandra* we do not return to make those cups of tea, as we do in the companion novels (p. 98). Structurally, Ransom journeys both to and from Perelandra before we even hear the flashback account of his experience there. We first read that he shares "meat and beer and tea" with Lewis for his farewell meal, and shortly after that Lewis has "poured out the tea" for his homecoming (p. 26 and p. 34). Only as Ransom begins to recount his adventures over tea do we leave behind our "tiny windowless universe" and look out with him through the "coffin-shaped window" of his projectile (p. 255). We are then launched into a mythical, timeless world from which we do not return. We simply ride the Perelandrian wave until Ransom once more climbs into the "narrow house" of his coffin and "his consciousness is engulfed" (p. 32 and p. 256; tense changed). Appropriately for the trilogy's central and most mythic narrative, this "narrow house" of a coffin is as close to home as the novel returns myth. Thus the reader tastes the same cup of destiny as Ransom,
imaginatively realizing a timeless existence and the peculiar death it involves.

Of course, Lewis does bring myth home in his conventional manner by revealing the supernatural which always resides in the ordinary. For example, the Lewis character encounters the barrage of evil eldila in the midst of a "quiet landscape" which is "in no way remarkable" (p. 7). More importantly, however, Lewis also brings myth "home" by taking us into its unearthly realm and showing us our home there. With Ransom, we are "turned out--deposited--solitary" and left to the perils of a foreign planet (p. 37). Those perils ultimately become the route to a new life, however: "At the very moment when he stood farthest from our ordinary mode of being he had the sense of stripping off encumbrances and awaking from trance, and coming to himself" (p. 253; emphasis added). Our sense of a homeland on this mythic soil is very real, to the extent that we share Stella Gibbons' nostalgia for it.

Although we are left, as it were, on a floating island that wanders the waves, like Ransom we are welcomed "with a gesture that makes that whole world a house" (p. 70; tense changed).

It was strange to be filled with homesickness for places where his sojourn had been so brief and which were, by any objective standard, so alien to all our race. Or were they? The cord of longing which drew him to the invisible isle seemed to him at that moment to have been fastened long, long before his coming to Perelandra, long before the earliest times that memory could recover in his childhood, before his birth, before the birth of man himself, before the origins of time. (p. 116)

Ransom recognizes his true heritage in Perelandra, and even asks Tor and Tinidril to adopt him. Seeing them revealed in all their glory, he
pleads: "'I have never before seen a man or a woman. I have lived all my life among shadows and broken images. . . . Take me for your son,'" (p. 235; emphasis added). Perelandra makes a natural home for the Lady as well, so much so that she puzzles about the meaning of the word. "'What is home?" she asks, unfamiliar with the concept of a local refuge because she is at home in her universe and unaware of alienation or strangeness anywhere (p. 73).

To be at home, Ransom discovers, means to ride the wave and accept the story as Maleldil writes it. "This itch to have things over again, as if life were a film that could be unrolled twice or even made to work backwards . . . was it possibly the root of all evil?" he speculates (p. 53). "Instead of saying: 'This also is Thou,' one may say the fatal word Encore," Lewis warns in Letters to Malcolm.2 As the Lady says, "'You could refuse the real good; you could make the real fruit taste insipid by thinking of the other'" (p. 77). "We must 'sit light' not only to life itself but to all its phases," writes Lewis "To a Lady" (21 Nov. 1962, Letters, 306). Ransom too has to learn to "sit light" and to moderate his desire, or more specifically to satisfy himself according to appetite, rather than "in the teeth of desire and in obedience to a spurious rationalism" (p. 47). He learns to reject greedy impulses such as to plunge through the groves of bubble trees, satiate himself in "the orgiastic and almost alarming pleasure of the gourds", and select only the "redhearts" from among the oval green berries (p. 55).

In learning to be as much at home with the waves of quiddity as the Lady is, Ransom must accept the death of his own grasping desires. He must also give up the habit of speculating what "would have happened" and focus rather on what is actually happening: "Only the actual was real." Maleldil's Perelandrian story is written in the incarnational language, and its every detail is charged with a unique spiritual significance. There is no purpose in comparing the Perelandrian story to its terrestrial counterpart. "The useless word is 'encore,'" writes Lewis "To a Lady" (21 Nov. 1962, Letters, 306), a conclusion which Ransom also reaches: "This chapter, this page, this very sentence, in the cosmic story was utterly and eternally itself; no other passage that had occurred or ever would occur could be substituted for it" (p. 166).

In learning to ride the wave of Maleldil's story, Ransom discovers that a speaker of the incarnational language must focus on his own dialect alone. For example, when he eats the seaweed which the mermen are eating, Ransom finds "his mind oddly changed" to their perspective. He thinks of the floating islands as we think of clouds, and becomes "startlingly conscious of his own experience in walking on the topside of them as a miracle or a myth" (p. 185). This experience reinforces his postulate that what is myth in one world is fact in another, and that ultimately there is no boundary between them. But it also teaches Ransom an important lesson: he has trespassed the lines of his own story to read the "heraldically fantastic shapes" of another, the story of "a whole world of phosphorescent creatures" (p. 115). In the Narnia tales, Aslan strictly rebuffs every attempt to peer over one's given wave to see
another's: "'No-one is told any story but their own.'" In his encounter with the mermen, Ransom similarly discovers that "each was wholly irrelevant to the other" (p. 184). The lesson is painful and leaves Ransom with a terrifying sense of utter solitude that plunges him into despair:

Like all solitudes it was, indeed, haunted: but not by an anthropomorphic Deity, rather by the wholly inscrutable to which man and his life remained eternally irrelevant. . . . The Empirical Bogey came surging into his mind—the great myth of our century . . . in which everything that can possibly hold significance for the mind becomes the mere by-product of essential disorder. . . . Part of him still knew that the size of a thing is its least important characteristic, that the material universe derived from the comparing and mythopoeic power within him that very majesty before which he was now asked to abase himself, and that mere numbers could not overawe us unless we lent them, from our own resources, that awfulness which they themselves could no more supply than a banker's ledger. But this knowledge remained an abstraction. Mere bigness and loneliness overbore him. (pp. 187-88)

Having learnt his lesson, Ransom later exercises a more delicate caution in watching a procession of gigantic earth-beetles wend their way "with insufferable majesty" through their subterranean caverns. He is better prepared for the sense of dislocation which inevitably assails him: "Assuredly the inside of this world was not for man. But it was for something. . . . That thing, that swathed form in its chariot, was no doubt his fellow creature. It did not follow that they were equals or had an equal right in the under-land" (p. 211).

The incarnational language is far more polysyllabic than man, who is but one exponent of Maleldil's story, can know. "You are not the voice that all things utter, nor is there eternal silence in the places where you cannot come," the Great Hymn celebrates (p. 248). While riding his fish in chase of the Un-man, Ransom hears the crying of a flock of swan-like birds, "and it was the wildest sound that Ransom had ever heard, the loneliest, and the one that had least to do with Man" (p. 182). The sound seems to have a mythical quiddity which enunciates the sacramental language once and for all:

It was not hostile: if it had been, its wildness and strangeness would have been the less, for hostility is a relation and an enemy is not a total stranger. . . . It was strange that he to whom a wood or a morning sky on earth had sometimes been a kind of meal, should have had to come to another planet in order to realise Nature as a thing in her own right. The diffused meaning, the inscrutable character, which had been both in Tellus and Perelandra since they split off from the Sun, and which would be, in one sense, displaced by the advent of imperial man, yet, in some other sense, not displaced at all, enfolded him on every side and caught him into itself. (pp. 183; emphasis added)

As Purtill writes, "Nature is almost a character in the drama: Malacandra (Mars) and Perelandra (Venus) are parts of the stories set on them, not mere backgrounds" (Lord of the Elves, p. 26). "'Though men or angels rule them,'" the Great Hymn continues, "'the worlds are made for themselves. . . . Their own voice was in them'" (p. 248).

The cosmic story is written in the polysyllables of the sacramental language, each of which has its own central significance:

You might look upon the Perelandrian story as merely an indirect consequence of the Incarnation on earth: or you might look on the Earth story as a mere
preparation for the new worlds of which Perelandra was the first. The one was neither more nor less true than the other. Nothing was more or less important than anything else, nothing was a copy or model of anything else. (p. 165)

Of course, the fact that one's own story is an individual sentence within the grand framework of Maleldil's story redoubles the importance of riding the waves that Maleldil sends. Each of us then stands in relation to a personal destiny which is in turn related to a cosmic destiny. Every story becomes important not only for its own sake, but for that of its contextual lines as well. "The pattern grows and . . . from each world it sprouts into the next through some other dimension" (p. 169). As "a new character in the drama," Ransom thus has a role that is both personal and cosmic (p. 165). One sees the meaning with which one's own story is charged and trembles, for "it is in our responses that we are given the gift of helping God write our story," L'Engle says (Walking on Water, p. 192). With dismay, Ransom realizes "the true width of the frightful freedom that was being put into his hands--a width to which all merely spatial infinity seemed narrow" (p. 169).

Our response to the claims of the gods, Martin Heidegger says, "always springs from the responsibility of a destiny." Words are the point at which "we enter the sphere of the decision as to whether we are to yield ourselves to the gods or withhold ourselves from them," he continues (pp. 279-80). Because Ransom is a philologist, words literally

comprise the responsibility of his destiny, and Lewis the author literally "enact[s] what philosophy only thinks" (Perelandra, p. 168). Further challenged to respond to the lines of his story, Ransom enters a "sphere of decision" still literally defined by words. "'It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom,'" Maleldil tells the philologist (p. 168). His name is one with his destiny, and his response one with his responsibility, although "to connect the name Ransom with the act of ransoming would have been for him a mere pun" (p. 168). Ransom must learn to speak the sacramental language in a more than metaphoric sense, however. Later we learn that his first name is as portentous as his surname, meaning "friend of the eldila."

As Gibson notes, Oyarsa's name similarly circumscribes his responsibility. In his own sphere where he rules he is called Oyarsa, but on Perelandra his name is simply "Malacandra" (p. 224). Such literal quiddity of the sacramental tongue is further demonstrated when the King names the place where Maleldil has taught him many secrets. "'Its name is Lur,' said the King. 'Its name is Lur,' repeated the eldila. And Ransom realised that the King had uttered not an observation but an enactment'" (p. 241; emphasis added). With every resplendent depth the language of incarnation becomes more solid and less abstract; we truly taste the language. L'Engle identifies naming with art's sacramental activity: to name is to call forth lovingly into the freedom of a responsible destiny, "and so open the wide gates of creativity" (Walking on Water, pp. 112-13). In an agony of recognition Ransom comes to this same realization:

5 Spinner of Tales, p. 40.
Before his Mother had borne him, before his ancestors had been called Ransoms, before ransom had been the name for a payment that delivers, before the world was made, all these things had so stood together in eternity that the very significance of the pattern at this point lay in their coming together in just this fashion. And he bowed his head and groaned and repined against his fate. (p. 168)

Lewis describes his decision to convert to Christianity as his own such "free" response to a personal responsibility:

I know very well when, but hardly how, the final step was taken. I was driven to Whipsnade one sunny morning. When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did. . . . It was more like when a man, after long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake. And it was, like that moment on top of the bus, ambiguous. Freedom, or necessity? Or do they differ at their maximum? At that maximum a man is what he does; there is nothing of him left over or outside the act. (Joy, p. 223)

"That moment on top of the bus" to which Lewis refers was an earlier sub-Christian experience of his, when freedom and necessity similarly intertwined in the overwhelming quiddity of a sacramental universe:

I felt myself being, there and then, given a free choice. I could open the door or keep it shut; I could unbuckle the armour or keep it on. . . . I chose to open, to unbuckle, to loosen the rein. I say, "I chose," yet it did not really seem possible to do the opposite. On the other hand, I was aware of no motives. You could argue that I was not a free agent, but I am more inclined to think that this came nearer to being a perfectly free act than most that I have ever done. Necessity may not be the opposite of freedom, and perhaps a man is most free when, instead of producing motives, he could only say, "I am what I do." (Joy, pp. 211-12)

The composite reality of the sacramental language continually erases terrestrial distinctions. Because 'only the actual is real,' any freely
uttered response will comprise one's responsibility. Ultimately, the only option outside speech is silence: "'To walk out of His will is to walk into nowhere,'" as the Lady says (p. 132). Ransom's response to his destiny confirms this equation of choice and necessity:

You might say, if you liked, that the power of choice had been simply set aside and an inflexible destiny substituted for it. On the other hand, you might say that he had been delivered from the rhetoric of his passions and had emerged into unassailable freedom. Ransom could not, for the life of him, see any difference between these two statements. Predestination and freedom were apparently identical. (p. 170)

Response and responsibility continue to intersect in a riot of quiddity once Ransom has reached his climactic decision to kill the Un-man. Even as he is deciding, the fatal encounter becomes a fait accompli, undisturbed by the mere flux of time.

The only difference was that he knew—almost as a historical proposition—that it was going to be done. . . . The future act stood there, fixed and unalterable as if he had already performed it. It was a mere irrelevant detail that it happened to occupy the position we call future instead of that which we call past. (p. 170)

"Thus something does really depend on my choice," Lewis says. "My free act contributes to the cosmic shape. That contribution is made in eternity or 'before all worlds'; but my consciousness of contributing reaches me at a particular point in the time-series" (Miracles, p. 214).

The overwhelming solidity of the task not yet enacted is actually a boon to Ransom, and an abettor of his free response rather than the shadow of destiny. That is, the inevitability of the future act makes its magnitude less imposing and its enormousness less inhibiting. Moral
duties which would stagger us if revealed in all their cosmic significance are frequently mediated incrementally in Lewis' writing. The trilogy itself assumes such a modest inception: only Ransom's urgent need of a night's lodging prompts him to inquire after Harry. There is no deliberate, assertive heroism on his part: the thought simply becomes the decision, even as the decision melts into the act. "Whatever the process of thought may have been, he found that the mental picture of himself calling at The Rise had assumed all the solidity of a thing determined upon" (Planet, pp. 9-10). Small though it may be, one's free response does co-inhere with one's responsibility. The future act then stands fixed and solid, and the rest of the tale simply enacts what already is.

We might class Lewis' Perelandra as one of those stories which he says do "what no theorem can quite do." At the conclusion of such stories, says Lewis, "we have seen how destiny and free will can be combined, even how free will is the modus operandi of destiny" ("On Stories," p. 101). Through Ransom's experience the reader acquires precisely such insights: he understands freedom to be one with the necessity of response, and he learns through his free responses to help Maleldil write that story which He has already penned. Story readers are able to grasp this paradox, Lewis points out in "The Seeing Eye," because they are already familiar with the concept of a fictional character having free will, even while his course has been pre-determined by the author. Transposing this principle to the real world, we can understand the synonymity of free will and destiny in our own roles within the Author's story. There is of course one crucial point where this analogy breaks down: "God can make things which not only--like a poet's or novelist's characters--seem to have a partially independent life, but
really have it" ("Seeing Eye," p. 172). What the reader cannot learn by analogy, however, he can learn through Ransom's experience, confirming that free choice does coincide with necessity.

The insight into human freedom which Ransom gains through his decision to kill the Un-man makes his choice the climax of the story. It is not the peculiar importance of the decision which generates its climactic effect, for Ransom understands that "it might as well be any other choice as this" (p. 171). In the quiddity of the incarnational language, each morpheme is as important as the next. Perelandra's fate depended as much on Ransom's decision to inquire after Harry as it now depends on his resolve to kill the Un-man. "The fierce light which he had seen resting on this moment of decision rested in reality on all" (p. 171).

In making this decision Ransom is simply riding the next wave of his own story, fully recognizing that "it might as well be he as another" (p. 171). "My name also is Ransom," a Voice says (p. 168). The sheer solid Noun which underlies all incarnational language penetrates our imagination and echoes in our ears. The reader hears with Ransom and understands the imperative: we are all called to be little Christs. Although it is Ransom's name that is one with his responsibility, we know that it might as well be we as he. "He stood for Maleldil: but no more than ... any man stands for Him in doing any good action" (p. 171).

Even though our identification with the hero thus becomes rather philosophical and impersonal, we continue to see through Ransom's eyes and learn ontologically through his experience. Because it might as well be anyone else as he, Ransom does illustrate a principle; nevertheless, it remains his personal story. "The thing was irreducibly, nakedly real. ... It rested with no other creature in all time or all space" (p. 161).
"If the issue lay in Maleldil's hands, Ransom and the Lady were those hands" (p. 161). Although one moment is as significant as the next, it is this moment at hand and not another, so that "the fate of a world really depended on how they behaved in the next few hours" (p. 161). Given "the preposterous truth that all really depended on their actions," Ransom's response to responsibility becomes infinitely important. "A stone may determine the course of a river. He was that stone at this horrible moment which had become the centre of the whole universe" (p. 162). "Thus, and not otherwise, the world was made. Either something or nothing must depend on individual choices. And if something, who could set bounds to it?" (p. 162).

The fate of a world hangs in the balance and all heaven and hell have entered the fray, yet a bodily encounter determines the outcome. The intense physical nature of what amounts to an essentially spiritual battle has troubled many critics, as it indeed troubles Ransom in the novel. Gibson smooths over the problem by simply eliminating the fundamental disparity. In his opinion, Lewis makes it patently clear that he is not saying "the moral issues of a world hang on the outcome of a boxing match" (Spinner of Tales, p. 52). To this end, Gibson continues, Ransom voices the same objection which comes to the reader's mind, that "no such crude, materialistic struggle could possibly be what Maleldil really intended" (Perelandra, p. 163). Ransom then comes to see the issue in its proper light, Gibson says, finally perceiving that the moral struggle is really the Lady's and that he can have no integral role in what must be her personal spiritual triumph. Indeed, Ransom concludes that he has been grossly overestimating his own importance, for the
Lady has already won her victory. "[He] perceived that his voluble self had begged the question. Up to this point the Lady had repelled her assailant. She was shaken and weary, and there were some stains perhaps in her imagination, but she had stood" (Perelandra, p. 165). Gibson emphasizes that Ransom's job now is incidental: he is simply "to remove the personified malice" and provide "'the way of escape' promised to those who are tempted" (Spinner of Tales, p. 52).

Certainly Gibson reads the text aright in affirming that the Lady has proven herself the moral victor. That Ransom's ensuing physical struggle is not a radically moral conquest, and that it does not determine the moral issues of a planet, however, are unfounded conclusions which ignore Lewis' emphatic statements to the contrary.

His journey to Perelandra was not a moral exercise, nor a sham fight. . . . The fate of a world really depended on how they behaved in the next few hours. . . . They could, if they chose, decline to save the innocence of this new race, and if they declined its innocence would not be saved. (Perelandra, p. 161; emphases added)

Gibson fails to recognize that Ransom's objections to the fight are but personal excuses—red herrings which Lewis introduces into the text to expose the false dichotomies of our normal perception.

Ransom rationalizes, for example: "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. If only it were as simple as that . . . . It would degrade the spiritual warfare to the condition of mere mythology" (p. 163; boldface print emphasis added). Here, however, Ransom utters the fatal words which choked all further objections, for mythology is anything but "mere," as he has been learning:
[Ransom] got another check. . . . [He] had been perceiving that the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact was purely terrestrial. . . . All this he had thought before. Now he knew it. The Presence in the darkness, never before so formidable, was putting these truths into his hands, like terrible jewels. (pp. 163-64)

Ransom has come up against the concrete expression of the sacramental language, against which all his objections wordlessly melt away. "Do all theoretical problems conceal [such] shirking by the will?" Lewis muses perceptively in a Letter ("To Sister Penelope, C.S.M.V.," 22 Dec. 1942, 202). The reader similarly comes up against the concreteness of the sacramental language in vicariously experiencing Ransom's fight with the Un-man. Thomas Howard describes how graphic drama literally embodies theme:

The sheer physical grossness of the fight, described at agonizing length, page after page, dramatizes with terrible clarity the thing that Lewis has been working at all through his fiction: the distinction between flesh and spirit, nature and supernatural, history and myth, is only a provisional and contingent one. This fight does not differ in substance from all arguments with unbelief and apostasy and temptation. This is simply what it looks like and what it comes to when all illusions and euphemisms have been stripped away. In our own story, of course, we are familiar with this sort of thing: the same fight got down to nails, splinters, thorns, blood. (Achievement, pp. 113-14).

Another critic, Robert Plank, assumes like Gibson that Ransom's physical battle is not itself essentially spiritual, but unlike Gibson he condemns rather than rationalizes the physical encounter. "The fight between good and evil is actually an abstract process," Plank begins. "True, to become a narrative it has to be incarnated—but in so much torn flesh? One would think it could be done, without blunting the point
of the story, on some level closer to the intrapsychic struggle it really is. Physicality is precisely the point of the story, however: it is not "quite irrelevant to the spiritual issue," as Ransom mistakenly suggests (p. 164), nor is it a mere image, symbol, or narrative expedient; rather, it is that moral struggle. In *Miracles*, Lewis writes: "Certain spiritual gifts are offered us only on condition that we perform certain bodily acts. After that we cannot really be in doubt of His intention. To shrink back from all that can be called Nature into negative spirituality is as if we ran away from horses instead of learning to ride" (p. 194). Ransom himself comes to realize the moral integrity of the physical attack against the Un-man; let us not do less. After all, as Tor and Tinidril predict, Deep Heaven's final attack against the Bent One and his eldila will be physical warfare on a cosmic scale.

In one sense Ransom's decision to kill the Un-man is climactic. It does not follow that the actual fight and the rest of the novel are anti-climactic, however, just as the unalterable fixity of a future act does not mean that the fate of a world is already comfortably secured. This is the lesson of quiddity that *Perelandra* continually teaches: only the actual is real. The novel's narrative tension continues to build even after Ransom's existential dilemma has been resolved, because the resolution itself is indefinite, requiring Ransom's commitment to a certain action with an uncertain outcome. The agonizing decision which the King reaches, to obey Maleldil regardless of the Queen's actions,

similarly leaves him with a curious combination of direction and indeterminacy. "'He gave me no assurance. No fixed land. Always one must throw oneself into the wave'" (p. 242). Ransom's resolution likewise affords him little comfort, despite the Voice's encouragements. "The future was black as the night itself," we are told, and the Perelandrian night is a "seamless darkness," as Ransom considers, "not like night but like being in a coal-cellar, darkness in which his own hand held before his face was totally invisible" (p. 167 and p. 48).

The authenticity of a story written in the incarnational language comes not from its sequentiality, but from its Authorial inspiration. That is, assurance and solidity are got from a vertical line of reference, not horizontal. The light which is spiritual is in the darkness that is temporal. This concept is figured in Ransom's early speculation about Perelandra's geophysical nature. He considers that if Schiaparelli is right about the planet revolving on herself only once every solar year, one could conceivably stand near the frontier between the perpetually dark and sunned sides and look into everlasting day and night (p. 27). Certainly Ransom has had a similar experience en route to and from Malacandra: "There was an endless night on one side of the ship and an endless day on the other: each was marvellous" (Planet, p. 34). Although Ransom's conjecture about Perelandrian geophysics proves false, the chiaroscuro motif continues to haunt the trilogy. As the light of Deep Heaven "cast shadows as sharp as a floodlight" in the Malacandrian story (Planet, p. 32), so Ransom can stand in the brief Perelandrian twilight and look over his shoulder to see "the whole island ablaze with blue, and across it and beyond it, even to the ends of the world, his own enormous shadow" (Perelandra, p. 48).
Light is the living reality, but dark is concomitant with light in both Deep Heaven and Perelandra. On Perelandra, there is little moderation between light and dark as the sun sets rapidly: Ransom describes "the day . . . burning to death" (p. 48). Within the microcosm of the spaceship in Deep Heaven, nights and days are even more abrupt as they alternate with the mere turning of a door-handle. Light and dark are the stark realities of a vertical orientation, as opposed to the shadowy realities of an horizontal orientation. As the blackness of Deep Heaven is "undimensioned, enigmatic," and "far more emphatic and palpable than it showed on Earth" (Planet, p. 35), so the blackness of Perelandra is "absolute . . ., the undimensioned, the impenetrable, pressing on . . . [the] eyeballs" (Perelandra, p. 48; tense changed). In the "undimensioned" blackness of Deep Heaven, Ransom lies "stretched naked on his bed, a second Danaé," wholly delighting in the remembrance of "'sweet influence' pouring or even stabbing into his surrendered body" (Planet, p. 35). In Perelandra's "seamless darkness," it seems that Ransom lies once more in this "womb of worlds":

The darkness was warm. Sweet new scents came stealing out of it. The world had no size now. Its boundaries were the length and breadth of his own body and the little patch of soft fragrance which made his hammock, swaying ever more and more gently. Night covered him like a blanket and kept all loneliness from him. The blackness might have been his own room. Sleep came like a fruit which falls into the hand almost before you have touched the stem. (Perelandra, pp. 48-49)

This chiaroscuro motif is a tandem image of the little death involved in throwing oneself to the wave, and of one's consequent ability to walk on water. It diagrams the lack of immediate assurance afforded
by one's response to responsibility. Indeed, the dark and light coordinates of the chiaroscuro motif model the death and life pattern of baptism. "'The highest does not stand without the lowest,'" nor the brightest without the blackest. The stark contrast of light and dark figures the sacramental language: its most fluent expression corresponds to the greatest death, as does the "sweetest influence" to the greatest "stab," and the most heightened sense of cosmic immediacy to the least grasp of sequential continuity.

The chiaroscuro motif images the principle which allows the book's thematic climax to occur before its narrative peak, and the subsequent tale to unfold without an anticlimactic sense of deflation. Because "'the highest does not stand without the lowest,'" the thematic climax of Ransom's epiphany is appropriately followed by a dramatically darkened narrative. If Ransom has till now been buoyed in a world with a peculiar vertical orientation, he now plunges down its vertical axis, depth after depth, into the Perelandrian nether regions, before finally ascending to its topmost heights. Admittedly he has enjoyed great spiritual insights, but only in the anguish of his Gethsemane hour. Moreover, his future at best remains as black as the night. Ransom fully expects to lose his conflict with the Un-man in an agony of torn flesh.

*Perelandra*'s chiaroscuro theme and structure are imaged in Tinidril and Tor's analogy of needing to bite through a thick rind before reaching the sweet flesh of a fruit (p. 255). In contrast, Weston considers the "'thin little rind of what we call life'" to be the mere prelude to a greater horror, an eternal descent "'into the inner darkness: under the rind'" (p. 192). His hellish vision continues: "'Inside, what do you get? Darkness, worms, heat, pressure, salt, suffocation, stink'" (p. 194).
The Great Hymn affirms that "'there seems no centre,'" but only "'because it is all centre'":

"All that is made seems planless to the darkened mind, because there are more plans than it looked for... There seems no plan because it is all plan..."

"Yet this seeming also is the end and final cause for which He spreads out Time so long and Heaven so deep; lest if we never met the dark, and the road that leads no-whither, and the question to which no answer is imaginable, we should have in our minds no likeness of the Abyss of the Father, into which if a creature drop down his thoughts for ever he shall hear no echo return to him." (p. 251)

We know suffering only that we may know its opposite. The sacramental language expresses truth, but not without the darkness that is inherent in its chiaroscuro nature, unavoidable in a fallen world. Lewis introduces the reader to a new home in the bright world of myth, but like the Perelandrian night which "might have been... [Ransom's] own room," it coincides with an "impenetrable" blackness. Although Ransom finds a paradisal refuge on the planet, its doorway is a coffin, a darkly "narrow house."

"We must let go our daylight convictions and trust ourselves to be guided by dark figures." Thus, we follow our guide Ransom in "a fantastic chase" as he himself pursues a dark figure, "in and out of the lights and shadows and up and down the slowly moving ridges and valleys" (Perelandra, p. 178). With Ransom, we wrestle the Un-man in terror and danger, only to be dragged into the ocean depths and grotesque recesses of an underwater cavern. As Ransom grapples with the shadowy figure, he might be fighting Darkness itself. Whether his opponent is actually Weston, or a demon inhabiting Weston's body, however, "has in the
long run no clear significance," because evil lacks integral differentiation (p. 198). "There was, no doubt, a confusion of persons in damnation . . . . They were melted down into their Master, as a lead soldier slips down and loses his shape in the ladle held over the gas ring," Ransom speculates (p. 198). "Evil is a parasite, not an original thing," Lewis says in *Mere Christianity* (pp. 36-37). Its solipsism is the opposite of Perelandrian quiddity:

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

MacDonald tells Lewis in *The Great Divorce* (pp. 113-14; emphasis added). Ransom fights against all Darkness in his battle, but it is a self-destructive conglomerate which has already been defeated in the cosmic order.

Nevertheless, for the present moment the darkness of evil remains a real threat with which to contend. "I freely admit that real Christianity (as distinct from Christianity-and-water) goes much nearer to Dualism than people think," Lewis writes in *Mere Christianity*. "One of the things that surprised me when I first read the New Testament seriously was that it talked so much about a Dark Power in the universe" (p. 37). Even the blackness of the cavern in which Ransom is entrapped is so absolute as to be all but a character or entity in its own right, even though like evil it too is literally nothing. Its "perfect blackness" entices Ransom to strain his eyes against it, and so "creates phantom
lights and colours" (p. 202; tense changed). "By a curious confusion of mind he found it impossible not to imagine that the slope he walked on was not merely dark, but black in its own right, as if with soot. He felt that his feet and hands must be blackened by touching it" (p. 202). Indeed, learning to trust the wave and walk on water in this region requires navigating an ink so palpable that Ransom stubs his toe on it.

Ransom does learn to negotiate the darkness, however, scaling sheer rock faces in his "mere hunger for light," and assuaging his thirst at every water source he encounters (p. 205; emphasis added). Unlike the damned who cannot "open . . . their mouths for food," Ransom tastes the sacramental language. Finally, he perceives "a very dim, tiny, quivering luminosity, slightly red in colour" (p. 204). He must initially assume it is an hallucination, but is overjoyed to discover light coming through a fissure. Even "the very first glance at the funnel restored dimensions and perspective to his world, and this in itself was like delivery from prison" (p. 205). Ransom's journey through darkness finally begins to reward his progress, for he succeeds in climbing up through the funnel, reaching a huge underground cavern filled with firelight from a burning abyss.

Unfortunately, the Un-man also crawls into the cavern, reappearing one last time before Ransom destroys him forever. Curiously, as he takes the conclusive action of hurling Weston's body into the firepit below, a giant earth-crawler which has followed the Un-man into the cavern loses all of its horror for Ransom. Indeed, Ransom's childhood phobia "about insects and reptiles died that moment," even as the giant beetle turns "laboriously round" and descends "into the hole by which it had come" (p. 209). "Apparently it had all, even from the beginning, been a dark
enchantment. . . . He saw at once that the creature intended him no harm—had indeed no intentions at all. . . . Ransom almost laughed" (p. 209). The inherent joy of following one's own story has finally released Ransom. Where another man in the pit of darkness once cried, "The horror, the horror!" Ransom can exclaim, "But where had the horror gone?" (p. 209). Refreshing himself a final time from the cavern's stream, the voyageur of Deep Heaven can lie down to a peaceful sleep, having arrived at the last leg of his journey.

The rest of Ransom's journey continues to reveal the quiddity of the sacramental language. Because the living moment is real, Ransom's "actual moment of decision" to carry on is subordinated in his own memory to the "pictures" of his ascent, which "come back in a chaotic, disjointed fashion" (p. 210). For example, Ransom remembers viewing a regal procession of giant earth-beetles and realizing anew the quiddity of the cosmic story: how it is "'incorrigibly plural'" in its composition, and how one must strictly follow one's own story line. Suddenly, Ransom's journey out of the subterranean depths is over and he attains his full freedom:

And so, after more strangeness and grandeur and labour than I can tell, there came a moment when his feet slid without warning on clay—a wild grasp—a spasm of terror—and he was spluttering and struggling in deep, swift-flowing water. He thought that even if he escaped being battered to death against the walls of the channel he would presently plunge along with the stream into the pit of fire. . . . He lay helpless, in the end, rushing forward through echoing darkness. (pp. 211-12; emphases added)

In both diction and circumstance the incident suggests baptism. The
motif completes itself when Ransom is "rushed out into broad daylight and air and warmth, and rolled head over heels, and deposited, dazzled and breathless, in the shallows of a great pool" (p. 212; emphasis added).

At this point the chiaroscuro pattern bears its fruit. As Danaë was impregnated by Zeus in the form of a shower of gold, so Ransom once lay in the light of the "womb of worlds," being stabbed by "the palest of all imaginable golds," and feeling "his body and mind daily rubbed and scoured and filled with new vitality" (Planet, p. 32 and p. 35). The golden light of Perelandra now furnishes a fruition no less wondrous, after having cast shadows as dark as Deep Heaven's blackness. Having accomplished his harrowing of hell, as it were, Ransom enjoys a "long Sabbath" reposing on "sweet blue turf" (Perelandra, p. 213 and p. 212). "There were rich clusters of a grape-like fruit glowing under the little pointed leaves, and he could reach them without getting up. Eating passed into sleeping by a transition he could never remember" (pp. 212-13). Ransom fully tastes the incarnational language, knowing "a second infancy, in which he was breast-fed by the planet Venus herself: unweaned till he moved from that place" (p. 213). Ransom lives in a timeless present, for "neither the future nor the past really concerned him at this period" (p. 215). His desire is one with his having, for "wishing and fearing were modes of consciousness for which he seemed to have lost the faculty" (p. 215). The paradisal existence consummates Ransom's chiaroscuro experience and gloriously heralds man's destiny.

After a convalescence of perhaps days, although judging by the standard of Earth's less propitious habitat "it must have been more like a fortnight or three weeks," Ransom is well enough to begin walking around (p. 213). He then discovers the bleeding wound in his heel which
has been inflicted by the Un-man's jaws. The wound recalls Genesis iii: 15b: "He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel" (N.A.S.V.). Although Ransom is not an allegory of Christ, but an instance of Maleldil working through the willing human form, such Christ-like parallels are deliberate and unmistakable. It is significant, for example, that Ransom is able to renew his journey on the third full day after he begins walking around.

"Ready for adventures," Ransom sets out on his remarkable trek through the Perelandrian mountains (p. 217). Its unsurpassable beauties and joys celebrate timeless quiddity once more: "He was not lonely nor afraid. He had no desires and did not even think about reaching the top nor why he should reach it. To be always climbing this was not, in his present mood, a process but a state, and in that state of life he was content" (p. 221). So effortless is the climb that it occurs to Ransom he has died. This of course suggests the baptism and chiaroscuro motifs once again. The wound in his heel, however, convinces Ransom that he is still alive, although the sensation of life after death persists. "If it had been so indeed, and these had been trans-mortal mountains, his journey could hardly have been more great and strange" (p. 221; emphasis added). This experience of trans-sensual pleasures in Perelandra's unfallen realm anticipates the New Creation's transvaluation of material realities, a favourite theme of Lewis'. In later trying to communicate the essence of his experience to MacPhee, Ransom exclaims impatiently, "'Oh, don't you see, you ass, that there's a difference between a trans-sensuous life and a non-sensuous life?'" (p. 35).

The pinnacle of Ransom's experience occurs when he has climbed above the dense mists to find himself "so high that the concave of the sea
seemed to close him in on every side but one" (p. 222). There he sees the rose-red peaks, the two nearest of which stand sentinel to the secret place beyond:

He began to feel a strange mixture of sensations—a sense of perfect duty to enter that secret place which the peaks were guarding combined with an equal sense of trespass. He dared not go up that pass: he dared not do otherwise. He looked to see an angel with a flaming sword: he knew that Maleldil bade him go on. "This is the holiest and the most unholy thing I have ever done," he thought; but he went on. (p. 222)

Ransom has, as it were, been granted access to the Holy of Holies, where the ground is carpeted with flowers "shaped something like a lily but tinted like a rose" (p. 222). This combination is significant: the lily is traditionally a funerary as well as an Easter flower, and thus an emblem of the death that leads to life. As an emblem of love, the rose might further evoke the kinds of death traditionally associated with love. This meaning is redoubled as we hear the famous words of the Canticle's love-song, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."  

The spiritual application of the Song of Songs, the Christian and Moslem mystical traditions, and New Testament teaching all cast human love as a picture of divine-human love. We are already familiar with human love as an emblem of the sacramental language, by virtue of its intimate conjunction of material and immaterial. Associating love with the image of the lily, and its pattern of death and life, reveals a new depth in its role of symbolic expression, however. That is, love's

7 Bible, Song. Sol. ii: 1. (K.J.V.)
relationship of male and female models the relationship of nature and supernature, by requiring the sacrificial transposition of the greater into the lesser, and the yielding submission of the lesser to the greater. From the ashes of their union the two rise as one strong phoenix, even as nature and supernature merge in mythology.

Symbolically, the rose-tinted, lily-shaped flowers bespeak love's assimilation of the death-life pattern. Their symbolic function is directly transposed into the drama of the narrative. For example, the flowers are so thickly planted in the valley that Ransom cannot avoid crushing them with his heels as he goes. Their 'death' is exchanged for his 'life,' however, for their rose-tinted abundance provides him with a carpet of comfort in which his bleeding heel leaves no trace. Significantly, it is these flowers which Tor and Tinidril use to protect Ransom's face from the burning sun on his return journey to Thulcandra, but which Humphrey and Lewis mistake for his "ruin and blood" when they first open the coffin (p. 32). These same friends then admire the flowers' exquisite beauty, but are unable to salvage the delicate blooms which are already withering.

In all this exchange of life and death, a new aspect of the chiaroscuro motif comes to the fore, that is, its profound principle of Vicariousness. "And this Vicariousness--no less than Death and Rebirth"--is universally entrenched, says Lewis (Miracles, p. 143). Thus, Ransom fights for his own life, but in the process also wins life for a planet and a race. In turn, the rose-tinted flowers of the habitat he has saved sacrifice themselves to succour his wound and to expedite his homeward journey. "'It is the Law. The best fruits are plucked for each by some hand that is not his own,'" the Lady explains. "'All is
gift. . . . Through many hands, enriched with many different kinds of love and labour, the gift comes to me!" (p. 241). "[God] seems to do nothing of Himself which He can possibly delegate to His creatures," Lewis concludes in "The Efficacy of Prayer." 8

In his essay "Triadic Patterns," Zogby confirms our discovery that "the traditional understanding of the effectiveness of the Sacrament of Baptism is certainly being given the priority" in Lewis' writing. 9 Those to whom the Creator would give life and delegate His life-giving power must first follow the dark path of obedience. "The downward ascent" is Lewis' "key metaphor," Zogby explains, and the ransoming of man's capacity for the Tao-Christ is his "representative anecdote" (p. 24). As Ransom enacts such an anecdote, obediently struggling with death to win new life for himself and a planet, Perelandra's chiaroscuro elements and vertical orientation indeed portray a downward ascent. Zogby follows us in attributing this sacramental pattern to "the downward ascent of the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ, the Evangelium" (p. 24). Zogby also follows us in tracing the source of this "familiar pattern" of descent and re-ascent not "simply to the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ," but ultimately to "the total pattern, of which they are only the turning point" (Miracles, p. 135 and p. 136). As Lewis says, "the real Death and Re-birth . . . [is] this huge descent and re-ascension in which God dredged the salt and oozy bottom of Creation"


9 "Triadic Patterns," p. 22; the next four paragraphs are largely given to explaining Zogby's propositions.
(Miracles, p. 136). Therefore "the Evangelium story of the tragic Creator and Redeemer is the main subject of Lewis's fiction," Zogby concludes (p. 24).

Indeed, our view of Lewis' conjunctive natural supernaturalism, whereby the greater descends into the lesser and the two rise together as a composite entity, proves to comprise the triadic relationship which Zogby identifies as the foundational structure of Lewis' fiction in all its patternings. Coinciding opposites are reconciled in polar tension to produce a third thing, he outlines. We remember Lewis' disappointment at the marriage of myth and fact in the Christ-event, until he recognized that myth was not compromised by its submission to fact, but rather enriched by its relational status, and fulfilled in the mutual submission of polar tension. "When polarities remain simply two poles without a relationship of coinciding opposition, no marriage or union is possible," Zogby explains (p. 36). His words echo our discussion of the centrality of the marital motif, and recall Lewis' representation of the universe as "married pairs of sensibles and insensibles." Lewis characterizes creation "by the archetype of gender," says Zogby; "gender is where he focuses on the masculine and the feminine in polar tension" (p. 24). Zogby's triadic analysis coincides with our own application of the marital schema to Lewisian natural supernaturalism. Zogby writes:

For Lewis, the pattern is first in God the Creator, then in creation. In this pattern the polar opposition between Creator and creation means that the Masculine is Masculine because it is in relation to the Feminine, and the Feminine is Feminine because it is placed in relation to the Masculine. Thus the bottom line for Lewis is that suffering has to be the main mode of transposition for both the Masculine and the Feminine. The Creator is a tragic Creator and Redeemer because He had to
relate, submit to creation and suffer out of love . . . Without submission creation could not receive the Masculine. Likewise, unless the Feminine submits to the Masculine in obedience, its own ability to share in the qualities of the Masculine, of begetting and bearing, would never result. (pp. 37-38)

The outcome of this relationship between Masculine and Feminine is "the central man," that whole creature which so many critics have applauded in Lewis himself. As the "third thing" in Zogby's triadic schema, the central man represents another facet of natural supernaturalism which is consummated in the Christ-event. "Through Incarnation the coinciding opposites are in perpetual tension but unified by personality," Zogby explains; "the Masculine and the Feminine co-inhere without one taking over the other" (pp. 27-28; emphases added). Zogby further suggests that the trilogy "as a trilogy . . . is an exploration on a grand scale of this archetype of gender," comprising "a complete triad which celebrates the central man" (p. 25 and p. 27). Out of the Silent Planet is the story of a pre-Christian, dying world, he outlines, "governed by the archon Malacandra, who represents the Masculine per se but is not to be confused with God, the absolute Masculine" (p. 25). Perelandra is the story of "a planet on the brink of new life, . . . under the guardianship of the archon Perelandra, who is the Feminine per se" (p. 25). Both stories culminate in That Hideous Strength, the account of a restored world that is under the authority of "the central man," namely Maleldil in his Thulcandran Incarnation and his legacy of a redeemed species.

Zogby's theory of gender can be further applied in microcosm to the closing pages of Perelandra. As Ransom proceeds into the Holy of Holies,
for example, he finds "a valley pure rose-red, with ten or twelve of the
glowing peaks about it, and in the centre a pool, married in pure
unrippled clearness to the gold of the sky" (Perelandra, p. 222;
emphasis added). The pool married to "the gold of the sky" recalls
Ransom's experience as a second Danaë, yielded to the golden light of Deep
Heaven. The generally evocative language recalls the strongly symbolic
imagery of Ransom's first sight of Meldilorn in Out of the Silent Planet:

The beauty of this new handramit as it opened before him took his breath away. . . . Right below him lay an almost circular lake—a sapphire twelve miles in diameter set in a border of purple forest. Amidst the lake there rose like a low and gently sloping pyramid, or like a woman's breast, an island of pale red, smooth to the summit, and on the summit a grove of such trees as man had never seen. Their smooth columns had the gentle swell of the noblest beech-trees: but these were taller than a cathedral spire on earth, and at their tops, they broke rather into flower than foliage; into golden flower bright as tulip, still as rock, and huge as summer cloud. Flowers indeed they were, not trees, and far down among their roots he caught a pale hint of slab-like architecture. He knew before his guide told him that this was Meldilorn. . . . But he had not looked for anything quite so classic, so virginal, as this bright grove—lying so still, so secret, in its coloured valley, soaring with inimitable grace so many hundred feet into the wintry sunlight. (Planet, pp. 118-19)

Having sketched the "archetype of gender" in a static portrait, Perelandra goes on to paint a more dynamic polarity. Moving into the crater between the rose peaks, Ransom sees the two archons themselves appear in their visible glory:

He has said that Malacandra was like rhythm and Perelandra like melody. He has said that Malacandra affected him like a quantitative, Perelandra like an accentual, metre. . . . At all events what Ransom saw at that moment was the real meaning of gender. . . .
Gender is a reality, and a more fundamental reality than sex. Sex is, in fact, merely the adaptation to organic life of a fundamental polarity which divides all created beings. . . . Masculine and Feminine meet us on planes of reality where male and female would be simply meaningless. (Perelandra, p. 230)

Out of such a profound polarity Lewis effects a wondrous marriage. The product of its fruitful tension, which Lewis honours as the supreme composite union, is "the third thing" in the triadic scheme of gender. Man is the glory of that triadic relationship.

Moreover, because Maleldil has honoured the human form in His Thulcandran Incarnation, the animal rationale has been forever elected over all other species, Zogby adds (p. 28). It is because Maleldil once suffered Gethsemane in His human form that Ransom must undergo his own Gethsemane hour:

He could not understand why Maleldil should remain absent when the Enemy was there in person. . . . "Where is Maleldil's representative?"

The answer which came back to him, quick as a fencer's or a tennis player's riposte, out of the silence and the darkness, almost took his breath away. It seemed Blasphemous. . . . That miracle on the right side, which he had demanded, had in fact occurred. He himself was the miracle. (pp. 159-60; boldface print emphasis added)

Zogby explains that "the ransoming of Perelandra and Thulcandra from the power of the Bent One is done through men who, because of their Christian baptism, are also Maleldil" (p. 28). In Miracles Lewis elaborates:

This doctrine of a universal redemption spreading outwards from the redemption of Man, mythological as it will seem to modern minds, is in reality far more philosophical than any theory which holds that God, having once entered Nature, should leave her, and leave her substantially unchanged, or that the glorification of one creature could be realised
without the glorification of the whole system.
(p. 149; emphasis added)

It is therefore literally true that "if the issue lay in Maleldil's hands, Ransom and the Lady were those hands." With awed fear and trembling Ransom realizes that man is the fulcrum of the universe. "'Look on him, beloved, and love him,'" says Malacandra to Perelandra. "'He is indeed but breathing dust and a careless touch would unmake him. And in his best thoughts there are such things mingled as, if we thought them, our light would perish. But he is in the body of Maleldil and his sins are forgiven'" (pp. 223-24; emphasis added).

Although the archons have finally been revealed to Ransom in all the splendour of their polar identities, Lewis now has Ransom think of them "no more as Malacandra and Perelandra" (p. 231). Rather, because man is the glory of Maleldil, Ransom's terrestrial point of view takes precedence: "He called them by their Tellurian names. With deep wonder he thought to himself, 'My eyes have seen Mars and Venus. I have seen Ares and Aphrodite'" (p. 231). These pagan archetypes then "undergo their own Christian conversion," Zogby proposes; the archons live on but only as subjects of the human King and Queen ("Triadic Patterns," p. 28). "The very elaborate ritual in which the angels hand over the rule of that planet to the humans" shows "that the 'angelocracy' pictured on Mars is . . . a thing of the past: the Incarnation has made a difference," Lewis writes.10 Supernature has married nature to produce the animal rationale, in whom the archetypes of gender have been fulfilled. The "central man" now occupies the apex of that triangle.

10 "A Reply to Professor Haldane," in Of Other Worlds, p. 78.
Because man is the elected species, the reigning species of Maleldil's new Perelandrian creation is also molded in the human form, for "God never undoes anything but evil, never does good to undo it again," Lewis says (Miracles, p. 149). "Be still," say the archons, bowing down before the King and Queen as "Paradise itself in its two Persons, Paradise walking hand in hand," appears in the valley between the rose peaks (Perelandra, p. 234 and p. 235). Tor and Tinidril seal the perfect union of nature and supernature, and their harmony of love is an emblem of all the meaning of the sacramental tongue. Ransom marvels that there is no discord in their contrast with the archons, that "the one did not seem rank nor the other spectral":

Animal rationale—an animal, yet also a reasonable soul: such, he remembered, was the old definition of Man. But he had never till now seen the reality. For now he saw this living Paradise, the Lord and the Lady, as the resolution of discord, the bridge that spans what would else be a chasm in creation, the keystone of the whole arch. By entering that mountain valley they had suddenly united the warm multitude of the brutes behind him with the transcorporeal intelligences at his side. They closed the circle, and with their coming all the separate notes of strength or beauty which that assembly had hitherto struck became one music. (p. 238)

"We were made to be . . . Men. Not beasts nor angels but Men—things at once rational and animal," proclaims the perfection of the triadic schema.

In characterizing this "central man," Zogby explains: "The cosmic result is that Man becomes the Feminine, receptive and expectant of the Divine Gift, which is the Presence of the Masculine God through the free, unilateral, and continuing gift of Himself to His creation" (p. 24). Thus, in his willingness to be Maleldil's representative on Perelandra,
Ransom has become a second Danaé. In sharing the wisdom of his experience with Jane, he says: "The masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it" (Strength, p. 391). Through his obedience on Perelandra, Ransom does receive the Divine gift of life, which in turn enables him to bestow life upon the Lady, and through her upon a multitude of descendants. Thus Perelandra's "Morning Day . . . is an annunciation scene," Zogby notes (p. 26). The King and Queen look forward to begetting and ruling an host of heirs, and delight in the prospect of eventually delegating their own increase of power and authority to their progeny. They also anticipate instructing the nobler of their beasts, making them "'so wise that they will become hnaú and speak,'" as the King says (p. 196). In the meantime the royal pair appoints "'full management'" of the natural dominion to the archon Perelandra, until their own skills can answer the demands of such a responsibility (p. 191). Thus the capacities for life-dealing and life-bearing rapidly redouble as the triadic pattern of gender comes to its fruition. As Tor says, in explaining to Tinidril the concepts which he believes Maleldil is passing to his own mind through hers: "'It may be that in this matter our natures are reversed and it is you who beget and I who bear'" (p. 243).

The lavish festival of life-dealing and life-bearing continues as Ransom returns to Thulcandra with a legacy of gender-in-polarity and its fruit, the central man. Marriage structures the very plot and theme of That Hideous Strength, while Ransom continues to receive and impart the Divine gift of life as he serves as Director of St. Anne's. The tiny bustling community which fights to save Britain from evil's conquest is
named for the "patroness of mothers," says Patrick Callahan, and "represents creation," according to Zogby (p. 27). In contrast to the propriety of such a feminine role, Weston has attempted to usurp Maleldil's Masculinity. Refusing to submit to the suffering of relationship, he has cared for the seed of "Life" only and nothing for its fertile fruition. "'He wants the creatures born from us to be in as many places as they can,'" Ransom tells us on Malacandra. "'He says he does not know what kind of creatures they will be. . . . And he says that though he doesn't know what will happen to the creatures sprung from us, he wants it to happen very much'" (Planet, p. 155). Where the fruitful submission of relationship is spurned, however, the seed must be sterile. That Hideous Strength, in which evil continues to oppose the cosmic union of gender-in-polarity, dramatically reveals the barrenness of rejected Femininity, and establishes the fecundity of sacramental relationships.

11 "The Two Gardens in C.S. Lewis's That Hideous Strength," in SF: The Other Side of Realism: Essays on Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction, ed. Thomas D. Clareson (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1971), p. 150; the article is cited hereafter as "Two Gardens."
Chapter IV

That Hideous Strength: Speaking the Language

We need no barbarous words nor solemn spell
To raise the unknown. It lies before our feet;
There have been men who sank down into Hell
In some suburban street,

And some there are that in their daily walks
Have met archangels fresh from sight of God,
Or watched how in their beans and cabbage-stalks
Long files of faerie trod.

C.S. Lewis, from "Our Daily Bread,"
Spirits in Bondage.

In a Letter, Lewis refers to the Wagnerian quality of Perelandra:
"You will see if you look, how operatic the whole building up of the
climax is" ("To Charles A. Brady," 29 Oct. 1944, 205). If Perelandra is
operatic, That Hideous Strength might be cast as a pageant, given its
panoply of characters and spectacle of action. The novel proceeds "as
straightforwardly as any saga," Gibbons quips, as Lewis brings myth home
right to our doorstep ("Imaginative Writing," p. 91). The timeless
vertical orientation of Perelandra reverts to an horizontal plane of
frenzied activity as Earth becomes the setting for cosmic drama. Having
learned the lingua franca of Deep Heaven, that is, Hlab-Eribol-ef-
Cordi or Old Solar, we test our fluency and its currency in the silent
world of Thulcandra.

Myth invades our everyday reality in the third novel, because as
Carnell says, "Lewis is attempting to do something which highlights his
view of the function of myth" (Bright Shadow, p. 104). Lewis not only brings his myth of Deep Heaven down to Tellus, but he also resurrects the terrestrial myths of Arthurian lore, weaving the variegated strands into one powerful contemporary story. Thus in modern-day Britain we see Merlin and Ransom, "the man who had been dug up out of the earth and the man who had been in outer space," converse freely together (Strength, p. 342). "And now, the moment they met, here were the two of them, run together like two drops of quicksilver," Jane marvels (p. 342). The anachronism serves to amplify the quiddity of myth, which becomes literal fact in Lewis' fictional framework. Indeed, the disparate mythologies which are conjoined as the planetary deities descend and Merlin is raised up into the Tellurian arena are further consolidated when those deities actually indwell Merlin. Greater extremes are united in his person than in Ransom's, notwithstanding the latter's roles as Fisher-King, Pendragon, and voyageur of Deep Heaven. Merlin is yet another "central man," and the triadic basis of natural supernaturalism continues to be the recipe by which Lewis mixes his elixir of nectar, ambrosia and tea. The concoction proves to loosen tongues marvellously, for the swell of the sacramental language is most voluble in Strength, where all the morphemes of the preceding novels appear.

Lewis ascribes the "serious 'point'" of this "'tall story' about devilry" to the concerns he puts forward in The Abolition of Man, and most critics duly supply synopses of the treatise in their examinations of the novel (Pref., Strength, p. 7). While such a focus is valid, however, That Hideous Strength is most effective as it gathers together all the previous themes of the trilogy. In "The Two Gardens," Callahan
calls the novel "a coda that unites and expands all the themes developed before" (p. 148). Such comprehensiveness might be overwhelming but for the strict parallelism of structure which orders the novel. In a graphic diagram of good and evil, Strength's narrative is divided almost incident for incident between the two camps of St. Anne's and Belbury. The company at St. Anne's comprises voluntary members who, to varying degrees of fluency, speak the sacramental language and savour its living unity of matter and spirit. Only MacPhee, the honest skeptic, trusts to reason alone in his fiery defiance of imagination and supernature. Nevertheless, his office is an important one, Ransom tells us (p. 224), and offsets that of Belbury's Frost, who coldly reduces all thought to "mere" chemistry, as Kilby points out ("Creative Logician," p. 29).

Opposing St. Anne's is the Belbury group, ironically known under the trite acronym, N.I.C.E., for the "National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments." Its adherents are puppets rather than true members, being prisoners first of their own fears and passions, and ultimately of the N.I.C.E. system.¹ They speak no common language, for Belbury's is an atmosphere of backbiting, blackmail, misunderstanding and insinuation. Malacandra's observation about Thulcandra in general might well apply to Belbury in particular: "'I have heard the prisoners there talking in their divided tongues'" (Perelandra, p. 224). Every inhabitant is locked into the alienating rhetoric of an individual passion, and the Belbury company is drawn together only in their common need to erect a tower of Babel to their pride. Divided among themselves, none understands the

¹ Gibson, in his chapter on That Hideous Strength in Spinner of Tales, writes a fine essay comparing the two camps in terms of true and spurious membership.
other because every utterance is divorced from meaning.

Imagination, we remember, is the organ of meaning. Meaning is inversely proportional to the assumption of one's own literalness, because language is radically dependent on metaphor. Belbury disdains metaphor, however, giving ear only to the ostensible literalness of its abstract and pseudo-scientific jargon. None of the Belbury clan values the imagination nor has any unitive sensibility. On the other hand, by Feverstone's own admission the Bracton "'Die-hards,'" as he refers to the St. Anne's collegians, do have "'a clear idea'" which "'they follow . . . out consistently,'" but which Feverstone ironically dismisses as "'unrealistic'" and "'mere fantasy'" (p. 38 and p. 43; emphasis added). It is at the nation's self-adjudged intellectual centre, however, that words are "unrealistic" and divorced from thought, as Wither's case makes manifestly clear. His rambling politeness, vague mumblings, and detached manner add up to no more than a string of ominously hollow sounds: "'Oh . . . as to being committed,' said Wither, 'in some sense . . . ignoring certain fine shades for the moment, while fully recognizing their ultimate importance . . . I should not hesitate . . . we should be perfectly justified'" (p. 339).

The forces of evil grant language no more than a utilitarian value, as Ransom has witnessed in the Un-man's brilliant performance:

It showed plenty of subtlety and intelligence when talking to the Lady; but Ransom soon perceived that it regarded intelligence simply and solely as a weapon, which it had no more wish to employ in its off-duty hours than a soldier has to do bayonet practice when he is on leave. Thought was for it a device necessary to certain ends, but thought in itself did not interest it. It assumed reason as externally and inorganically as it had assumed Weston's body. The moment the Lady was out
Feverstone evinces a similarly mercenary attitude, both towards words and "'the people one has to use for getting things done'" (Strength, p. 43). He flatters Mark as "'a trained sociologist with a radically realistic outlook,'" meaning that he can be schooled in the art of linguistic manipulation and camouflagic journalism (p. 47; emphasis added). As Ransom later tells Merlin, "'They have an engine called the Press whereby the people are deceived'" (p. 361). In coaching Mark, Feverstone puts his position forward:

"For instance, if it were even whispered that the N.I.C.E. wanted powers to experiment on criminals, you'd have all the old women of both sexes up in arms and yapping about humanity: call it re-education of the maladjusted and you have them all slobbering with delight that the brutal era of retributive punishment has at last come to an end. Odd thing it is--the word 'experiment' is unpopular, but not the word 'experimental.' You mustn't experiment on children: but offer the dear little kiddies free education in an experimental school attached to the N.I.C.E. and it's all correct!" (pp. 47-48)

Such imbalance and myopia on the part of Belbury's members represents in microcosm what is true of Belbury as a whole and of evil in general. Belbury's split ranks and ultimate collapse simply mirror the lack of holism within its members. The narrative's balance of incidents between St. Anne's and Belbury also diagrams this self-destructive vacuity of evil: the parallelism graphically portrays a moral cosmos in which "evil is a parasite, not an original thing," existing only as a negation of the good and true. As Glover says, "perversion is . . . the keynote of the parallelism which acts as the structure of the book" (Enchantment, p. 113). In a host of details Belbury is seen to be the
warped imitation of St. Anne's, acting as a direct foil to good. It preys upon Edgestow and ultimately devours even its own foundations, toppling its tower of pride. The yawning blackness which swallows the N.I.C.E. edifice in the apocalyptic earthquakes provides a fitting conclusion both thematically and imagistically to a tale of vacuous self-destruction.

One immediately striking feature of *Strength* besides its terrestrial setting is Ransom's new peripheral position in the plot. Glover reads the development as a weakness, complaining that "Ransom becomes like Weston, an unman," and that he "has passed beyond the realm of ordinary action, . . . operating above the level of most of the book's action and guiding it rather than participating in it" (*Enchantment*, p. 110). Walsh too finds Ransom "a shade ghostly, almost as though he were pure spirit temporarily caught in the confines of a body."² Both these analyses, however, contradict the profound impact which Ransom's physical vibrancy has on Jane:

Jane looked; and instantly her world was unmade.

On a sofa before her, with one foot bandaged as if he had a wound, lay what appeared to be a boy, twenty years old.

. . . . All the light in the room seemed to run towards the gold hair and the gold beard of the wounded man.

Of course he was not a boy——how could she have thought so? The fresh skin on his forehead and cheeks and, above all, on his hand, had suggested the idea. But no boy could have so full a beard. And no boy could be so strong. She had expected to see an invalid. Now it was manifest that the grip of those

² *The Literary Legacy of C.S. Lewis* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanich, 1979), p. 120; cited hereafter as *Literary Legacy*.
hands would be inescapable, and imagination suggested that those arms and shoulders could support the whole house. (pp. 171-72)

Ransom is hardly ghostly and unreal, or lacking in strong individuality; rather, he is too real for our comfort and "'too definite for language.'" Certainly he has passed to a new level of being as a result of his extraterrestrial experience, but he is simply growing towards his destiny as a true animal rationale, approaching trans-mortality rather than sub-mortality. As Callahan more astutely observes, "He is what Ransom has become" ("Two Gardens," p. 151). In his overwhelming personhood Ransom is indeed a myth-like figure, but "what flows into you from the myth is . . . reality," we remember. Neither abstract nor confined to particular experience, myth claims to be only itself: "gleams of celestial strength and beauty," as Ransom understands in Perelandra (p. 232). Ransom figures these qualities of myth in his capacity as a concrete instance of Lewis' conception of mythology; he embodies the fiction's dialectic. The philologist who mastered the sacramental tongue of Old Solar has himself become a morpheme in its system, an incarnation of the incarnational language. He even feeds on sacramental food: in the manner of another myth-become-fact Figure before him, bread and wine are the nectar and ambrosia which he is served for his tea.

The narrative shift of focus away from Ransom does not diminish the protagonist's stature; it is simply in keeping with the dynamics and theme of the trilogy. It is consistent with the novel's change of setting and with Lewis' wish to entrench us in ordinary reality. Callahan says that "Ransom has journeyed to the unfallen worlds of Mars and Venus to achieve a kind of enlightenment, but it is to Earth that he must
return, and it is on Earth that his greatest battle must be fought" ("Two Gardens," p. 148). If Ransom has understood "that the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact . . . [is] purely terrestrial," Earth is the most obvious testing ground for that proposition. The validity of the sacramental language, with its conjunction of ordinary and extraordinary, will be tried in the crucible of the commonplace. The "humdrum scenes and persons" with which the novel begins conform to "the traditional fairy-tale" method of assuming the local and familiar elements comprising our everyday reality, Lewis writes in his Preface to Strength (p. 7).

Because the gods have paid tribute to the human King and Queen on Perelandra, it is further imperative that we leave the exotic climes of Deep Heaven and return to the native territory of central man. That Hideous Strength turns our attention toward the animal rationale en habitat. In particular, our focus is trained on Mark and Jane, whose representative role is underscored by their stereotyped names. The pair replaces Ransom as the character interest of the story because their status as a married couple embodies the dialectic of the sacramental theme. That is, Mark and Jane's evolving relationship repeats in microcosm the triadic structure of the sacramental language. Growing towards their own version of gender-in-polarity, Mark and Jane ultimately produce "the third thing": an archetypal marriage relationship, with its potential for offspring. Nevertheless, the two have much to learn before attaining the fulness of that relationship.

Ransom, on the other hand, has a good deal to teach. Having returned to Tellus, the voyageur of Deep Heaven is not only meant to prove the temper of his own spiritual maturation, but is also to impart
that strength to the society around him. In response to the demands of goodness, he must share himself completely, relinquishing the last stronghold of his privacy. Ransom may have more of his own moral education ahead of him, but he is beyond the level where we would be able to perceive his progress. Instead, we watch him participate in the moral development of a spiritually younger generation, bequeathing them the wisdom of his experience. Thus, the trilogy's final novel moves from the moral and mythic journeys of its hero, to the society which that reeducated pilgrim reclaims.

In the novel's "notably brilliant" dialogue of a whole array of characters, we finally discover the context of speaking the sacramental language. Ransom has learned that he stands for Maleldil, but no more than "any man stands for Him in doing any good action." The point of view rightly shifts from the inner and outer drama of his individual consciousness, to the panoramic view of a whole cast of characters. If it might as well have been any other person as Ransom acting for Maleldil, we now see those other persons. If it might as well have been any other choice as that of Ransom to fight the Un-man, we now observe those choices being made, and interlocking with the effects of other decisions. Through the novel's swell of action, involving many disparate lives, we are able to understand the ever-widening impact of a single innocuous decision, spreading like the ripples of a pebble tossed into a pond. The Obedience which is so dear to Ransom's heart consequently becomes important to us too, as we are able to trace Britain's present hope for salvation back from its immediate source in St. Anne's-on-the-Hill, to the

3 Gibbons, "Imaginative Writing," p. 91.
moment when the Pedestrian stood on the road debating whether to ease an old woman's fears. In short, having returned to Earth with a cosmic perspective, we are newly able to appreciate the intrinsic significance of each character, action, and circumstance. With his readers thus prepared Lewis moves into a kaleidoscopic plot, and a milieu much closer to home than that of the previous novels.

Mark and Jane's marriage substructures the paralleled plot of the third novel, in which the marital motif functions rather as the chiaroscuro motif serves in *Perelandra*. *Strength* begins and ends with the Studdock marriage, but the contrast itself is of chiaroscuro starkness. The novel opens with conflict and misunderstanding: "'Matrimony was ordained, thirdly,' said Jane Studdock to herself, 'for the mutual society, help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other'" (p. 9; emphases added). The hollow irony which reflects the couple's empty relationship is gradually dissolved in a healing process, culminating in the royal epithalamium with which *Strength* closes. Mark and Jane are both in need of healing, for they suffer the same malady which has been an emblem of evil throughout the trilogy: the radical and arbitrary rupture of a composite unity. Disjunctive perception has induced myopia in both of them, blinding them to the spiritual meaning which invests the commonplace. "'Spirit and matter, certainly. That explains why people like the Studdocks find it so difficult to be happily married,'" Mother Dimble diagnoses (p. 350; emphasis added).

Aware only of a pseudo-transcendent reality, Mark and Jane are ignorant of the universal principle of transposition, whereby the greater descends into the lesser to draw it up into "the third thing." Like
Weston, Mark and Jane have come to value only the seed of life. They care nothing for its fruition, as evidenced by their barren marriage which Merlin chastises so severely in a rather comic episode. Rather than accept the suffering inherent in the productive relationship of gender-in-polarity, Mark and Jane have chosen to stand as equals. "'I thought love meant equality . . . and free companionship,'" Jane tells Ransom (p. 179). Mark and Jane have modelled their marriage as a partnership, abolishing the principle of headship and eradicating its corollary, submission. Indeed, given their naivété regarding hierarchical counterpoint, the pseudo-marital relationship of equality to which they have resorted is their best option, because "a dogmatic belief in objective value is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is not tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery," Lewis says. 4

By usurping the function of the Masculine and valuing only the seed of life, Mark and Jane have rendered it sterile. "'Equality guards life; it doesn't make it,'" Ransom warns Jane. "'No one has ever told you that obedience--humility--is an erotic necessity'" (p. 179). However, as Ransom once shied away from all claims against his person, so Jane furiously resents such intrusions into her privately made world. Her specifications for a tailor-made "Religion" clearly indicate her attitude: "Something civilised, or modern, or scholarly, or (of late) spiritual which did not want to possess her, which valued her for the odd collection of qualities she called 'herself,' something without hands that gripped and without demands upon her" (p. 316; emphases added).

The imposing supernature which Ransom describes to her is a completely unexpected and unwelcome alternative. Jane worries:

How if this invasion of her own being in marriage from which she had recoiled, often in the very teeth of instinct, were . . . the lowest, the first, and the easiest form of some shocking contact with reality which would have to be repeated--but in ever larger and more disturbing modes--on the highest levels of all? (p. 390)

Too familiar with its symptoms in his own past, Ransom gently diagnoses Jane's condition. "'We call it Pride,'" he chastises:

"You are offended by the masculine itself: the loud, irruptive, possessive thing--the gold lion, the bearded bull--which breaks through hedges and scatters the little kingdom of your primness . . . . The male you could have escaped, for it exists only on the biological level. But the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it." (pp. 390-91)

Already in Ransom's presence Jane has felt the vitality of the hierarchical principle, and has been alternately unwilling and unable to rally her usual self-sufficiency against it. "For her world was unmade: anything might happen now. . . . For all power of resistance seemed to have been drained away from her and she was left without protection" (pp. 173-74). Strangely won by this glowing specimen of the animal rationale, Jane glimpses the archetypal reality which underlies all hierarchical relationships. She comprehends the integrity of obeisance and deference through the respect which Ransom's authority commands in her. Through his whole physical demeanor, heraldic as it is of the true relations between matter and spirit, she also grasps the principle of the greater investing the lesser. Thus Jane is able to appreciate humbly,
and for the first time, her own physical existence and environment. "And for a little time Jane was hardly conscious of anything but peace and well-being, the comfort of her own body in the chair where she sat, and a sort of clear beauty in the colours and proportions of the room" (p. 177).

As Ransom gently but firmly expounds marital hierarchy to her, the restoration of the reigning Masculine releases the Feminine for submission, and the reinstatement of headship recovers the body which it rules. The sweetness of obedience steals over Jane's liberated senses with soporific allure, flooding her entire being:

The word obedience—but certainly not obedience to Mark—came over her, in that room and in that presence, like a strange oriental perfume, perilous, seductive, and ambiguous. . . .

"Stop it!" said the Director sharply.
Jane stared at him, open-mouthed. There were a few moments of silence during which the exotic fragrance faded away. (pp. 178-79; emphases added)

One suspects that, in the enthusiasm of Jane's first introduction to gender-in-polarity, the boldfaced, unchristened goddess of fertility, who later appears to her in a shameless vision, tries to sneak past Ransom in a mischievous attempt to overwhelm Jane now. Later in the novel, the Director himself is almost overcome in the similar presence of a christened but still relatively "neutral" figure from the past, Merlinus Ambrosius. As the Druid recites his ability to heal Ransom's wound, Ransom begins to succumb to his hypnotic power:

And in that deepening inner silence of which . . . [Merlin's] face bore witness, one might have believed that he listened continually to a murmur of evasive sounds; rustling of mice and stoats, thumping progression of frogs, the small shock of falling hazel nuts, creaking of branches, runnels trickling, the very growing of grass. The bear had closed its
eyes. The whole room was growing heavy with a sort of floating anaesthesia. "Through me," said Merlin, "you can suck up from the Earth oblivion of all pains."
"Silence," said the Director sharply. He had been sinking down into the cushions of his sofa with his head drooping a little towards his chest. Now he suddenly sat bolt upright. . . . The air of the room was cleared. Even the bear opened its eyes again. (p. 355; emphases added)

The remarkably similar diction of the two scenes consolidates their purpose, which is to show the sheer quiddity of nature, so overwhelming to our puny frames when not properly lodged in its sacramental framework, that even the Director is dangerously vulnerable.

For all the encouragement that Jane's newly-awakened instincts will still require, it is clear that the irony of her doctorate work on Donne, with the "great stress" it lays on his "'triumphant vindication of the body,'" has begun to resolve itself (p. 10). Jane has learned not to scorn the flesh, nor any humble thing. To consolidate her insight Ransom arranges a living parable. "'You are not afraid of mice are you?" he asks, summoning a trio of the creatures with a note from his silver whistle (p. 180):

Thanks to this effort she saw mice for the first time as they really are--not as creeping things but as dainty quadrupeds, almost, when they sat up, like tiny kangaroos, with sensitive kid-gloved forepaws and transparent ears. With quick, inaudible movements they ranged to and fro till not a crumb was left on the floor. Then he blew a second time on his whistle and with a sudden whisk of tails all three of them were racing for home and in a few seconds had disappeared behind the coal box. . . . "There," he said, "a very simple adjustment. Humans want crumbs removed; mice are anxious to remove them. It ought never to have been a cause of war." (p. 181)

Pointing the lesson, Ransom continues, "'But you see that obedience and
rule are more like a dance than a drill--specially between man and woman where the roles are always changing" (p. 181). As Lewis writes in Miracles, "We think of flat repetitive equality and arbitrary privilege as the only two alternatives--thus missing all the overtones, the counterpoint, the vibrant sensitiveness, the inter-inanimations of reality" (p. 150).

Completely enamoured of her first encounter with hierarchical reality, Jane longs to stay with the St. Anne's company. Ransom insists that she seek her husband's permission, however, even though it jeopardizes the entire operation at St. Anne's. On the train-ride back home Jane takes notice that the fog has begun to lift: "Great windows had opened in it" (p. 182; emphasis added). Though fiercely divided against herself and still partially misunderstanding the nature of her experience, Jane does enjoy a new freedom of sensation and a joyous participation in the world around her.

She saw from the windows of the train the outlined beams of sunlight pouring over stubble or burnished woods and felt that they were like the notes of a trumpet. Her eyes rested on the rabbits and cows as they flitted by and she embraced them in heart with merry, holiday love. She delighted in the occasional speech of the one wizened old man who shared her compartment and saw, as never before, the beauty of his shrewd and sunny old mind, sweet as a nut and English as a chalk down. . . . She rejoiced also in her hunger and thirst and decided that she would make herself buttered toast for tea--a great deal of buttered toast. And she rejoiced also in the consciousness of her own beauty . . . . There was little vanity in this. For beauty was made for others. Her beauty belonged to the Director. It belonged to him so completely that he could even decide not to keep it for himself but to order that it be given to another, by an act of obedience lower, and therefore higher, more unconditional and therefore more delighting, than if he had demanded it for himself. (pp. 184-85; emphases added)
Jane's meeting with the head of St. Anne's is counterbalanced by Mark's introduction to the Head of N.I.C.E.—a literal head which has been decapitated from Alcasan and artificially sustained by Filostrato's engineering. The Head is another feature of *Strength* to which critics have objected. Kilby calls it the novel's "least successful ingredient":

The unbearable slobbering of Lewis's monster amid its tubes and pumps is sufficient to make one sick at the stomach, and the Head makes no sense in the story unless it be accepted as the mouthpiece of the evil eldila . . . . Of course this is the actual use Lewis makes of it, but the gruesomeness of the thing tends to usurp any logical explanation of its place in the novel. (*Christian World*, p. 112)

Admittedly, the encounter with the grotesque Head is an utterly wretched experience which one might choose to avoid in re-readings of the novel. Nevertheless, the horror inflicted on the reader is not gratuitous, and we cannot deny its valid function within the novel and the trilogy as a whole. Indeed, *Perelandra* has foreshadowed the atrocity with its own abomination only a little less abhorrent. The demoniac takeover of Weston's body leaves an artificially locomoted hulk of matter which Ransom fittingly calls the Un-man. Its dehumanized machinations are singularly dreadful to witness: "Hours later the Un-man began to speak. It did not even look in Ransom's direction; slowly and cumbrously, as if by some machinery that needed oiling, it made its mouth and lips pronounce his name" (*Perelandra*, pp. 139-40). In detail and diction, the incident compares closely to the introduction of the Head in *Strength*, when Jane describes her dream vision:

"Well, quite suddenly, like when an engine is started,
there came a puff of air out of its mouth, with a hard dry rasping sound. ... Then it began working its mouth about and even licking its lips. It was like someone getting a machine into working order. ... It spoke in a queer way. ... With no proper expression. And of course it couldn't turn itself this way or that, the way a--a real person--does." (pp. 221-22)

On *Perelandra*, the Un-man's similarly impersonal manipulations continue to anticipate Belbury's Head:

It had a whole repertory of obscenities to perform with its own—or rather with Weston's—body: and the mere silliness of them was almost worse than the dirtiness. It would sit making grimaces at him for hours together; and then, for hours more, it would go back to its old repetition of "Ransom . . . Ransom." . . . But worst of all were those moments when it allowed Weston to come back into its countenance. Then its voice, which was always Weston's voice, would begin . . . "That boy keeps on shutting the windows. That's all right, they've taken off my head and put someone else's on me." (*Perelandra*, p. 147; emphasis added)

Weston's voice continues to surface with the same complaints: "'My God, Ransom, it's awful. You don't understand. Right down under layers and layers. Buried alive. You try to connect things and can't. They take your head off . . .'' (*Perelandra*, p. 157; emphasis added).

Evil has certainly become physically grotesque, but with the gruesome Saracen's Head opposite a gloriously transfigured Ransom at the centre of the novel, *Strength* markedly defines the trilogy's sharpening contest between good and evil. The stakes have been raised in the three novels, Walsh notes, dramatizing "Lewis's theory that everything in the universe is coming to a point."⁵ In *Planet*, Walsh says, Weston and

⁵ *Literary Legacy*, p. 121; further quotations from this work in this paragraph are also from p. 121.
Devine's chances of carrying out their plans for wrack and ruin "are doomed from the beginning." Weston holds a greater hope of success in Perelandra, with Walsh putting the odds at "one in two" for a fallen paradise. "A still more ghastly possibility" awaits us in Strength: the overthrow of Logres by the macrobes, which would end all earthly resistance to their temporal rule. The St. Anne's company is painfully aware of this Damoclean sword above their heads. "'It is as in the days when Nimrod built a tower to reach heaven,'" Ransom cautions Merlin (p. 356). Lord Feverstone paints a similar picture for Mark, using the do-or-die situation to deliver a veiled ultimatum: "'It sounds rather in Busby's style to say that humanity is at the cross-roads. But it is the main question at the moment: which side one's on--obscurantism or order'" (pp. 44-45).

Strength retraces and emboldens the outlines sketched by the previous novels. Ransom and Feverstone, the only figures besides the narrator to appear in the original cast, both return to Strength with exaggerated characters, revealing the moral momentum of their individual choices. Having been merely an incorrigibly carnal libertine in Planet, and being but "a minor figure in the gallery of villains in That Hideous Strength,"6 Feverstone nevertheless returns for his last gamble with "a name which suggests disease,"7 bespeaking his engrained rapacity and callousness. "The technique used in drawing [the characters] ... is broader than in either of the other two books," Gibbons says ("Imaginative Writing," p. 91). Dimble explains to Jane and Mother Dimble:

7 Callahan, "Two Gardens," p. 152.
"Good is always getting better and bad is always getting worse: the possibilities of even apparent neutrality are always diminishing. The whole thing is sorting itself out all the time, coming to a point, getting sharper and harder. Like in the poem about Heaven and Hell eating into merry Middle Earth from opposite sides." (p. 350)

If the violence of the severed head reflects the relentless laceration of Strength's turgid evil, the Head's ghastly production of artificial speech perfectly expresses the final perversion of the sacramental language. The guillotined Head graphically illustrates evil's disjunctive nature—its sundering of noumenal from phenomenal, Masculine from Feminine, and soul from body, within the individual, within marriage, and within society. In man's idolization of the Masculine and its life-dealing power, the head, as it were, has been divorced from the body. That Lewis should translate this idea into literal fact should come as no surprise, given both his own heraldic method and his concrete conception of the sacramental language.

The severed Head is also a graphic diagram of evil's parasitical and essentially non-substantial nature, exposing the vacuity that lies at its heart like a black hole in Deep Heaven. "'If all Hell's miseries together entered the consciousness of yon wee yellow bird on the bough there, they would be swallowed up without trace, as if one drop of ink had been dropped into that Great Ocean to which your terrestrial Pacific itself is only a molecule,'" MacDonald tells Lewis in Great Divorce (p. 113). Perelandra has again anticipated this aspect of evil in a telling description of the Un-man:

This creature was, by all human standards, inside out—its heart on the surface and its shallowness at the heart. On the surface, great designs and an
antagonism to Heaven which involved the fate of worlds: but deep within, when every veil had been pierced, was there, after all, nothing but a black puerility, an aimless empty spitefulness content to sate itself with the tiniest cruelties, as love does not disdain the smallest kindness? (p. 112; emphasis added)

As emblems of evil and its fundamental vacuity, both the Un-man and the severed Head personify—if such a paradoxical term can be applied—the "Men Without Chests" which Lewis writes about in Abolition. "'Observation of real events includes the observer, "heart" and all,'" we remember; "'The common measurable features are obtained by omitting this part.'" "Men Without Chests" are heartless wraiths who do omit "'this part,'" denying that values are absolute or that the noumenal has objective reality. Characterized only by absences and negations, these ghostly shadows contrast the solid, organic corporeality of the animal rationale. "'The emergence of the Bodiless Men!'" announces Dimble (p. 241). Their atrophied chests aptly demonstrate evil's subhuman nature, for our "chests" comprise our very humanity:

The head rules the belly through the chest—the seat, as Alanus tells us, of Magnanimity, of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments. The Chest—Magnanimity—Sentiment—these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man. It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal. (Abolition, p. 21)

It is obviously this "middle element" which N.I.C.E. is seeking to destroy, as the Un-man and the disembodied Head graphically illustrate. "'Once the thing gets going we shan't have to bother about the great heart of the British public. We'll make the great heart what we want it
to be,'" Feverstone's words ring ominously (Strength, p. 47). Wither too speaks of effecting "'a real change of heart'" in Mark (p. 294). The enemy's target is precisely this sense of "oughtness" or belief in absolute value, which comprises the centre of our beings and gives us our hearts and chests. "'That whole system of instinctive preferences, whatever ethical, aesthetic, or logical disguise they wear, is to be simply destroyed,'" Frost intones (p. 366).

Ironically, the very revulsion we feel towards the severed Head incites our own sense of "oughtness," revealing the reader to himself as a man with a chest. It secures our firm commitment to objective value--what Lewis calls "the Way" in Abolition and what Mark opts for as "the Normal" amidst the distortion of Frost's desensitizing chamber. As opposed to Frost's "'real objectivity,'" which recognizes "'all motives as merely animal, subjective epiphenomena'" (Strength, p. 365), "the doctrine of objective value, [is] the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are" (Abolition, p. 17). The jolt to our emotions which the Head provides rallies us to a resolution that carries us solidly through the novel. "Some kind of vision of the sweet and the straight" takes hold of us as it does Mark:

But there it was--solid, massive, with a shape of its own, almost like something you could touch, or eat, or fall in love with. It was all mixed up with Jane and fried eggs and soap and sunlight and the rooks cawing at Cure Hardy and the thought that, somewhere outside, daylight was going on at that moment. . . . He was choosing a side: the Normal. "All that," as he called it, was what he chose. (Strength, p. 370)

Like Mark, the reader is "not thinking in moral terms at all," although
he is having perhaps his "first deeply moral experience" (p. 370). Affirming the inherent value of life in its least auspicious forms and in all its organic profusion, the reader rejects the dismemberment of the "objectivity" process, which Frost boasts "'is like killing a nerve'" (p. 366).

The very vehemence of our reaction to the Head suggests that Lewis has not only found a powerful device for his novel, but has also struck a central image deep within the twentieth-century consciousness. Madeleine L'Engle uses Lewis' innovations to great effect some fifteen years later, for example. The climax of her award-winning science fiction story, A Wrinkle in Time, draws heavily upon the disembodied Head in Strength, its "'brain swollen to superhuman proportions'" (Strength, p. 240). "IT" is the Head's corollary in L'Engle's story:

As she continued to step slowly forward, at last she realized what the Thing on the dais was.
IT was a brain.
A disembodied brain. An oversized brain, just enough larger than normal to be completely revolting and terrifying. A living brain. A brain that pulsed and quivered, that seized and commanded. No wonder the brain was called IT. IT was the most horrible, the most repellent thing she had ever seen, far more nauseating than anything she had ever imagined with her conscious mind, or that had ever tormented her in her most terrible nightmares.
But as she had felt she was beyond fear, so now she was beyond screaming.
She looked at Charles Wallace, and he stood there, turned towards IT, his jaw hanging slightly loose; and his vacant blue eyes slowly twirled.8

The fear of losing our individuality to "men without chests" has figured

prominently in the literature of an era of mass-production and world wars, and the sacrifice of personhood to the impersonal forces of utilitarianism has haunted the modern imagination. It is horror of a non-human enemy which so grips our hearts: "It is not that they are bad men. They are not men at all. Stepping outside the Tao, they have stepped into the void. Nor are their subjects necessarily unhappy men. They are not men at all: they are artefacts," Lewis writes in Abolition (p. 45).

The vacuity of evil is dehumanizing, and it is the philosophies and systems which prepare the way for such de-individualization that Strength vehemently attacks. Lewis defends his purpose in his "Reply to Professor Haldane," pointing out that "what we are obviously up against throughout the story is not scientists but officials" (p. 78). The goals of N.I.C.E. are only pseudo-scientific, as Feverstone's diabolical paraphrase reveals: "'Man has got to take charge of man. That means, remember, that some men have got to take charge of the rest'" (Strength, p. 46; emphasis added). Feverstone employs this line of thinking, for example, to rationalize his brutal treatment of Jewel at the College meeting: "'Total war is the most humane in the long run. I shut him up instantaneously'" (p. 37).

Evil eradicates any appreciation of or even tolerance for the individual. Gibson notes that "obedience at the N.I.C.E. moves one closer to a vortex, a whirlpool which assimilates and destroys individual characteristics" (Spinner of Tales, p. 96). Even language becomes depersonalized, as witnessed by Wither's negative politeness. His elaborate equivocations in rejecting Fairy Hardcastle's proposition and banishing her from his presence, for example, are chillingly impersonal.
under guise of being solicitous:

"I had almost forgotten, my dear lady, how tired you must be, and how very valuable your time is. We must try to save you for that particular kind of work in which you have shown yourself indispensable. You must not allow us to impose on your good nature. There is a lot of duller and more routine work which it is only reasonable that you should be spared." He got up and held the door open for her. (p. 292)

Hardcastle's last-minute ploy for a prolonged audience with Wither only elicits his complete withdrawal of personality:

And suddenly, as Wither stood with his hand on the door-handle, courtly, patient, and smiling, the whole expression faded out of his face. The pale lips, open wide enough to show his gums, the white curly head, the pouchy eyes, ceased to make up any single expression. Miss Hardcastle had the feeling that a mere mask of skin and flesh was staring at her. A moment later and she was gone. (pp. 292-93; emphasis added)

Similarly, Straik and Filostrato's faces appear to be mere masks hovering in the stark shadows of Mark's moonlit room, as they explain to their protégé that the Head of N.I.C.E. is literally that: François Alcasan, decapitated. "Both faces were close to him: in that disastrous light they looked like masks hanging in the air" (p. 217). The Head is the figurehead of N.I.C.E. in a more than traditional sense, and the Belbury members literally assume the grisly appearance of its disembodiment.

The dehumanizing vacuousness at evil's core actually spells its own defeat, a further aspect of evil's anatomy graphically portrayed by the disembodied Head. "'Their own strength has betrayed them,'" Ransom says of the Belbury agents who have broken Thulcandra's quarantine. "'If of
their own evil will they had not broken the frontier and let in the celestial Powers, this would be their moment of victory. They have... pulled down Deep Heaven on their heads" (p. 363). Similarly, by seeking an accomplice in Merlin, they have only "raised up for themselves a scourge" (p. 359). And by inducing Mark to "cry out for help," the demoniac attack he suffers simply "strengthens his decision that he has taken sides," Gibson notes, thereby proving that "evil is by its very nature self-defeating" (*Spinner of Tales*, p. 83 and p. 84).

Founded on the "black puerility" at its centre, Belbury's Babel is wholly incapable of supporting its horrendous height. The Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments can coordinate only its own defeat, an irony highlighted by a narrative reversal. "As the novel begins," Callahan points out, "N.I.C.E. seems flawlessly organized, and its move to force Bracton College to sell its little wood is so smoothly put over that the reader envisions the institute as a well-oiled machine, sinister in its purposes, but brilliantly efficient in their achievement" ("Two Gardens," p. 154). Our first impression is soon undermined, however, as we discover that the organization is "a chaos," containing "within itself the contradictions that destroy it." Callahan continues:

Evil is a negation, a distortion or perversion of the good. If the garden at St. Anne's represents the fecund and harmonious pattern of life, Belbury can only be its grotesque parody, and thus it must contain the seeds of its destruction: order is chaos, the 'conquest of organic life' is death, liberation is slavery" (p. 154).

Evil's self-destruction is a parasitic quality aptly expressed by the imagery of consumption, a concept which is explicitly pictured by the disembodied Head. "To us a human is primarily food; our aim is the
absorption of its will into ours, the increase of our own area of selfhood at its expense," Screwtape writes to Wormwood (p. 45). Gibson notes that Wither's descriptions of the Institute "betray a picture which suggests the digestive organs of a giant" (Spinner of Tales, p. 96). Callahan and Gibson both describe Belbury as a cancerous growth eating the members of its diseased body--feeding "its own processes through purposeless destruction," Callahan says (p. 153). For example, Wither has long since preyed upon his own soul, now "spreading and dissipating itself like a gas through formless and lightless worlds, waste lands and lumber rooms of the universe," and periodically condemned to wander Belbury's haunts as a wraith-like projection (Strength, pp. 229-30). His corpse-like body remains, but Wither is able to negotiate its movements only with awkward effort and extreme difficulty. He now waits to prey upon others, body and soul: "'I would open my arms to receive--to absorb--to assimilate this young man,'" he says of Mark. "'I desire the closest possible bond. I would welcome an interpenetration of personalities so close, so irrevocable, that it almost transcends individuality'" (p. 298; emphasis added). At this point in his conversation with Frost, the two lost souls melt into their own "interpenetration of personalities," "locked in an embrace from which each seemed to be struggling to escape," and which ends in "rather an animal than a senile parody of laughter" (p. 298 and p. 299; emphasis added). Glover praises this "nearly obscene vision of Frost and Wither, clutching, giggling, grappling to the floor in a paroxysm of mutual devourings," for making us feel what evil is like "rather than telling us" (Enchantment, p. 121). "'Unity, you know. The family circle,'" Wither menacingly invites Mark (p. 259). "'The friendly--the almost fatherly--concern'" that Wither extends to Mark on the Head's
behalf ominously parodies the "'way back into the human family'" which
Dimble is to offer Mark only hours later (p. 259 and p. 273).

With its members thus divided amongst themselves in an atmosphere of
malice and backbiting, N.I.C.E. is sitting on a bomb with its fuse
already lit. Belbury only comes to its logical conclusion in the
apocalyptic downfall and aftermath of internal butchery. Knowing doom to
be imminent, the last members of N.I.C.E. indulge in an orgy of death.
Wither and Straik first guillotine Filostrato in a grisly ritual
sacrifice to the Head. Wither then turns the knife on Straik, before
falling prey himself to the attack of an avenging bear. Left as the sole
surviving member of N.I.C.E., Frost is a chilling example of the
Institute's self-destructive pathology. Like Wither, he has long ago
abandoned his soul to die, leaving only the shell of a person. "Thus the
Frost whose existence Frost denied watched his body go into the
ante-room, watched it pull up sharply at the sight of a naked and
bloodied corpse. The chemical reaction called shock, occurred"
(p. 444). Fittingly, Frost completes the process of self-immolation
begun many years ago, and by his own hand meets his final end.
Ironically, the passionless scientist sets himself ablaze. Before dying,
he betrays his own person one final time--once and for all eternity:

Escape for the soul, if not for the body, was offered
him. He became able to know (and simultaneously
refused the knowledge) that he had been wrong from
the beginning, that souls and personal responsibility
existed. He half saw: he wholly hated. The physical
torture of the burning was hardly fiercer [sic] than
his hatred of that. With one supreme effort he flung
himself back into his illusion. In that attitude
everty overtook him as sunrise in old tales
overtakes trolls and turns them into unchangeable
stone. (p. 445)
As Callahan says, the planetary deities who help to destroy N.I.C.E. do so "only in the sense that they amplify its internal contradictions" ("Two Gardens," p. 154). "We see nothing at all at Belbury . . . whose seeds were not carefully planted and watered in the Common Room at Bracton," Howard says (Achievement, p. 125). The minor intrigue of the college business simply "thickens and hardens into Belbury, that paradigm of hell itself" (Howard, p. 125). Merlin too merely unleashes "a chaos already implicit in the organization," Callahan judges, by inflicting the curse of Babel upon those whose use of language has always divorced meaning from words ("Two Gardens," p. 154). "'We shall send them an interpreter!'" Ransom promises. "'Yes, by the splendour of Christ, we will send them one. 'Upon them He a spirit of frenzy sent to call in haste for their destroyer.' They have advertised in the papers for one!'" the Director exclaims (p. 392). The Belbury company signs its own death warrant. None at St. Anne's need lift a hand in battle, and even Merlin is simply a catalyst, as nature takes its own revenge. The moral law is written in the universe, transcribed in the sacramental language. "I believe Lewis means to say that we do not have a world plus God," Kilby writes, "but that, so to speak, God has built the moral principle into the very atoms" (Christian World, p. 190). He continues:

Sin violates not simply the commands of God but the very principle of life. 'Be sure your sins will find you out' is not an edict from outside or the capricious decree of God but rather a law at the center of creation. The world is so constructed that this world as well as the next pays off for ill conduct. (p. 190)

Even so, Plank objects to the bloodbath at the end of Strength, protesting that "the logic of the story requires the annihilation of the
forces of evil; but hardly of the persons that embody them" ("Psychological Aspects," p. 35). Embodiment is just the point, however, and Plank is guilty of the same disjunctive perception as the Belbury crowd. A momentous spiritual meaning invests every material morpheme in the sacramental language, thus comprising solid, firm elements. When Dimble speaks "the Great Tongue," "great syllables of words that sounded like castles" come out of his mouth:

The voice did not sound like Dimble's own: it was as if the words spoke themselves through him from some strong place at a distance—or as if they were not words at all but present operations of God, the planets, and the Pendragon. For this was the language spoken before the Fall and beyond the Moon and the meanings were not given to the syllables by chance, or skill, or long tradition, but truly inherent in them as the shape of the great Sun is inherent in the little waterdrop. This was Language herself, as she first sprang at Maleldil's bidding. (pp. 280-81; emphases added)

The Babel-mongers have spurned embodied meaning and exploited these morphemes for their delight of sound only. Because meaning has been fleshed in sound, however, even as two are made one flesh in marriage, to deny the meaning of words must ultimately immolate their phonics as well. "'They that have despised the Word of God, from them shall the word of man also be taken away,'" rings the curse in Babel's ears (p. 435). The building blocks of language with which Belbury has played are dangerously solid, and the edifice they constructed parlously real. The impact when that top-heavy structure crashes round their heads can be no less real.

Furthermore, Belbury's disastrous end can hardly be considered an unfair manipulation of the plot, when individual actions are as morally significant for St. Anne's as they are for Belbury. The fate of Lewis'
characters generally depends upon innocuous moments, we remember. For example, "what had been in . . . [Wither's] far-off youth a merely aesthetic repugnance to realities that were crude or vulgar, had deepened and darkened, year after year, into a fixed refusal of everything that was in any degree other than himself" (Strength, p. 438). On the other hand, Curry is "trivially saved" and Mark is spared simply by loving the best which he knows. Similarly, having protested that she knows nothing of Maleldil, Jane is saved simply by placing herself in obedience to Ransom. "'It is enough for the present,' said the Director. 'This is the courtesy of Deep Heaven: that when you mean well, He always takes you to have meant better than you knew'" (p. 282). Even Jane's ultimate regeneration is little more glorious. "It was revealed only in its departure. The largest thing that had ever happened to her had, apparently, found room for itself in a moment of time too short to be called time at all" (p. 395).

For both sides, then, the cosmic war comprises a series of moral skirmishes fought in the battlefield of the soul. The encounters seem minor but their outcomes are decisive, sealing individual fates and determining history. Indeed, with the acute divergence of good and evil in the present age, "'there is even less room for indecision and choices are even more momentous,'" Dimble says (p. 350). In Feverstone's own words, it is "'a real war with real casualties,'" a concept best understood at St. Anne's (p. 45). "'There is no security for anyone now. The battle has started. I'm offering you a place on the right side. I don't know which will win,'" Dimble tells Mark (p. 273; emphasis added). In such a dangerous arena, it should rather be surprising to Mr. Plank that one side should win at all, than that the
opposing side should go down in utter defeat.

The disembodied Head is not only a picture of evil's quality of self-destruction, but even a graphic diagram of its particular course of ruin in Strength. As we have seen, N.I.C.E. is a body which literally dismembers itself. Furthermore, it resolutely opposes all aspects of organic life, including man's bodily makeup. N.I.C.E. is doomed by the inherent imbalance of its ideology, which aspires solely to the polar Masculine, and emulates only inorganic qualities such as headship and intellectual prowess. Belbury shuns the polar Feminine, which more humbly embraces organic life; significantly, Alcasan has been decapitated for poisoning his wife. Even Feverstone, grossly materialistic and hedonistic though he is, agrees with the Belbury perspective that "there's far too much life of every kind about, animal and vegetable" (p. 46). He derides such common values, for example, in his sneer at Busby: "'I'd quite forgotten you had a family, James'" (p. 41).

Lewis satirizes Belbury's disdain for organic fecundity in the "monumental report on National Sanitation" recently written by Bracton's Warden, a stooge for the "Progressive Element" (p. 36). In a similar vein Filostrato delivers several harangues on global hygiene, in which he proposes eliminating the planet's "organic stain" (p. 215). His suggestions include disinfecting Earth of "'the blue mould'" with which it is "'furred over . . . all sprouting and budding and breeding and decaying,'" cleaning the planet of "'dirty dirt'" (which is the "'sweat, spittles, [and] excretions'" of organisms, as opposed to the "'clean dirt'" of minerals) and shaving the planet of its offensive natural trees, which would be replaced by chemical trees complete with "'art birds'"
that sing only as an electric current is supplied (p. 211 and p. 210).

"Consider again the improvement. No feathers dropped about, no nests, no eggs, no dirt," Filostrato gloats; "No leaves to fall, no twigs, no birds building nests, no muck and mess" (p. 210). The language of negation recalls Ransom's dangerously similar rejection of the rich organic life on Malacandra: "No insect-like... Abominable, no twitching feelers, no monstrous union of superhuman intelligence and insatiable cruelty...", race Ransom's hopes en route to the planet. "Not one blade of grass, not one fibre of lichen, not one grain of dust. Not even air... No crumbling, no erosion," slavers Filostrato in envisioning non-organic life on the moon (Strength, p. 214). The Belbury scientist concludes that "the impure and the organic are interchangeable conceptions," a proposition borne out at least satirically by his own obesity (p. 211). Clearly, then, the disembodied Head is the direct outcome of a pathological myopia, which Filostrato endorses as follows:

"In us organic life has produced Mind... Learn to make our brains live with less and less body: learn to build our bodies directly with chemicals, no longer have to stuff them full of dead brutes and weeds. Learn how to reproduce ourselves without copulation... There will never be peace and order and discipline so long as there is sex. When man has thrown it away, then he will become finally governable... The world I look forward to is the world of perfect purity. The clean mind and the clean minerals. What are the things that most offend the dignity of man? Birth and breeding and death... [This Institute] is for the conquest of death: or for the conquest of organic life, if you prefer. They are the same thing. It is to bring out of that cocoon of organic life which sheltered the babyhood of mind the New Man, the man who will not die, the artificial man, free from Nature. Nature is the ladder we have climbed up by, now we kick her away." (p. 211, p. 212, and p. 215)
As Lewis demonstrates in Abolition, however, "man's conquest of Nature turns out, in the moment of its consummation, to be Nature's conquest of Man" (p. 47). Anorexia nervosa, the disease of self-starvation that plagues our increasingly plastic society, bears out Lewis' conclusion more graphically than he could have anticipated. "Man's final conquest has proved to be the abolition of Man," comes his warning, even as the grotesque Head hovers in our imaginations (Abolition, p. 45). "Man's conquest of himself means simply the rule of the Conditioners over the conditioned human material," Lewis affirms (Abolition, p. 51). His analysis exactly describes the Institute's exploitation of Alcasan. Horror transfixes Alcasan's face as he discovers the fate that is to befall him, a horror which we later share upon recognizing a grotesque lump chained onto a wall bracket in Filostrato's laboratory. St. Anne's denunciation of this diabolical exploitation of someone who was once "at least a plain murderer" (Strength, p. 273), recalls Ransom's pity for the demoniac exploitation of Weston, who was once at least a "bent hnaуш." "There neither is nor can be any simple increase of power on Man's side," Lewis insists. "Each new power won by man is a power over man as well" (Abolition, p. 42). N.I.C.E. indeed establishes its power base in England only at the direct expense of Edgestow and its experimental victims. "What we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument," Lewis concludes in Abolition (p. 40).

The inevitable result of such enmity with Nature, of course, is that Nature ultimately avenges herself.

We are always conquering Nature, because "Nature" is the name for what we have, to some extent,
conquered. The price of conquest is to treat a thing as mere Nature. Every conquest over Nature increases her domain. The stars do not become Nature till we can weigh and measure them: the soul does not become Nature till we can psycho-analyse her. The wresting of powers from Nature is also the surrendering of things to Nature. (Abolition, p. 49)

Nature's domain thus grows with a vengeance, until man eventually hands himself over to her as well: "The final stage is come when Man by eugenics, by pre-natal conditioning, and by an education and propaganda based on a perfect applied psychology, has obtained full control over himself. Human nature . . . [is] the last part of Nature to surrender to Man" (Abolition, p. 42). With Frost's radical consignment of everthing to what he patronizes as "mere Nature," the Belbury scientist does bring human nature to its knees in surrender. In the process he relinquishes his human authority, however, and discovers his mastery to be lost even as it is won. Savagely reducing all thought to mere chemical phenomena, Frost is left only with the random chemistry to which he must ultimately fall victim. For example, he opts to hold Mark's final indoctrination session partly because of the matter's pressing urgency, but also "partly in obedience to an unexplained impulse (such impulses grew more frequent with him every day)" (p. 417). "When all that says 'it is good' has been debunked, what says 'I want' remains. It cannot be exploded or 'seen through' because it never had any pretensions. The Conditioners, therefore, must come to be motivated simply by their own pleasure," Lewis explains in Abolition (p. 46).

"Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism," continues Lewis, graphically diagnosing Belbury's condition (Abolition, p. 20). Indeed, N.I.C.E. literally falls
prey to the "animal organism" at its heart when its cruel vivisection practices backfire. What were once the "mere" subjects of its scientific experimentation become the menacing wolf, elephant, gorilla, and other beasts which avenge themselves at the Belbury banquet, adding a macabre and bloody twist to the feast. "'There was a real tiger about and their play ended by letting her in,'" MacPhee judges astutely (p. 462). The theme of evil's self-destruction comes full circle when Deputy Director Wither, the last survivor of N.I.C.E., briefly speculates whether the bear about to maul him might be his henchman Straik reincarnated. The head that devours its own body is truly subject to the final revenge of the "animal organism."

Lewis, on the other hand, profoundly respects the body. Indeed, he judges all organic life to be the mediator of meaning and grace. "The regenerate science which I have in mind would not do even to minerals and vegetables what modern science threatens to do to man himself," Lewis protests. He continues in an expostulation that might serve as the best gloss on Strength:

> When . . . [science] explained it would not explain away. When it spoke of the parts it would remember the whole. While studying the It it would not lose what Martin Buber calls the Thou-situation. The analogy between the Tao of Man and the instincts of an animal species would mean for it new light cast on the unknown thing, Instinct, by the inly known reality of conscience and not a reduction of conscience to the category of Instinct. Its followers would not be free with the words only and merely. In a word, it would conquer Nature without being at the same time conquered by her and buy knowledge at a lower cost than that of life. (Abolition, p. 54)

The reader certainly encounters this refreshingly reverent attitude in
Lewis' wonderful descriptions of Bultitude's life as a bear. The bear's meetings with Ransom, for example, are to him "what mystical experiences are to men":

The Director had brought back with him from Venus some shadow of man's lost prerogative to ennoble beasts. In his presence Mr. Bultitude trembled on the very borders of personality, thought the unthinkable and did the impossible, was troubled and enraptured with gleams from beyond his own woolly world, and came away tired. But with Ivy he was perfectly at home—as a savage who believes in some remote High God is more at home with the little deities of wood and water. It was Ivy who fed him, chased him out of forbidden places, cuffed him, and talked to him all day long. It was her firm conviction that the creature "understood every word she said." If you took this literally it was untrue; but in another sense it was not so wide of the mark. For much of Ivy's conversation was the expression not of thought but of feeling, and of feelings Mr. Bultitude almost shared—feelings of alacrity, snugness, and physical affection. In their own way they understood one another pretty well. (Strength, pp. 380-81)

The passage richly develops nature's organic relation to supernature. Firstly, we see Bultitude's basic animal existence drawn up into some kind of participation in the supernatural, or at least an intimation of such. "One of our race, if plunged back for a moment in the warm, trembling, iridescent pool of that pre-Adamite consciousness, would have emerged believing that he had grasped the absolute," Lewis affirms (p. 379). The passage then brings us to realize how Ivy's vital existence, lived at an essentially physical level, is her own avenue to profound spiritual realities. "'You were never goose enough to think yourself spiritually superior to Ivy,'" Mother Dimble good-naturedly rebukes the erudite Jane (p. 204).
A novel "more robustly human in treatment" than its predecessors, \textit{That Hideous Strength} vigorously defends organic nature and closely examines its mediation of supernature.\textsuperscript{9} The malicious scission of nature and supernature which the severed Head portrays is counterbalanced by the wholesomeness of Bragdon Wood. Both images are the antipodal loci of thematic concerns. An excellent prose passage in its own right, Bragdon Wood's introduction into the narrative operates subtly but pivotally within the larger whole. As a lyrical and romantic centre within the dense and fast-paced prose, the episode serves as a kind of touchstone for the novel. Myth hovers in the air as we explore the Wood, and alights there as we leave. The timeless harmony of its presence enhances the rest of the story, even as "the dew encrusted jewel / Of a ruby-throat" graces the lace-like tracery of Duncan Campbell Scott's lilac tree:

\begin{quote}
The secret of this dream delight,
The core of this bride-quiet,
Hid even from the moonlight
By the heart-leaved screen.\textsuperscript{10}
\end{quote}

As the quintessential ruby-throat is best perceived obliquely, and as "Joy" is best apprehended indirectly, so myth is most enjoyed while looking sidelong and beyond. This principle is reiterated in the very pattern of Bragdon Wood: "The trees were just so wide apart that one saw uninterrupted foliage in the distance, but the place where one stood

\textsuperscript{9} Gibbons, "Imaginative Writing," p. 87.

seemed always to be a clearing: surrounded by a world of shadows, one walked in mild sunshine" (p. 19).

The Wood is a sort of refuge for the reader after Jane's ominous nightmare and Mark's fretful politicking with Curry. The quiet drama of our excursion into the Wood is also a peaceful precursor to the cruelly staged events of the College Meeting. Indeed, our direct transition from the cosy mystery of Bragdon Wood, to the hot, stuffy Soler where the "Progressive Element" is engineering its "'sale of the area coloured pink on the plan,'" underscores the inimitable worth that is being forfeited (p. 27). It also stresses the moral poverty of the proponents of the Wood's sale. Serving as such a backdrop for several subsequent scenes, the Wood provides a continuing norm for the novel. It functions also as an image of centrality; that is, a character's morality is directly reflected by his perception of the Wood.

Bragdon Wood establishes its centrality in the novel by its own sacramental mediation of myth, but also by its reflection of the narrator's morality. Nature, we remember, is morally neutral in herself. "For she is not the Absolute: she is one of the creatures, with her good points and her bad points and her own unmistakable flavour running through them all," Lewis emphasizes (Miracles, p. 79). The morality of the Bragdon Wood episode is established simply by the narrator's experience there. Gibson points out that it is "his activities [which] make an episode out of what would otherwise have been a static description" (Spinner of Tales, p. 73). Bragdon Wood is the point of the narrator's single and oblique entry into his own tale; further appearances are curtailed by his omniscience, says Gibson (p. 73). This isolated point of view reinforces the scene's sense of timelessness
and enhances the Wood's function as an emblem of mythic permanence. The incident's suspension outside the regular course of action redoubles the romantic lyricism and cosmic quality of its prose.

Thus we share the narrator's strong "sense of gradual penetration into a holy of holies," as he proceeds into the Wood through a series of ancient gates, passageways, and quadrangles (Strength, p. 18). Edgestow itself "lay in what had been the very heart of ancient Logres," we discover, and "the village of Cure Hardy preserved the name of Ozana le Coeur Hardi" (p. 245; emphases added). Bragdon Wood, in turn, is the heart of this heart. "'We know not by ancientest report of any Britain without Bragdon,'" quotes the narrator from a sixteenth-century Warden of Bracton College (p. 20). Merlin's Well, the last and holiest of these Chinese boxes, as it were, rests at the centre of Bragdon Wood. The narrator reports:

I came to the centre of the Wood. I knew it was the centre, for there was the thing I had chiefly come to see. It was a well: ... I did not step on it, but I lay down in the grass and touched it with my fingers. For this was the heart of Bracton or Bragdon Wood: out of this all the legends had come and on this, I suspected, the very existence of the College had originally depended. (pp. 19-20; emphasis added)

Bragdon Wood is the heart not only of Bracton College, but of the Tellurian story as well, even as Alcasan is its Head. The Wood is the novel's living emblem of organic fecundity, while the Head is but its dead badge of sterility.

Indeed, there is an extensive parallelism between the Head and Bragdon Wood, which is drawn up in a series of diabolical contrasts. For
example, Mark makes a labyrinthine excursion equivalent to the narrator's, except that Mark's is a much less pleasant, drunken nighttime affair, as opposed to the narrator's leisured sun-lit walk. Both men are initiates in a privilege allotted to a select few, and doors are locked behind both as they approach their destination, but Mark's feeling of entrapment within the solid brick edifice contrasts with the narrator's liberty to explore the airy outdoors. Mark's companions link arms with him when he stumbles, but he continues to feel utterly alone and alienated, while the narrator's consciousness of being alone is a friendly, secure feeling: "It felt more like the loneliness of a very large room in a deserted house than like any ordinary solitude out of doors" (p. 19). Mark's expedition tortures him with a sense of garish unreality and disjointed delirium which lingers into the following morning. The narrator, on the other hand, becomes aware of a universal, rooted reality: "I was quite alone . . . . A moment later I thought, 'But when alone--really alone--everyone is a child: or no one?'  Youth and age touch only the surface of our lives" (p. 19).

The narrator's walk is infused with a sense of purpose, symbolized in the chronologically ordered range of architecture he passes by, including the "humble, almost domestic" buildings of the seventeenth century (p. 18; emphasis added). Mark, however, is led passively through the bewildering turns of a maze, "passage after passage, passages he had never seen before, doors to unlock, and then into a place where all the lights were on" (p. 219). The "strange smells" which greet Mark in this clinical atmosphere contrast with the narrator's "whiff of the smell of fresh bread" (p. 219 and p. 18). Mark next enters "a surgical-looking room with glaring lights," where he is "received" by "a young man whom
he hardly knew, dressed in a white coat" (p. 219; emphasis added). The narrator, on the other hand, is alone when he enters the Wood proper, but enjoys a distinct and welcoming "sense of being received" (p. 19; emphasis added). His journey has brought him near to the well at the centre of the Wood, "the heart of Bracton or Bragdon Wood," but Mark is close only to the rasping labours of the Head.

The narrator has encountered a few sheep along the way, who sometimes raise "their long, foolish faces to stare" at him (p. 19). Mark, however, confronts an inanimate and menacing visage in the mounted control panel he is shown: "The staring dial faces and the bunches of tubes beneath them, which seemed to be faintly pulsating, gave one the impression of looking at some creature with many eyes and many tentacles" (p. 219). The macabre visage anticipates the Head itself. As if being devoured, Mark is then led through an orifice in this wall, which swallows him into Filostrato's death-chamber. The nightmarish horror that Mark meets there disturbs his rest from that time forward, while the Wood's soothing shadows only lull the narrator into a soft, dreamy sleep.

The artificially preserved Head hideously parodies the natural preservation of Merlin's body, which has been protected deep within the Earth in a chamber under Bragdon's Well. Both Merlin and the Head blur our normal distinction between life and death, but the Head is actually dead and only spuriously alive, while Merlin is essentially alive and only apparently dead. Jane's dream points this contrast between the two:

The visitor, adjusting his pince-nez and still smiling his cold smile, seized the prisoner's head between his two hands. He gave it a sharp turn--just as Jane had last summer seen men give a sharp turn to
the helmet on a diver's head. The visitor unscrewed
the prisoner's head and took it away. Then all
became confused. The head was still the centre of the
dream, but it was quite a different head now—a head
with a reddish-white beard all covered with earth.
It belonged to an old man whom some people were
digging up in a kind of churchyard—a sort of ancient
British, druidical kind of man, in a long mantle.
Jane didn't mind this much at first because she
thought it was a corpse. Then suddenly she noticed
that this ancient thing was coming to life. "Look
out!" she cried in her dream. "He's alive. Stop!
Stop! You're waking him." But they did not stop.
The old, buried man sat up and began talking
something that sounded vaguely like Spanish. (p. 12)

"Merlin had not died," we hear later. "His life had been hidden,
side-tracked, moved out of our one-dimensioned time, for fifteen
centuries. But under certain conditions it would return to his body"
(pp. 247-48). Merlin's spirit is indeed reunited with his body, and the
Druid proves to be a vital force in the novel. Although his speech is
"the Latin of a man to whom Apuleius and Martianus Capella were the
primary classics and whose elegances resembled those of the Hisperica
Famina," Merlin's obscure language is more profound, and indeed more
intelligible, than the bloodless and breathless raspings of the Head
(p. 344). Merlin is the pulsing heart of the novel; he is a man with an
"enormous chest," we are told (p. 335). In contrast, the Head is only an
obscene, quivering lump, with nothing more than a neck sprouting tubes to
support it. "'Merlin is the reverse of Belbury,'" as Dimble says:

"He is the last vestige of an old order in which
matter and spirit were, from our modern point of
view, confused. For him every operation on Nature is
dressed of personal contact, like coaxing a child or
stroke one's horse. After him came the modern man
to whom Nature is something dead—a machine to be
worked, and taken to bits if it won't work the way
he pleases. Finally come the Belbury people, who
take over that view from the modern man unaltered and
simply want to increase their power by tacking onto it the aid of spirits—extra-natural, anti-natural spirits." (p. 352; emphases added)

Our excursion to Merlin's Well in Bragdon Wood helps us to understand the sacramental language which the druidical figure speaks. The episode establishes his link with nature, especially that ancient element of "living unity" in which our forebears moved. Indeed, the narrator's vivid accounts of Merlin histories, which enliven our visit to the Well, almost animate the Wood for us in the way that all nature was once animated for the ancients. It is through our vital experience of Bragdon Wood that we are able to understand Dimble's account of Merlin's world, days before our modern bifurcation of spirit and matter. "'There were still possibilities for a man of that age which there aren't for a man of ours,'" Dimble explains. "'The earth itself was more like an animal in those days. And mental processes were much more like physical actions'" (p. 351). We are reminded, of course, of the Lady's own visceral thought and of Perelandra's natural dynamism. "'Merlin . . . seems to produce his results simply by being Merlin,'" Dimble proposes, contrasting the powers of the Druid to the magic arts of the ceremonial occultists (p. 246). Ransom agrees, suggesting that Merlin's art goes "back to an era in which the general relations of mind and matter on this planet had been other than those we know" (p. 201). Our experience in Bragdon Wood gives us just this sense of integral harmony between nature and supernature, myth and reality, and logic and romance. In Bragdon Wood we share, as it were, the draught of water from Merlin's Well which was traditionally drunk by the Bractonian Wardens as a ceremonial nectar. This great cup of antiquity, figuratively speaking, prepares
us for the myth that Ransom brings home. "'This man is Merlinus Ambrosius,'" announces the Director to the household of St. Anne's (p. 345; emphasis added).

Myth stands before our eyes, and does not melt. A raging storm whips Merlin's back as he stops on St. Anne's threshold, "but his great mass stood as if it had been planted like a tree, and he seemed in no hurry" (p. 334). Our suspense grows as the narrator's description continues: "And the voice, too, was such as one might imagine to be the voice of a tree, large and slow and patient, drawn up through roots and clay and gravel from the depths of the Earth" (p. 334). Merlin's uniquely earthy and animal-like character, however, has led us to expect the worst as soon as the best. That is, as the nature with which he has been so intimately identified is a neutral element, so we can only presume Merlin to be neutral. "'I don't mean, of course, that anything can be a real neutral,'" Dimble quickly explains. "'A conscious being is either obeying God or disobeying Him. But there might be things neutral in relation to us'" (p. 351). We have indeed recognized that Merlin descends from antiquity's living unity of spirit and matter, and we have caught "'glimpses of a population that won't exactly fit into our two columns of angels and devils'" (p. 351). We have also understood, however, that "'there was room for them then, but the universe has come more to a point'" (p. 285). We therefore have a justifiable concern as to which side Merlin will now join.

In keeping with the medieval sacramentalist's view of nature's dual moral potential, we have no guarantee of Merlin's good faith. Both Dimble and the Bragdon Wood narrator rehearse the indeterminacy of Merlin's
Ransom notes that "the physical sciences, good and innocent in themselves," have already been warped in his own time (p. 248). The menacing potential of something good in its own right is also revealed in Jane's vision of the "'untransformed, demoniac'" fertility goddess, which is alarming to us in our era of sharply separated good and evil (p. 389). "'She's what you'll get if you won't have the other,'" Ransom warns (p. 314). Indeed, he conjectures that the vision is probably induced by Merlin's presence. Ransom agrees with Jane that the Huge Woman is like Mother Dimble, "'but Mother Dimble with something left out.'" He continues: "'Mother Dimble is friends with all that world as Merlinus is friends with the woods and rivers. But he isn't a wood or a river himself. She has not rejected it, but she has baptized it. She is a Christian wife'" (p. 389).

We breathe a sigh of relief to find out that Merlin has also been baptized a Christian. He will commit his powers to Logres against Britain, we discover, and submit himself to the current Pendragon's authority. Nevertheless, Ransom immediately takes the precaution of forbidding Merlin his "'commerce with field and water,'" which "'never was very lawful,'" and would be "'utterly unlawful'" in this age of focussed good and evil (p. 356). In fact, Ransom informs Merlin, "'One of the purposes of your reawakening was that your own soul should be saved'" (pp. 356-57). Merlin's command of the soul of wood and water, moreover, would not even avail Logres in its present battle. It would be too much "'like fighting Belbury with its own weapons,'" Mother Dimble says, and Ransom warns Merlin that the weapon would break in his hands (p. 352 and p. 356). The modern unlawfulness of the ancient methods automatically decrees their defeat.
Merlin's role, Ransom explains, will be to provide a channel for eldilic power, which would be too strong in its naked element for Middle Earth to withstand, and too strong for a virginal mortal mind that had been previously unopened to the invasion of supernatural powers "'to be so violated'" now (p. 359). Only as it is naturalized through Merlin can myth be brought home to Thulcandra. Merlin initially expresses incredulity at any prospect of eldilic intervention, because he is aware of Maleldil's delimitation of such supernatural involvement in Earth's affairs. Several critics have expressed their own reservations on not dissimilar grounds, objecting to the deus ex machina effect of the descent of the gods. Indeed, many of their complaints extend to Merlin himself, although critics are unanimous in their praise of the brilliance of Lewis' conception of the resuscitated Druid. Angele Botros Samaan is one critic who judges the novel to be inauthentic in its latter chapters, "rather incoherent and in parts almost melodramatic."\(^{11}\) This "sensational element" is "not in keeping with the exalted theme of the book," and interferes "with its essentially intellectual quality or its serious 'point,'" Samaan criticizes (p. 159). He further cites George Orwell's complaint that "'the miraculous happenings, though they grow more frequent towards the end, are not integral to it.'"\(^{12}\)

Our examination of the trilogy, however, has shown that precisely the opposite is true, that the "supernatural" events are part and parcel of the sacramental language which the trilogy has been working to render


\(^{12}\) Rev. of That Hideous Strength, Manchester Evening News, 16 Aug. 1945, p. 2; as quoted by Samaan, p. 164.
intelligible. The natural and supernatural are twin integral elements in
the universe. Ransom's statement that the Oyéresu are his masters is not
merely an arbitrary password, as Merlin first believes, but a literal
expression of Ransom's personal experience. "'True as the plainest
things are true,' repeated Ransom; 'true as it is true that you sit here
with my bear beside you'" (pp. 357-58). Moreover, Ransom explains to
Merlin, it is proper that the Powers should now descend, for Maleldil did
not forbid them from reacting to the evil men who first broke the
quarantine and invaded the Heavens to trouble the gods there. "'For all
this is within the natural order,'" Ransom emphasizes. "'And so the
wicked man [Weston] had brought about, even as Judas brought about, the
thing he least intended'" (p. 359; emphasis added).

As a result of his kidnapping, Ransom has been able to learn the
eldilic tongue; "'neither by God's miracle nor by magic from Numinor, but
naturally, as when two men meet in a road'" (p. 359; emphasis added). In
turn, MacPhee's unqualified, one-sided commitment to rationalism is no
longer natural; it has become an obsolete dialect. "'It's no good,
MacPhee,' said the Director, 'you can't go. For one thing you don't know
the language'" (p. 276; emphasis added). It is no longer unnatural for
a human being to converse with planetary deities in his home territory:
"'I have become a bridge,'" Ransom says (p. 359). Thus "the lord of
Meaning" himself descends upon St. Anne's, and with him the heavenly host
of deities. Empowered by the gods, the Druid simply mediates the fulness
of the sacramental language. As naturally as Merlin once operated on
field and wood "'simply by being Merlin,'" so the solidity of the
sacramental language shatters the faulty words of Belbury as they hurl
themselves against it.
In the restoration of the sacramental language, the closing pages of *Strength* bring together a host of events, and juxtapose a variety of moods and emotions, setting horror beside humour, terror beside tenderness, majesty beside humility, and grim sobriety beside jovial affection. Dignified human intimacy even stands alongside merry animal gambols; as the austere Grace Ironwood says, "'There will be nothing unfit for anyone to see'" (p. 471). Although Walsh worries about a problem of pacing in *Strength*, the highly textured prose, which becomes even more dense at the end of the novel, appropriately reflects the fulness of reality which has been gradually realized in the trilogy, and is now fully released in the climax of its conclusion (*Literary Legacy*, p. 118). With the universe having focussed and come to a point, moreover, the elements comprising that fulness of reality have become more distinct and emphatic. That is, not only is reality "'incorrigibly plural,'" as we remember, but "'everything is getting more itself and more different from everything else all the time'" (*Strength*, p. 350).

We begin to see the acceleration of "the polychrome of this novel,"\(^\text{13}\) for example, in Merlin's extreme and swiftly alternating reactions to the prospect of oyéresu invading his person:

\[\text{[Ransom] stopped, shocked at what was happening. The huge man had risen from his chair, and stood towering over him. From his horribly opened mouth there came a yell that seemed to Ransom utterly bestial, though it was in fact only the yell of primitive Celtic lamentation. It was horrifying to see that withered and bearded face all blubbered with undisguised tears like a child's. All the Roman}\]

\(^{13}\) Kilby, *Christian World*, p. 108.
surface in Merlinus had been scraped off. He had become a shameless, archaic monstrosity babbling out entreaties in a mixture of what sounded like Welsh and what sounded like Spanish. "Silence!" shouted Ransom. "Sit down. You put us both to shame."

As suddenly as it had begun the frenzy ended. Merlin resumed his chair. To a modern it seemed strange that, having recovered his self-control, he did not show the slightest embarrassment at his temporary loss of it. The whole character of the two-sided society in which this man must have lived became clearer to Ransom than pages of history could have made it. (p. 360)

With the giant strides of a Druid, the novel sweeps forward from this stunning display of reality's composite character to amass a baroque panorama. "The reality is a queer mixture of idyll, tragedy, farce, melodrama: and the characters (even the same character) far better and worse than are ever imagined," Lewis writes to Griffiths (8 Feb. 1956, Letters, 267).

In a flurry of quiddity, every morpheme of the sacramental language is freed; even the animals are liberated from Belbury. "'There's already as much carrying on about this house and garden as I can stand,'" poor rationalist MacPhee protests (p. 470). The effect is one of brilliant heraldry, emblazoning a luminous reality. All the pageantry is ultimately subsumed in a glorious epithalamium, comprising not the rites of Venus but the festival of the christened goddess Perelandra. In its humble splendours, the festival is more magnificent than the Great Hymn and Great Dance of Perelandra, for it simply comprises their wonders transposed to our domestic spheres. From the "'squealing and squeaking'" of hedgehogs and the scampering of mice, through ubiquitous birdsong and the elephantine "'minuet of giants,'" to Mark and Jane's new-found demureness, and her warm-hearted response to his shirt-sleeve innocently
dangling over the window sill: all enacts the grandest spectacle of Deep Heaven (p. 470 and p. 471). As Jane is more, but not less, than a bear or hedgehog, so Heaven's profound realities are more, but not less, than organic sexuality (p. 473). Tellus is not a world that is "'spiritual' in the negative sense—as some neutral, or democratic, vacuum where differences disappear, where sex and sense are not transcended but simply taken away" (p. 390; tense changed). Rather, it is a dynamic, incorporative world, where "something" might leave no room for the sexual life only as the "carnal raptures" of lovers leave them no appetite for chocolates: "the positive thing . . . excludes it" (*Miracles*, pp. 190-91).

Although this "something" remains rather elusive in our present dimension, "some glimpses and faint hints we have," says Lewis: "in the Sacraments, in the use made of sensuous imagery by the great poets, in the best instances of sexual love, in our experiences of the earth's beauty" (*Miracles*, p. 190). With such glimpses and hints, then, the epithalamium properly seals the trilogy and concludes its paean of sacramental language. Fruition, however, awaits consummation: in his role as the Fisher-King, the fertility god of the Grail myth, Ransom blesses Jane: "'You will have no more dreams. Have children instead'" (p. 473). Such issue, nevertheless, is contingent upon Jane's acquiescence. "And she thought of children, and of pain and death" (p. 473). Then, "descending the ladder of humility," Jane chooses to submit to the imperative (p. 476). Her obedience completes the trilogy's progress in bringing myth home, and establishing man as the animal rationale in the glory of his created splendour. Ransom's glowing words give the benediction: "'Perelandra is all about us and Man is no longer isolated. We are now as we ought to be--between the angels who are our
elder brothers and the beasts who are our jesters, servants, and playfellows" (p. 471). "Not beasts nor angels but Men—things at once rational and animal."

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