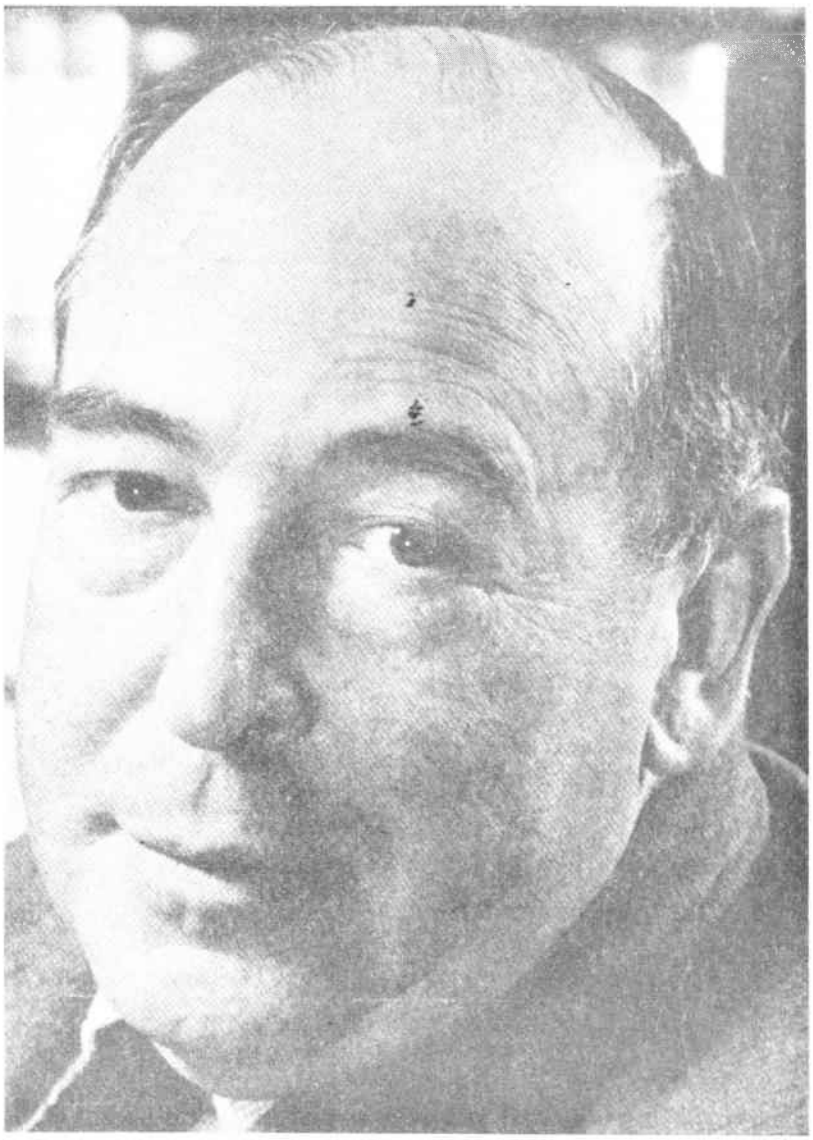
ORCRIST 6



special c. s. lewis issue

ORCRIST

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The Bulletin of the
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Special C. S. Lewis Issue

Editor: Richard C. West
Art Editor: Ivor A. Rogers

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DEDICATION

For Bill Orr

Learned in the three R's

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This issue has been often promised and much delayed, but here at last is a selection of articles on the work of C. S. Lewis as scholar, poet, and prosateur. The range is not quite as wide as I would have liked (notably lacking is any piece on Lewis's Narnia books or Christian apologetics), but what is here already badly crowds our limited space, and we hope the variety and quality we do offer will please those who join our long-expected party.

Joe R. Christopher is in the Department of English at Tarleton State College in Texas; more of his work will appear in future issues of Orcrist. Clyde S. Kilby, who teaches at Wheaton College in Illinois, is well-known for his many books and essays on Lewis. Jared Lobdell regularly reviews books on Lewis for the National Review. Deborah Rogers is at work on a doctoral dissertation dealing with Lewis and Tolkien for the Department of Comparative Literature of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Eugene Warren lives in Missouri and is, among other things, a poet who considers himself much influenced by Lewis and Charles Williams. All of these contributors are members by correspondence of the New York C. S. Lewis Society; anyone interested in this group should write to the Secretary, Mrs. Hope Kirkpatrick (466 Orange Street, New Haven, Connecticut 06511). I have also to thank Prof. Eugène Vinaver of Northwestern University for his kindness in allowing the publication of some letters written to him by Lewis, as well as the Trustees of the Estate of C. S. Lewis, especially Walter Hooper and W. H. Lewis, for graciously acquiescing to this project.

Scattered through this issue are double dactyls by Sharyn Lawler (SL), John Leland (JL), Deborah Rogers (DR), Ivor Rogers (IR), and Richard C. West (RCW). This verse form consists of two stanzas of four lines each, with one rhyme on the final words of each of these two quatrains. The poem is in dactyllic dimeter, except for the fourth and eighth lines, each of which consists of four syllables with any metric stress. It is customary to open with nonsense words (like "Higgledy, Piggledy"), followed by a single name (such as "Thomas Stearns Eliot") comprising line two; and there should be somewhere in the poem a single word which is a perfect double dactyl. To encourage practitioners of this jolly verse form, Orcrist announces the Old Possum's Prize of ten dollars (not exactly a king's ransom, but what do you expect for eight lines?) for the best previously unpublished double dactyl submitted to us. These should be strictly regular; please, no "terror-dactyls". The contest is open to anyone except members of the University of Wisconsin Tolkien Society (who will serve as judges). The better submissions will be printed in Orcrist, the field will remain open for the rest of this year, and the winner will be announced in the first 1973 issue of Orcrist to be published.

Due to lack of space, we are dispensing with a section of errata for Orcrist No. 5. Some minor clerical errors in that issue have been detected, but the only one of such moment that I feel I must correct it here is my own embarrassing comment on p. 9 about the "Spenserian stanzas" of Dymer, a poem written, of course, in rhyme royal--a poetic form bearing no resemblance to the Spenserian stanza.

The theme of Orcrist No. 7 will be "The Medieval Tradition in Modern Literature" (see my essay, "Contemporary Medieval Authors", in Orcrist No. 3). The contents will include Bonniejean Christensen's "Tolkien's Creative Technique: Beowulf and The Hobbit", Elizabeth Lane's "Lloyd Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain and the Welsh Tradition", and Richard West's "Malory and T. H. White". We will also publish J. P. Jacobsen's nineteenth-century poem on the medieval "Songs of Gurre", translated from the Danish by Poul Anderson. This material is already to hand, and more is promised soon, so there should be no obstacle to publishing the issue this spring, providing our bank account allows it. Hence we are very willing to accept paid orders for it now.

R.C.W.
March, 1972

LETTERS OF C.S. LEWIS TO E. VINAVER - Richard C. West

C. S. Lewis was a highly distinguished historian of literature and one of the most eminent teachers of English literature at Oxford and, later, at Cambridge. When he began his teaching career at Oxford in the 20's, he was in the vanguard of those scholars who treated medieval texts not simply as material for philological and historical study, but as works of art--a common critical position now, but revolutionary in the England of the 20's and early 30's. Eugène Vinaver, another medievalist who shared this position, began teaching at Oxford at about the same time as Lewis, and they remained friends throughout the latter's life. Vinaver left Oxford for the University of Manchester in 1933 and was never part of the circle of Inklings, but he and Lewis often had occasion to meet or exchange letters. Knowing my interest in Lewis, he graciously presented me with some of these letters while he was at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, as a Visiting Professor, and both he and the Trustees of Lewis's estate have kindly granted permission for Orcrist to publish them.

I have tried to provide explanations wherever I think a reference in one of the letters might puzzle some readers; these can be skipped by people who do not require them. I apologize if my footnote numbers seem irksome and pedantic, but it was sometimes easier to resort to footnotes than to work an explanation into an introductory comment.

The first letter is the only one from such an early date in my possession. The Winchester ("W") manuscript, the only version of the oeuvre of Sir Thomas Malory independent of William Caxton's 1485 edition, had just been discovered in 1934 by W. F. Oakeshott. Vinaver was editing it, and, at a meeting of the Oxford Medieval Society, had given a lecture based on his findings. A more extended version of it was given eventually as a lecture at the John Rylands Library and printed in the Bulletin of the John Rylands Library. The Roman numerals give Caxton's book and chapter divisions of Malory's text, the N.E.D. stands for the Oxford (or "New") English Dictionary, and "F" refers to Malory's French sources.

Magdalen College,
Oxford
Sept 19th 1935

Dear Vinaver

Thank you very much for the copy of your lecture.[1] Ever since I heard it at the Arthurian[2] I have wished for more of it than memory could carry--as it is now a sine quâ non for any reading of Malory.

About holes in VI vi, it may interest you to note that my own MS. note on the passage gives "Hole=fenestra" (Catholicon Anglicum 1483)--a reference I probably got from the N.E.D. But can you throw any light on "hole of the tree" in VI ii? Your knowledge of "F." will enable you to say at once whether this is merely an error for "bole", or whether we must consider further.[3] (Tolkien showed me O. E. Healh=angulus=fork (of a tree) but this is difficult phonologically.) Thanks also for your very kind reference in a footnote to my somewhat pert review.[4]

I do wish you could see your way to give us a commentary as well as a text when you bring out the W. MS. --it is badly needed for all aspects of the work and whose business is it if not yours?[5]

With many thanks,

Yours
C. S. Lewis

The next letters are of much later date. Lewis had left Oxford in 1954 to assume the newly-established Professorship of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University. (He resigned this chair in 1963, shortly before his death, and was succeeded by J. A. W. Bennett, whom we shall hear more of in these letters.) He stayed overnight with the Vinavers on the occasion of his receiving an honorary degree from the University of Manchester, and the next two letters thank them for their hospitality. The following letter was written to Mrs. Elizabeth Vinaver. Mentioned in it is Mrs. Ida L. Gordon, another medievalist and literary scholar, who has recently published a book on Chaucer called The Double Sorrow of Troilus (Oxford, 1971); her husband, E. V. Gordon, co-edited Sir Gawain and the Green Knight with J. R. R. Tolkien.

Magdalene College,
Cambridge
May 19th 1959

Dear Mrs. Vinaver

I have to thank you both for a present, as well as for a past, pleasure, for I find already that my visit begins to mature very nicely in the cellars of the memory and bids fair to be a great wine for many years. That, you know, is the real test. It was a delightful epilogue to what had been a somewhat arduous day--just what I was needing. Your husband is a dangerous man, though. Far from impressing on me the fact that he is a very learned man and a brilliant talker, he gave me the illusion that I was both! Courtesy and skill cannot go farther--and it feels grand--but I can't believe it is good for me. How does he do it? I wish this lyric close to my trip had not been crossed by the tragic matter of poor Mrs. Gordon and her son; yet I was very glad to meet her too.[6]

Letters of real thanks, like letters of real condolence, suffer from the fact that one has written--and the recipient has read--so many false ones. Can I make you both believe that I really do feel rather as if I had had a night in Joyous Gard?

Yours sincerely,
C. S. Lewis

The "offprint" mentioned below which Vinaver presented to Lewis was of his article, "À la recherche d'une poétique médiévale," published in Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale Vol. 2 (1959), pp. 1-16. (Vinaver used the same title for a book of his published by Librairie Nizet in 1970, and, in recognition of this work, was awarded a prize by the French Academy.) Vinaver spent much of this article discussing Joseph Bédier, a noted French medievalist under whom he had studied. One of Bédier's works was a modern adaptation of the story of Tristan and Iseult based on the various medieval romances of Tristan. It is familiar to English readers in the translation by Hilaire Belloc and Paul Rosenfeld.

Magdalene
May 19th 59

Dear Vinaver--You could not, if you had thought for a year, have given me a more acceptable ξεινηλον[7] than that offprint. You carried me back in a flash to 1915 when I bought Bédier's Roman de T. et I. renouvelé. It was the first book I ever took to a binder's and had bound... Oh those golden years (you must have known them too) when one's medieval reading, far from being meritorious, was all a truancy from one's classics and mathematics!

Your character of Bédier is most impressive. His thought is extremely attractive to me and it made me wish for a moment that the truth, at least about many medieval texts, did not seem to me the exact opposite. Or perhaps not the exact opposite. I certainly don't believe in the work créé d'un coup par le génie populaire. But the typical activity of the medieval author, at any rate the English medieval author, seems to me to be that of "touching up" something that was there already--Wace touching up Geoffrey and Lazamon touching up Wace, or Chaucer touching up Boccaccio. The text before one must of course always be taken just as it stands and not dissolved into its known or supposed ingredients; must in that sense be taken "like the Cid or Tartufe". But one can't always find any single author who stands to it as Corneille or Molière did to them. And the last author is sometimes most original just where he is most indebted to his predecessor--it is where the "French Book" has most kindled Malory's imagination, or Wace has most kindled Lazamon's, that they are inspired to their finest additions.[8]

I agree delightedly with the second part of your paper. How v. odd it is that the abstract equation (le beau=le primitif) should flourish in a period whose general thought is steeped in the idea of "evolution"! And of course you are right in what you say about le lyrisme courtois. Certainly no song is, save accidentally, a confession. I tried to make the point (about the Elizabethan sonneteers) by saying that their work was not a series of love stories but rather an erotic liturgy in which we, all the lovers in the world, can join.[9] The subjective and romantic way of reading them is as if we sought in the words of the Mass for biographical details about its compilers!

I will send the fat volume containing my Spenser essay[10] under a separate cover. It was intended for American students who are on the level of our schoolboys and is v. little worth your attention, and really says nothing about interwoven narrative which you have not said, and better, yourself. All I add is that the technique began before the Middle Ages and survived then. Some younger man might well write a whole book on the subject.

A thousand thanks for both corporal and intellectual hospitality.

Yours
C. S. Lewis

Later, Vinaver sent to Lewis for his criticism the manuscript of a book he was writing on the development of medieval narrative. Vinaver revised this study further over the course of many years, but it has now been published as The Rise of Romance (Oxford, 1971). In these next three letters we find Lewis discussing many of his ideas on medieval aesthetics relevant to Vinaver's work. The collection edited by J. A. W. Bennett which is referred to was later published as Essays on Malory (Oxford, 1963). Both Lewis and Vinaver have articles in this volume, and the story behind the shape those essays took is here.

The Kilns,
Headington Quarry,
Oxford
22 Aug 59

My dear Vinaver

I have read the MS with great interest and often with delight. I shall, however, be a less useful critic than you hoped. This is because your book is so much concerned with relating medieval narrative to the whole history of fiction and, especially, the French novel--a very legitimate and important theme but not one on which I am well qualified to speak.

It is significant that the part I am best able to judge is the part I like best. This raises a presumption that the places where I am a little "at sea" are equally sound. The part I refer to is cap iii, of which your late Medium Aevum article[11] was a foretaste. I think you here settle for good and all a most important question. I, at any rate, do not see any possible answer. You have killed the anthropological giant and those who think all lost stories ipso facto better than all extant stories ought to be silenced.

I am less happy--perhaps because I understand less--about cap i. The contrast between narrative which merely states (like the Chansons de Geste or the Ballads) and that which interprets, which anticipates the question why?--I of course admit. (I wd. even add that I find the former technique still dominant among country-people in any village pub. If, at the end of their narrative you ask them "But why did he say that? Was he joking? Or angry? etc", you get no answer. Or rather their answer is to repeat the fact). What I am not quite convinced of is the view that the sen is related to the events of the story as the spiritual senses are related to the events of the story in Scriptural exegesis. For all the spiritual senses (as enumerated in Pseudo-Dante to Can Grande[12]) are after all allegorical. But the event of, say, Achilles loving Polyxena[13] is not related to his love-speech in that way at all. To say that "Israel came out of Egypt" means (in addition to the historical sense) "the soul turns from sin" is quite different from putting a speech about it into the mouth of Pharaoh.

I am doubtful about your explanation of the poet's motive (p. 29, para I) for giving Achilles a speech.[14] Can it not be fully explained (we have both read Auerbach[15]) as part of the increasing demand for mimesis? Once it was enough to say what happened. Then you add what people looked like--with similes as in Homer. Then what they felt and said. Of course A's speech contributes little to our knowledge of the human heart. We are blasé by now. But would not the original audience have been enabled by that speech to imagine his love more vividly?

I am similarly uneasy about your treatment of Soredamors and Alexandre[16] (pp 34 sq.). These speeches may be, as you say (p. 36A) "unnecessary to the action". But your view, unless I mistake your point, leaves them inconsistent with the action. How can it be an "interpretation" of the factual story to make your protagonists say things for which that factual story gives no pretext? I am assuming--this may be where I'm wrong--that you reject Paris's objection as irrelevant but accept his view that in fact there was no reason why S. and A. shd. not get married.[17] But is this so? Their rank makes a marriage not impossible. Does it not also make it inconceivable that they shd. take the initiative about their own marriage? The King and the Emperor will have their own plans. Even now princes are not v. free in such matters.

In all this I may seem to you--and you may be right--to be naively clinging to a modern idea of story telling. To some extent I am. The Scylla of our approach to old texts is of course this naif modernity; we go into the past as the most regrettable type of English tourist goes abroad, carrying his Englishry with him and meaning by a "good hotel" in Picardy that which is most like a hotel in Brighton.[18] But there is Charybdis too--a tendency to forget that these foreigners, or these medievals, are after all human, to explain everything by dead disciplines (e.g. Rhetoric) even if this involves attributing to them strictly unimaginable states of mind. I think you and I are both in more danger from Charybdis than from Scylla. Hence, am rather on my guard.

In the Erec-Mabinogrin episode (pp 50 sq.) I myself can feel no tension and hardly even a conjointure[19]

between the fairy and the courtly element, and I wonder whether something simpler than conjointure is at work. In a savage story if the hero finds the home of the dead or of the gods it will be a kraal with huts just like the kraals of the poet and the audience. So Valhalla is a ring-giver's hall just like Cerdic's or Alfred's. Ovid's Olympus is v. like Rome. Nearly every Christian representation of Heaven makes it a court. The naif negro representation in Green Pastures[20] significantly substitutes an office and gives God a roller-top desk instead of a throne. This is not conjointure. It is, on whatever level of crudity or sophistication, seriousness or playfulness, the changeless and unavoidable procedure of human imagination. Is it not possible that the (to coin a word) curialisation of the fairy element in Erec is in the same way inevitable? Once you make your fée a lady--and you must do that if she is to be a proper mistress for a knight--I suspect that a good deal more curialisation follows of itself.

A few marginalia:

P. 23 para 2, l. 1, exposition. Wd. "exegesis" leave less room for misunderstanding?[21]

P. 29 para 2 l. 6 bound by...the literal sense. Wd. it be better to say 'limited to' or 'confined to'. You mean, don't you, that he could go beyond it? It sounds as if you meant he could contradict or throw it over.[22]

P. 41, l. 9 speaks of love. Surely not of love (the passion) but of Love (the personification)?[23]

P. 109 para 2 This, if I may say so, seems to me excellently said.[24]

P. 120 para 2, l. 13 irrational. Yes, but how terribly familiar in our actual experience![25]

P. 146 ad fin. When Ross lectured us on Aristotle he forbade us to translate δοκεῖ by "seems". He said it always means "is (popularly or universally) thought".[26]

I admired your ordonnance. In so many books I find myself saying "Yes: I understand that sentence in itself, but why is he saying this just here?" You never once made me do so.[27]

Now something quite different. I hear from J. A. W. Bennett that you think of withdrawing your essay from the collection he is editing on Malory. I implore you to reconsider this. If you don't care to put in the one you originally intended, can you not let us have something else? A book on Malory without an essay by you would be so emphatically "Hamlet without the Prince" that the rest of us wd. be embarassed to appear in it. It will also be misinterpreted. Too many people in our profession look on scholarship as if it were a kind of politics. The book (without you) will be taken to mark the cleavage between a Vinaverian and an anti-Vinaverian "school", or some such nonsense. The fact that Brewer[28] argues against your division[29] and that my essay (based on that old T. L. S. review[30]) dissents from you will be seized on. I shd. find this very distressing. Could you not let us have as your contribution a v. slightly modified re-print of the Medium Aevum article? I know that it's all in cap iii of the Perspective,[31] but it is very well able to stand alone.

It has been a great privilege to read your MS. With kindest regards to Mrs. Vinaver and yourself,

Yours
C. S. Lewis

P.S. How about getting the TS of my essay fm J. A. W. B (or from me if you can wait till term and I am re-united to the carbons, which are at Cambridge) and writing an answer to it--or, if in any place you agree with me, a development from it? This wd. give the book a symposiastic quality. At any rate we wd. show our juniors--what they increasingly need to be shown--that disputation is not the same as quarrelling.

The Kilns,
Headington Quarry,
Oxford
26 Aug 59

My dear Vinaver--You make far too much of something that was more of an honour than a task and more of a pleasure than either.

One thing I ought to have said in my last letter. Some of my difficulty in fully understanding parts of your argument may be neither your fault nor (in a way) mine. It may be due to "un-shared background". You come to the subject, obviously, from a whole literature on the novel, especially "Form" in the novel, of which I know hardly anything. It is therefore v. possible that many words, including "Form", have overtones for you which they lack for me.

I am very, very glad that you are disposed to reconsider your decision about the J. A. W. B. collection. My own essay exists (a) in the TS which he, as editor, now has; (b) in two carbons and one illegible MS now at Cambridge. I can't get over to Cambridge at present. You can therefore, if you follow the symposiastic idea, either ask J. A. W. B. to lend you his copy now, or wait till term begins when I can send you one of the Cambridge carbons.

Have you read Tolkien's lecture on Fairy Tales in the volume Essays Presented to Charles Williams?[32] Part of my case against the Celticists wd. be his maxim that "motifs are products of analysis"--not bricks out of which stories are put together but entia rationis into which we analyze them--rather like metrical feet or grammatical conjugations and declensions.

Does it ever occur to you that the procedure of the Celticists is really a response showing how well the "ferlies" in the Romances work? For the Celticist is saying "Hush! Stop! Here is something hidden. Behind this lies something far older, mistier, more barbaric, more momentous than you might suppose." Or, more briefly and far better, numen inest. Is not this just the response the romances intended? But when v. unimaginative people are thus, for once, trapped into a healthy or naif response, they mistake it for a scientific theory! Their quest for the hidden Pagan ritual is itself another romantic quest and gives just the same sort of pleasure as the romances they think they are explaining. The same holds for the Jungians.

None of this expects an answer--I'm "just talking".

Yours
C. S. Lewis

Magdalene College,
Cambridge
21 Oct. 1959

Dear Vinaver

I think this open letter[33] is one of the very best things you have ever done--and to have occasioned it is perhaps the most useful thing I ever did. There is really no difference left between us about Malory. Further discussion would lead us into a different field. If we disagreed--and I am not quite sure whether we should--it would be about the meaning of words like Art and Nature. It's amusing, by the way, that you and Proust move the idea of "genius" back much nearer to the Medieval or Renaissance meaning--something almost other than the man. I'm not at all sure you are wrong. Though we shd. have to inquire whether the otherness between the moi profond and the common moi is a constant. The gap may be greater in some writers than in others. Of course I am completely with you in opposing the identification of the two taken for granted by many critics. I made my critical enfances by opposing it in The Personal Heresy.[34]

It is v. appropriate that a book on a medieval author shd. contain an estrif or débat.

When you write to J. A. W. B. will you be so kind as to tell him (with my authority--which is really your authority gratefully accepted) to substitute "accused of" for "convicted" on p. 6 of my essay.[35]

My duty to Mrs. Vinaver.

Yours
C. S. Lewis

I feel that any conclusion I might write after this would be quite superfluous, so I will merely break off with an expression of my sincere thanks to: Professor Fannie Le Moine of the Classics Department at the University of Wisconsin, Madison for helping me with Lewis's Greek; Father Walter Hooper, who checked my transcription of Lewis's letters and offered some helpful criticisms of an earlier draft of this article; and Eugene Vinaver, for his many acts of kindness, especially supplying me with these letters in the first place and discussing their background with me.

NOTES

[1]"Malory's Morte Darthur in the Light of a Recent Discovery," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Vol. 19, No. 2 (July, 1935), 438-457.

[2]The original name of the Oxford Medieval Society (founded in 1928).

[3]"The hole of the tree was emended in my 1947 edition to bole of the tree on the basis of body of the tree in the Winchester MS: a case of two parallel misreadings of the same word." (Personal letter to me from E. Vinaver, undated.)

[4]Cf. Sir Thomas Wyatt and Some Collected Studies by E. K. Chambers, reviewed in Medium Aevum Vol. 3 (October, 1934), 237-240. At that time, Vinaver was one of the editors of this journal.

[5]Vinaver's edition of The Works of Sir Thomas Malory was published by the Clarendon Press in 1947. A revised edition appeared in 1967. Both have an extensive commentary.

[6]Lewis saw Mrs. Gordon (the widow of E. V. Gordon) at dinner when he stayed with the Vinavers. At that time her son was dangerously ill, and died shortly afterwards. Lewis encouragingly told Mrs. Gordon of his own wife's apparent recovery from cancer. She had been given a new drug, and the results were remarkable; he attributed it chiefly to a miracle subsequent to a priest praying by her bedside. Not long after this Mrs. Lewis had a relapse and died.

[7]xeneion: a farewell gift from a host to his guest; a Homeric term.

[8]For more by Lewis on the process of "touching up", see "The Genesis of a Medieval Book," Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 18-40. Lewis discussed "What Chaucer Really Did to Il Filostrato" in Essays and Studies Vol. 17 (1932), 56-75; this was reprinted in Lewis's Selected Literary Essays, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 27-44.

[9]Lewis is referring to his English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama (Oxford, 1954), pp. 490-491.

[10]Major British Writers, ed. G. B. Harrison et al. (Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1954), Vol. I, pp. 91-104. Reprinted in Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature, op.cit., pp. 121-146.

[11]"The Dolorous Stroke," Medium Aevum Vol. 25 (1956), 175-180. For Lewis's own blow against the "anthropological giant" (that critical position which finds medieval literature valuable for supposed survivals in it of ancient myths and rituals of pagan Celts and Teutons), see his "The Anthropological Approach," in English and Medieval Studies Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien, ed. Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn (Geo. Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1962), pp. 219-230; reprinted in Lewis's Selected Literary Essays, op.cit., pp. 301-311. See also Lewis's letter of 26 August 1959 in this paper.

[12]A letter written, ostensibly by Dante, to an Italian nobleman, describing four levels of meaning in reading the Bible.

[13]In the Roman de Troie by Benoît de Sainte-Maure.

[14]Vinaver had suggested that Achilles in love must make a long speech about it because Benoît and his audience "could not conceive of any passion being silent". Cf. The Rise of Romance, p. 24.

[15]Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton University Press, 1953).

[16]In Chrétien de Troyes, Cligès.

[17]Gaston Paris, the founder of romance philology and of medieval studies in France, objected in the Journal des Savants (1902; p. 351) that Soredamors and Alexandre, the future parents of Cligès, being high-born and well-matched, need fear no obstacle to their love.

[18]Lewis develops the same analogy in his preface to his posthumously published study, The Discarded Image (Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. ix-x.

[19]conjointure: a term used by Chrétien de Troyes in his Erec et Enide, and variously interpreted. Vinaver suggests that it means "a whole made out of several parts" or "arrangement", referring to different elements combined into a single story and to different levels of meaning in the story. Cf. The Rise of Romance, pp. 35-37.

[20]Marc Connelly, The Green Pastures (Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1929).

[21]Vinaver preferred the phrase "the art of biblical exposition" which still appears in The Rise of Romance, p. 17.

[22]The meaning which Lewis wished to avoid was in fact intended. Cf. The Rise of Romance, p. 21.

[23]A reference to Dante's Vita Nuova.

[24]A reference to what is now the last paragraph on p. 91 of The Rise of Romance.

[25]The reference in Vinaver's original draft was to the sequence of episodes in later romances.

[26]Vinaver quoted here the remark in Aristotle's Poetics (IX) about "matters of chance that seem most marvellous if there is an appearance of design in them".

[27]Vinaver notes that some of the passages Lewis objected to survive in The Rise of Romance "because I still do not agree with Lewis's view of 'the discovery of meaning'. He believed that the processes I describe under that heading were part of the natural growth of things--a kind of natural mimesis. I don't, and strangely enough, I have Auerbach on my side, so far as medieval narrative is concerned. I see art (often synonymous with artifice) where he (Lewis) only saw nature--or human nature in its universal manifestations. He did not believe, as I do, in the historicity of the aesthetic process. And this is why he wrote this brilliant passage about Charybdis--one of the finest pieces of aesthetic theory I have ever read." (Letter to me dated January 22, 1972.)

[28]D. S. Brewer, "'the hoole book,'" in Essays on Malory, ed. J. A. W. Bennett (Oxford, 1963), 41-63.

[29]Vinaver concluded on the evidence of the Winchester manuscript that Malory had written not one but eight romances. The theory has caused the shedding of much ink.

[30]"The Morte Darthur," review of Vinaver's first edition of Malory (op. cit.) in The Times Literary Supplement (7 June 1947), pp. 273-274; reprinted in Lewis's Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature (op. cit.), pp. 103-110.

[31]A reference to an earlier tentative title for the first draft of The Rise of Romance.

[32]"On Fairy-Stories," in Essays Presented to Charles Williams (Oxford, 1947; Eerdmans, 1966), pp. 38-89.

[33]E. Vinaver, "On Art and Nature," in Essays on Malory, ed. J. A. W. Bennett (Oxford, 1963), pp. 29-40; written in answer to C. S. Lewis, "The English Prose Morte," ibid., pp. 7-28.

[34]C. S. Lewis and E. M. W. Tillyard, The Personal Heresy: A Controversy (Oxford, 1939).

[35]The reference is to crimes allegedly committed by Malory. Cf. Essays on Malory (op. cit.), p. 10.

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An Interpretation of "Till We Have Faces" - Clyde S. Kilby

This is, I think, unquestionably the most difficult of all of C. S. Lewis's books. Yet it may be the best of his books. I have read it at least a half-dozen times, but the present reading suggests a wholly new story.

Perhaps the most noteworthy new view is that of the number of witnesses from the gods to Orual.

In the first place Orual is clearly aware that the blood of the gods is in her family. She begins with this "connection" with them, suggesting at once the Light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The lengthy teaching of the Fox that the gods are lovely poetic inventions never quite wipes out a deepsense of their reality in Orual. When the Fox's death at the hands of her father seems imminent, she asks him, "Do you really in your heart believe nothing of what is said about the gods?" and she notices his trembling as his feelings overcome his Stoic philosophy. (17-18) So even apart from Psyche, Orual experiences a general witness.

But it is chiefly through Psyche that the epiphanies take place. Orual loved (or thought she loved) Psyche, and Psyche's beauty and goodness were constant witnesses to her. Psyche was the first Christian in her tribe, and a glorious one at that, but Orual failed to look beyond her toward the god of the mountain, the brightest spot in Psyche's life. (76) The at times overpowering, yet suppressed, supernatural force on Orual's existence keeps manifesting itself. When Psyche, in the palace prison and facing death, ironically repeats the Fox's fair-time philosophy about accepting misfortune, Orual says that it then "seemed to me so light, so far away from our sorrow. I felt we ought not to be talking that way, not now." Then she adds, "What I thought it would be better to talk of, I did not know." (69)

Then comes a series of overwhelming witnesses. The first is that the rain, the need for which was the cause of Psyche's sacrifice, actually followed that sacrifice. The fields were wet, the river refilled with water, the birds returned, and the people of Glome were happy in the belief that the gods had accepted their sacrifice and been placated.

Next comes Orual's finding of Psyche "alive" and looking healthier and happier than ever. Though Orual does not believe either in Psyche's palace or her loving husband, she sees before her an incontrovertible fact--her glorious sister full of life and warmth of welcome. And then, after their violent parting, Orual goes down at twilight to drink from the stream and momentarily, but truly, sees the palace. In her own words there it stood "solid and motionless, wall within wall, pillar and arch and architrave, acres of it, a labyrinthine beauty....like no house ever seen in our land or age. Pinnacles and buttresses leaped up...unbelievably tall and slender, pointed and prickly as if stone were shooting out into branch and flower." (132) Orual later stated her doubts about seeing the palace, but reading this account of its bulk and details one knows how she was fooling herself.

Another strong witness occurred on the second trip when Orual had won the victory over Psyche by commanding her to test her unseen husband and pledging her own suicide unless it was done. Yet promptly Orual was beset with the fear that she might have been wrong and that "a real god" is involved. She was terribly tempted to run back and stop what she had put into motion, but, she says, "I governed it." (169) What a difference had she succumbed.

For the Christian one of the great scenes of the book is what follows Psyche's forced testing of her husband. Lewis always wishes to say that "Aslan is not a tame lion," i.e., that there is another side to God than His love, and both aspects are clearly seen here. There is a great flash and thunder and lightnings and a vast flood. Then comes the voice which "even in its implacable sternness" was "golden." Her response, Orual says, is "the salute that mortal flesh gives to immortal things." (171) For a moment Orual experienced a theophany, the very face of God, and she said it was mainly the beauty, not the terror, that mastered her.

But now a new stage of both Psyche's and Orual's lives must begin, an oedipean wandering, particularly a wandering of the soul, day after day and year after year. The beginning of it is marked by "the passionless and measureless rejection" with which the face of God looked on her and a voice "unmoved and sweet, like a bird singing on the branch above a hanged man," said that Psyche was going out into exile and suffering, and then added, enigmatically, that "Orual shall be Psyche." (173-4)

Having undergone and successfully resisted the witness, Orual now begins to suffer the consequences. Yet one of those consequences is that God did not forsake her. The road back was a long, miserable road, and in many ways strikingly like the road taken by C. S. Lewis himself.

The story suggests two extreme sorts of response to God. One is that of Psyche herself. From earliest childhood her longing had been toward the mountain. Intuitively she believed she belonged there. She seemed natively to love and to possess religious virtues. She was born into a pagan home and a pagan city, yet she had a natural beauty of both body and soul. (All of us know of some pagan family today who produces a Psyche.) The other extreme type is represented by Orual, an instance of a person to whom God seemingly says, "I will have you, whether or no." St. Paul was such a man, and C. S. Lewis was another. At sixteen, Lewis wrote his boyhood friend Arthur Greeves of how God liked to get hold of some first-rate person and torture him with "cruelty after cruelty without any escape." He had nothing but contempt for "all the...tomfoolery about virgin birth, magic healings, apparitions, and so forth." After her experience beyond the mountain, Orual now realizes that the gods exist and, taking the anthropomorphic view, concludes that the gods hate her and intend to be revenged on her. She has heard that the gods sometimes turn men into beasts, so she puts her hand up to see if she can feel cat's fur or hog's tusks beginning to grow on her face. (175) But her wounds are of another sort, the kind that most men are acquainted with.

For one thing, she says she went over the religious view of things "thousands of times." (72) Yet forgetting the pathos of the face and the voice she experienced in the storm, she retains her hatred of the gods. Sometimes she pities herself. (209) Other times she becomes very hard. She wishes for the death of her father. (202) She hardens herself. She decides to destroy the Orual of the past by plunging into her duties as the new queen and for awhile she is successful. She kills a man in a duel. Meantime she concludes to hide her ugly face under a lifetime veil. Have we not seen people wearing this sort of veil, indeed have we not ourselves worn such a veil? Orual's experience proves it cannot hide her from God but only, in part, from the people around her.

She comes to wonder who "sends us this senseless repetition of days and nights and seasons and years" and feels it is "like hearing a stupid boy whistle the same tune over and over, till you wonder how he can bear it himself." (236) What a contrast this is with the Green Lady in Perelandra, who accepts at God's hand each day as a precious new gift, the best day of all. Orual does succeed in gaining a brief period of happiness, about the time she knows she is in love with Bardia and when she for a little appears to succeed in killing the old Orual. (222)

Interestingly, once Orual falls down seriously before the gods and prays to them. (150) Yet there is no response from the gods. Yet she confesses that she came "without a sacrifice" and also requiring of the gods a sign. What a stroke of genius with which Lewis handles this experience of Orual's. There was a sign, not a new sign but a repetition of one of the clearest signs Orual had experienced of the gods. Had she not been warmly conscious that the dread drought ceased and the birds returned after Psyche's sacrifice on the mountain? She says that all the time she lay on the floor asking the gods for a sign there was rain on the roof. Rain, often a symbol in the Bible of God's presence and care, was for Orual also a sign. We can imagine what results might have ensued if her very abject confession before the gods had had no strings attached. Even with the strings the sign was there all the time and actually heard by her, yet without any spiritual recognition. She was not yet able to get her eyes opened to an unbargaining God.

What was the underlying problem of Orual? It was something that I think Lewis understood almost as well as any person in history--understood and desperately feared. It was the insidiousness with which self crawls into every single crevice of a man's being. In this respect Orual was a replica of pagan and Christian alike.

Orual was in most respects an excellent and admirable person. She was reasonable, enthusiastic, brave, friendly, progressive, and a lover of justice. She was an excellent queen, efficient and just. She would have made a good neighbor. She vigorously took Psyche's part when she thought her sister unjustly sacrificed by the people of Glome. She hated her father's rages and was desperately ashamed of his cowardice when the lots were drawn for the sacrificial victim for the city of Glome.

Orual's great defect was selfishness and selfishness masquerading under the perfectly serious mantle of love. Orual is Maia. In Hindu religion Maia means "illusion." Maia is also "nature" or what Christians would call "the natural man." Almost from the moment of Psyche's birth, Orual loved her deeply and as Psyche grew up she and Orual and the Fox spent deliriously happy days together. After Psyche's sacrifice on the mountain the world for Orual was like "a dead desert." (88) The trouble arose the moment it appeared that Psyche was to be lost to another. (104) The Fox himself had to tell Orual on one occasion that she hates, rather than loves, her sister. "There's one part love in your heart, and five parts anger, and seven parts pride," he tells her. (148) Orual's agitated attitude that Psyche must not be sacrificed is in some respects like that of the disciples who told Christ that He must not go to the Cross.

Through the long years of Orual's successful queenship there was little cessation of the calling. She was constantly reminded, much as she tried to avoid them, of little memories of the happy days of childhood. The rain on the roof always spoke to her. But the beginning of her real enlightenment of the evil self-defensive attitude appeared when Orual visited the little temple in the woods, and, full of astonishment, heard her own story retold as a myth. She was nonplussed about the priest's account of how the Orual of the myth really saw the palace, as she had carefully hidden that part of her experience from everybody. The only conclusion she could draw was that the gods themselves had somehow implanted that fact in the myth. (243) But the thing which really incensed her was the claim of the myth that she hated Psyche. (242) She had not taken the earlier hints of this seriously, and now she promptly concluded, in her insulted state of mind, to write down her case against the gods. She felt that if that terrible story that she hated her sister had gone abroad while Orual was yet alive, she must correct it by assuring the world of the truth, that is, of her great love for Psyche. It was the door which opened up for Orual all the "terrors, humiliations, struggles, and anguish" of her life and she wanted the real facts to be known.

On this note the first book concludes.

The second opens with the remark, "I must unroll my book again." A whole new element had loomed up. The thing which caused the second account was the writing down of her case against the gods. (253)

Orual now began to sort out the threads of the tangle in her mind--to review the whole of her life with a different viewpoint. Sometimes the sorting took place in her dreams and once she found herself "separating motive from motive and both from pretext." (256) It was like a vast pile of different kinds of seeds needing to be separated but could not be. Then the first great blow to Orual's pride came in the form of a real event. Bardia died and Orual went to comfort his widow and made the horrendous discovery that her love-hate of Bardia destroyed him. Ansit told her, "Your queenship drank up his blood year by year and ate out his life." When Orual remonstrated and asked why Ansit never told her this, she answered that he was a soldier and she must not "make him so mine that he was no longer his." Note the double meaning here of 1) Orual's selfishness and 2) the way of God, who wants each man a free agent living the particular and peculiar life He has bestowed on him, rather than an automaton. (Psyche also loved Bardia but, like Ansit, she never thought of "devouring" him.) Orual now for the first time realizes that she is a destroyer of freedom in people's lives, that, like the legend of the Shadow-brute, the loving and devouring are all one.

"And now," says Orual, "those divine Surgeons (Lewis capitalizes the word) had me tied down and were at work." She had to confess to herself that in reality she hated Bardia. "A love like that," she said, "can grow to be nine-tenths hatred and still call itself love." (266) But to be able to see and say such a thing as that meant that now Orual was clearly on the right way. She was in position to get a new and correct view of the way things really are. Mainly she simply came to the end of herself. Thereafter she was "drenched with seeings." In his autobiography, Lewis tells how his "Adversary [God] began to make His final moves." (SBJ, 205) Later he adds, "Amiable agnostics will talk cheerfully about 'man's search for God'. To me, as I then was, they might as well have talked about the mouse's search for the cat." (SBJ, 214)

One thing which Orual discovered is that people really are helped and made happy by the ancient and bloody Ungit, not the clean and pretty one set up by Arnom. Then she experiences the vision of her descent down through one Pillar Room after another until finally she comes all the way down to "living rock," where she must stand and see herself as she really is. She knows now that she has indeed been Ungit, "that all-devouring womblike, yet barren, thing." Under the burden of these things, she concludes to kill herself, but at the moment of flinging herself into the River Shennit a god speaks to her. Even in her desperate intent to commit suicide, she is now on the way to God. The rebel in her is now gone and she finds herself a "cold, small, helpless thing," a necessary condition to any real progress. "Die before you die. There is no chance after," says the god. (279) Psyche had long before told Orual, "If I am to go to the gods, of course it must be through death," (72) and I think it is not wholly out of place here to believe, looking back, that Psyche meant death to self.

But still Orual has a way to go. Her next step is self-reformation based on the Fox's philosophy. She fails. Fate, she believes, is against her. It is at this point that she has the vision of the rams of the gods whose "gladness" injures her. God will have no mere reformation. There is a way to successfully get the golden fleece - a way made apparent when Orual sees another woman able to procure it, to procure it from "the thorns" and thus win it without any effort.

Orual's last great stronghold is still to be destroyed. Of one great fact she has been sure: her love for Psyche. Now she has the vision of going into the Deadlands and finding there her father, the Fox, Batta, and others. In this judgment hall she is ordered by a veiled figure to read her lifelong complaint against the gods, but it does not work out at all as she expected. As she makes her complaint she discovers that she really preferred Psyche dead to Psyche made immortal. (291) "She was mine. Mine!," the complaint said. The gods, she charged, are "a tree in whose shadow we can't thrive. We want to be our own. I was my own and Psyche was mine and no one else had any right to her.... You stole her to make her happy." She continues to read her complaint over and over (Have you not known someone exactly like this?) until finally the judge stops her. He asks, "Are you answered?" and she says "Yes."

Then we have that great page in the novel on which Orual confesses, "The complaint was the answer.... I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?" (294)

But now, as in any good courtroom, the defendants must answer the plaintiff. The gods have been called into court. Orual fearfully asks the Fox what is likely to happen to her. In reply the Fox says, that "whatever else you get, you will not get justice." (297) "Are the gods not just?" Orual asks. "Oh no, child," is the answer. "What would become of us if they were?" (297)

In the last beautiful and powerful portion of the story Orual finds not the justice but the love of the gods. By means of living pictures Orual learns of another attitude and another response toward the gods, mostly through seeing Psyche's means of sorting the seeds, acquiring the golden fleece, and filling the bowl with the water of death. When she asks how she could do such things and be happy, the answer is "Another bore nearly all the anguish." There seem to be at least two meanings here. One is that Love bore the anguish. Another is that in suffering Orual discovered the anguish of God over one lost to Him, as Psyche seemed to be lost to Orual. God is jealous for what is truly His own. (301) Orual learns that the cry of foolish men for heavenly justice is not at all a cry for justice but a mere muttering and whining.

Orual's "seeings" have now brought her almost full circle. Having discovered the nature of Love Himself, she is prepared for the last great vision of Psyche going into the deadlands to bring back the casket of beauty from "death herself." This trip illustrates the manysidedness of myth as Lewis sees it. It has at least three important aspects. It is the token of Psyche's unswerving obedience to her husband. In Apuleius, Psyche, on the brink of success in her trip to and from Hades, failed because at the last moment her curiosity and the wish to have a little of the beauty in the casket for herself overcame her. Not so with Lewis's Psyche. Here she refuses to listen to the voices crying to her to take care and to return to safety and goes straightforward to the completion of her task. Orual herself was one who cried, "Come back. Come back." and now Orual discovers her own terrible mistake in the two visits she had paid to Psyche long before. But there is a third and significant overtone of another "descent into hell" in which by obedience to the point of bloody hands, feet, and side, an ineffable beauty was brought back to men. Like Orual, the reader at this point in the story is himself "drenched with seeings," and is as overjoyed as Orual herself at the glorious appearing of Love Himself to replace her lifetime ugliness with a heavenly beauty.

Such, I think, is the main interpretation of this Christian myth. To state the entire implications of the story would mean, I think, to write a book larger than Lewis's.

The place of the Fox in the story is clearer than anything else, I think. For him nature and reason are "the whole," with allowances also for "custom." (85, 87) The gods are in nature. The Fox believes in the gods after the fashion of an "enlightened" man. They may be good for ignorant people, but after all he comes into Glome as an "expert" from abroad, as the man with the last word in philosophy and ethics. Finally he has to confess that his philosophy was as clear, but also as thin, as water. There is also the telling fact in his rationalism that it breaks down frequently when his heart is moved. The Fox seems to be Lewis's old tutor, the Great Knock, who was an logician and atheist who nevertheless on Sundays put on a nicer suit than usual in which to go out and do his gardening. One must not miss the significant postscript to the book which says that the whole account was intended for the Greeks to read, that is, people today who are like the Fox.

I think the place of Ungit in the story is also very clear, at least in its main theme. Ungit's house is said to resemble "the egg from which the whole world was hatched." (94) This is obviously another allusion to Lewis's belief concerning the meaning of myth. Here it primarily means that pagan myths are often involved with blood sacrifices and this Lewis explains is owing to an initial revelation to all nations of the essential nucleus of a theme which was made finally and fully clear in the Incarnation and Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In the sweet-smelling little temple which Orual found in the forest it was not blood that was sacrificed but flowers and fruit, if indeed there was any sacrifice at all. The difference between Ungit and the woodland temple was the difference between the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. Even in Glome, pagan as it was, the blood in some mysterious way "worked."

A troublesome element in the story is the "transformations" which keep appearing. The people of Glome

say that as healer Psyche is Ungit and they worship her. (32) Orual tells Psyche that she has always been her father and mother and kin - "and all the King too" that Psyche has ever had. (158) "You also shall be Psyche," says the god to Orual. (174) I think that one way at least in which Orual became Psyche was the long years in which Orual suffered the memory and the pain of her injury to Psyche. Without going into detail, we can perhaps best explain this element in the story by reference to the teachings of Charles Williams, Lewis's close friend, on co-inherence and substitution. Behind this conception is the idea that the world is inevitably a unity and therefore that men, made in the image of God, are capable of knowing and indeed undergoing the joys and sorrows of another. The most striking illustration of it in Lewis is the fact that for a period he took the pain from his wife's cancerous thigh and suffered while at the same time she was relieved of her pain. (Light on C. S. Lewis, 63) The great co-inherence is suggested by a poem of Lewis's two lines of which run, "Nearly they stood who fall" and "Nearly they fell who stand." (Poems, 102) How close Orual came to "standing" that time when she was all but overpowered with the idea of rushing back to Psyche and cancelling the promise of Psyche to "test" her husband.

Bardia seems to be given us not only to show another instance of Orual's devouring but also to show the sort of man who might be found walking down most any street or even in churches. He is a Stoic, a man who "does his duty" (90) but, though a "god-fearing man," (99) really manages to leave the gods alone. He readily remembers the saying in Glome that "Beyond the Tree, it's all gods' country," (100) but it is a saying, not a reality, to him. That belief is part of the mythology of Glome and illustrates Lewis's conception of how myth becomes encrusted with "filth," for Bardia and all the people of Glome had quite literally "brutalized" "the gods' country" by substituting a Shadowbrute for what Psyche and finally Orual knew to be the land of Love Himself. (If we do not accept God, we tend to brutalize him.) Bardia is a prudent, courteous, hard-working, duty-fulfilling man (69) who gives the gods their due and otherwise steers clear of them.

Redival, by the way, is apparently the selfish, lustful worldling more concerned about "getting and spending" and a good time than anything else. Ungit means nothing to her. The interesting thing is that the resentful and hateful Orual, the rebel who vigorously makes her case against the gods is the one who comes through, not Redival.

Finally we can say a word about the Apuleius myth which Lewis took as a source. There are clear agreements in Lewis and clear differences, and it makes an interesting study to examine them. In Apuleius we have a king with three daughters, the youngest worshiped as a goddess, a fact which makes Venus jealous and causes her to punish Psyche. An oracle in the old myth requires the exposing of Psyche to a kind of beast, and Psyche is then rescued by Westwind and carried, by prearrangement, to Cupid. Cupid requires Psyche not to see him as he visits her each night. The two other sisters come, see her beautiful palace, and become envious. They persuade her to look on and be prepared to slay her lover. As punishment for this act, Psyche is forced to wander away, is captured by Venus, and put to impossible tasks such as sorting seeds, getting the golden fleece, and acquiring water from the lower world. The river Styx is common in Greek myth as the main river of Hades and to be crossed at death. Lewis changes the myth to suit his own Christian purpose. He makes much more of the sorting of the seeds and particularly he has Orual on her visit get only that one fateful but sure glimpse of the palace of Psyche. In Apuleius Psyche gets herself in trouble by opening the casket of beauty, as I have mentioned already.

My present reading of the story has suggested to me all over again something of its almost unlimited mythic quality. There seems to be hardly a page - sometimes hardly a sentence - which has not its overtone about which one must ask, Is there something else here? For instance, the unseen lover of Psyche suggests more or less the whole relationship between the Christian and Christ. Though unseen, He is our great love and worthy of the test to "forsake all others." Even the sexual relation, as Bible students well know, is one of the important metaphors of the New Testament. Also this whole palace picture often suggests the glories of heaven as seen in the book of Revelation and the final goal of the Christian as the bride of the Lamb, as Psyche herself suggests the perfection of the Church, "without spot or wrinkle."

One characteristic of a great book, said Mortimer J. Adler, is that it will not let you down if you try to read it well. By this standard I think that Till We Have Faces is surely a great book.

Petty Curry: Salvation by a Taste for Tripe & Onions - Jared Lobdell

In That Hideous Strength, the late C. S. Lewis's grab-bag Arthurian novel, almost everyone connected with Bracton College (and a good many connected with the University of Edgestow, but not with Bracton) perishes either at the hands of the N.I.C.E., or in the general holocaust at the end when the N.I.C.E. is overthrown. The singular exception is the Sub-Warden of Bracton, Curry -- and a very singular exception it is. Even the "wholly innocent Warden" of Bracton, Charles Place, is missing and presumed dead in the course of the action; but Curry, the very leader of the Progressive Element, is spared. It seems a strange choice.[1]

Initially at least, the more one thinks about it, the stranger it becomes. Curry is a military historian who will almost certainly never put college politics aside and get down to writing his book on military history. He loves business and wire-pulling for their own sake. He is a bore. He is "so used to superintending the lives of his colleagues that it [comes] naturally to him to superintend their deaths." He regards his survival as providential -- because it means there is a responsible person left to deal with the re-founding of Bracton College. He is, in short, rather a pompous ass, and more than a bit of a fool, though we are assured he is not a hypocrite.[2]

This last point is interesting, and one is inclined to think it important. It is made twice, once when Curry is present at Hingest's funeral, once when he hears the news that Bracton is destroyed. In the first case, he is "stricken by a heavy blow but still mindful that he [is] the father of the College and that amid all the spoils of mutability he, at any rate, must not give way." In the second, "without the least hypocrisy, habit and instinct had given his shoulders just such a droop, his eyes such a solemn sternness, his brow such a noble gravity, as a man of good feeling might be expected to exhibit on hearing such news." The two passages may be taken together to suggest that Curry has in fact grown into what he has been pretending to be. Lewis elsewhere makes the point that, if pretending to be better than one is can be called hypocrisy, then hypocrisy (of this sort at least) is half a virtue: one becomes what one pretends to be. It is not hard to see Curry as an example of this.[3]

Mr. Walter Hooper has noted that "Curry represents a kind of ass whom we shall always have to endure: he is a common fixture in almost every Oxford common-room, and Lewis was marvelously charitable in enduring such self-complacent bores." One thinks of Lewis's own comment, in a letter to his publishers: "I have all the usual vices: the only virtue (if it is a virtue) which I can claim in any marked degree is a patience, amounting almost to a liking, for bores." And one notes elsewhere in his work, especially in the 1940's, a preaching of patience for bores. It would, in fact, be possible to see in Curry's survival (as well as in Lewis's own patience) a sort of corollary to that passage in The Screwtape Letters where his Abysmal Sublimity remarks that "if the Enemy appeared to [the patient] in bodily form and demanded that total service for even one day, he... would be greatly relieved if that one day involved nothing harder than listening to the conversation of a foolish woman..." It is not a mortal sin to be a bore, whatever the verdict of the Oxford common-rooms may be.[4]

Yet, when all this is said, and one realizes that Curry is certainly not so bad by a long shot as he might be, the question still remains, "Why was he preserved?" It may be suggested that the key lies in Dimble's words; his wife asks "Aren't Merlin and the eldils a trifle... well, wholesale. Did all Edgestow deserve to be wiped out?" He answers, after Denniston presents a kind of bill of indictment, "I'm afraid it's all true, my dear... Trahison des clercs. None of us is quite innocent." The reference to trahison des clercs should repay attention.[5]

That, it will be remembered, is the title of a book by the essayist Julien Benda, published in English in 1928 under the title, The Treason of the Intellectuals. Benda's influence on Lewis does not seem to have been generally noticed, though a comparison, for example, of the Summary chapter in La trahison des clercs, especially the passage relating to the difficulties of achieving civilization, with Lewis's similar remarks in his Rehabilitations and Other Essays, is highly suggestive -- the more so since Lewis's strictures on the philosophy of history (in De Descriptione Temporum) echo Benda. But this, for the time being, is rather beside the point.[6]

The essential question is whether Curry is guilty of the trahison des clercs. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to discover first what it was that Benda and Lewis were attacking. The conclusion of Benda's Summary chapter is obviously relevant to one of the themes of Lewis's entire interplanetary trilogy: "Above classes and nations there does exist a desire of the species to become the master of things, and, when a human being flies from one end of the world to the other in a few hours, the whole human race... adores itself as distinct from the rest of creation.... Sometimes one may feel that such an impulse will grow ever stronger, and that in this way inter-human wars will come to an end.... But far from being the abolition of the national spirit with its appetites and its arrogance, this would simply be its supreme form, the nation being called Man and the enemy God." This is Benda's prediction: his evidence, in the earlier chapters, is no less relevant to That Hideous Strength, and may be more relevant to Curry.[7]

Benda finds the psychological foundation of politics to lie in two desires: the will of a group of men to get hold of (or retain) a material advantage, and the will of a group of men to become conscious of themselves as distinct from other men. The treason of the intellectuals consists in their preaching the goodness of these aims. This treason is peculiar to the present time: "Our age has seen a fact hitherto unknown... in metaphysics preaching adoration for the contingent and scorn for the eternal." Moreover, "it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of a movement whereby those who for twenty centuries taught Man that the criterion of the morality of an act is its disinterestedness... that his will is only moral if it seeks its law outside its objects, should begin to

teach him that the moral act is the act whereby he secures his existence against an environment that disputes it, that his will is moral insofar as it is a 'will to power'..." It should not be necessary to labor the point -- this is precisely the treason of the N.I.C.E.[8]

But Curry is not involved in this to any great degree. He is not a "clerk" -- he thinks that the "traditionalists and research beetles" affect to look down on him. He neither wants any material advantage (Feverstone notes that he can be persuaded to drive the train but has no idea where he is going), nor is he wholeheartedly convinced of the "dimness of the outsiders" in the Bracton common-room. Like the man who is "defended from strong temptations to social ambition by a still stronger taste for tripe and onions," Curry is defended against the trahison des clercs by a taste for wire-pulling and superintending the lives of his colleagues. He preaches neither adoration for the contingent nor scorn for the eternal (unlike Busby, the Bursar), and he does not seek to justify his actions on moral grounds (unlike Mark Studdock). In fact, he neither preaches nor seeks to justify at all. It may be suggested that in this lies his salvation.[9]

One may compare Curry with another military historian: Lawrence Wentworth, in Charles Williams's 1938 novel Descent Into Hell, a novel which is known to have made a profound impression on Lewis. It is evident from the novel that Wentworth could have been saved even by his hatred for a rival historian, had that hatred derived from an allegiance to historical truth. In fact, Wentworth forgets that allegiance (he passes over a detail on a uniform that he knows to be wrong) in a desire to hug his fantasies to himself. But Curry's being a military historian is an irrelevancy -- his colleagues cannot even remember what particular branch of learning he has elected to follow -- and he cannot be saved in that way. Instead, he is almost trivially saved.[10]

Perhaps that is overstating it. There is no guarantee, after all, that his temporal preservation will lead to eternal life. Mr. Hooper has pointed out that Curry "thought the saving of his life was 'Providential'" and asked "Might he possibly go on to understand this in the religious sense?" The answer would seem to be "yes," even though there is no guarantee. His preservation takes place in the midst of an apocalyptic vision in which temporal and eternal salvation are virtually synonymous, or at least, though "there will be pain and heartaches yet, for the moment, near enough." It does not seem unreasonable to refer to Curry's "salvation."[11]

Nor does it seem unreasonable to use the word "trivial" -- especially when Lewis writes of Wither's damnation, in That Hideous Strength, "some tiny habitual sensuality, some resentment too trivial to waste on a blue-bottle, the indulgence of some fatal lethargy, seems to him at that moment more important than the choice between total joy and total destruction." Just as damnation rests on trivial choices ("the safest road to Hell is the gradual one -- the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts"), so, it would appear, may salvation. That is implicit in the idea of growing into what one is pretending to be. And Curry seems to be a case in point.[12]

To sum up thus far, Curry seems to have been saved (or, if one wishes, preserved) in part because being a bore is a very minor sort of irritation (and may even be funny, as in Lewis's poem "I stood in the gloom of a spacious room / Where I listened for hours (on and off) / To a terrible bore with a beard like a snore / And a heavy rectangular cough"), in part because he is protected against the trahison des clercs more or less "by a still stronger taste for tripe and onions." It is possible to see in the very triviality of these things an answer to a question of great concern for Lewis.[13]

The terms of the question may be taken from Screwtape, except that he asks how one is to damn, whereas Lewis is asking how may salvation be given, creatures "hardly worth damning," souls "so passively responsive to environment, that it [is] hard to raise them to that level of clarity and deliberateness at which mortal sin becomes possible." The importance of Curry lies not in his part in That Hideous Strength, which is tangential to the main story or stories, but in the fact that he alone in Lewis's fiction provides an answer to the question. One does not suppose he would have found this particular kind of importance very flattering: one is reminded that this novel did not make Lewis popular in the Oxford common-rooms. But for all that, the importance is there.[14]

Curry is one of the two examples in Lewis's fiction of salvation (or perhaps the impulse toward salvation) other than by sudden decision. Examples of almost instantaneous conversion (the man with the lizard in The Great Divorce, Orual in Till We Have Faces, Jane Studdock in That Hideous Strength) come readily to mind, and there are some who are seen already saved (the Dimbles in That Hideous Strength): but, aside from Curry, only Ransom himself, on a far higher plane than Curry, progresses toward salvation. Ransom, however, is the type of the New Man, Curry of the old (perhaps even the homme moyen sensuel). Ransom travels to Paradise: Curry is almost a candidate for limbo, a "failed human." Yet, in the end, for every one who is called upon to combat "depraved hypersomatic beings at great heights" (like Ransom), there are dozens who approach God through the almost unconscious imitation of virtue, whose way is open because they innocently produce boredom rather than intentionally producing harm (Curry does not seem to be malicious), and who are defended against great evil (the trahison des clercs) because it is beyond their capabilities, or because they have a still stronger taste for something (comparatively) innocent. One finds Curry, somehow, a comforting example.[15]

And, finding him so, one comes to think his preservation less strange.

NOTES

[1]On Place, see C. S. Lewis, That Hideous Strength (Macmillan paperback ed., New York, 1965), pp. 122 ("wholly innocent Warden"), 221 ("why Place and Rowley and Cunningham... have been arrested, and where they are").

[2]The characterization of Curry is from That Hideous Strength, pp. 36 (military history), 40 ("loves business and wire-pulling for their own sake"), 83 ("a pompous fool"), 92 ("the fantastic suggestion that he, Curry, might be a bore"), 126 (the passage quoted on "superintending their deaths"), 374 (the "Providential" passage).

[3]That Hideous Strength, pp. 125-126, 374. Lewis's remark that "if this [pretense] is hypocrisy, then I must conclude that hypocrisy can do a man good" is made in Surprised By Joy (New York, 1956), p. 192.

[4]All the remarks attributed in this paper to Walter Hooper are from a letter to the author, March 15, 1970. Lewis's letter to his publishers is quoted in Chad Walsh, C. S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics (New York, 1949), p. 162. The passage by his Abysmal Sublimity is from The Screwtape Letters (New York, 1943), pp. 107-108.

[5]That Hideous Strength, p. 371.

[6]Julien Benda, The Treason of the Intellectuals (New York, 1928), pp. 195-197. The essay from Rehabilitations (Ch. IV) has not been reprinted. But the relevant portion is quoted in Clyde S. Kilby, ed., A Mind Awake: An Anthology of C. S. Lewis (New York, 1969), p. 238. Cf. (on the philosophy of history) C. S. Lewis, "De Descriptione Temporum" (in Walter Hooper, ed., Selected Literary Essays (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 1-14), esp. p. 3.

[7]Benda, Treason of the Intellectuals, pp. 201-202.

[8]Benda, Treason of the Intellectuals, pp. 33, 100 ("adoration for the contingent"), 124-125 ("it is impossible to exaggerate...").

[9]That Hideous Strength, pp. 92 ("traditionalists and research beetles"), 40 (Feverstone), 92 ("dimness"). The "tripe and onions" passage is from The Screwtape Letters, p. 69. On Busby and Mark Studdock, see That Hideous Strength, pp. 37, 41.

[10]Charles Williams, Descent into Hell (New York, 1949), p. 160. That Hideous Strength, pp. 36-37.

[11]Hooper, Letter, March 15, 1970. The quotation is from the closing sentence of Charles Williams, The Greater Trumps (New York, 1954).

[12]That Hideous Strength, p. 353, on Wither's damnation. The Screwtape Letters, p. 65, on the road to Hell.

[13]That Hideous Strength, p. 374 ("a fine old chap"). The poem ("Awake, My Lute!") is quoted in full in Walsh, Apostle to the Skeptics, pp. 62-63.

[14]"Screwtape Proposes A Toast" in C. S. Lewis, The World's Last Night (New York, 1960), p. 54. On the common-room reaction to That Hideous Strength, Hooper, Letter, March 15, 1970.

[15]Two questionable cases occur in The Pilgrim's Regress and The Screwtape Letters -- the first is questionable as to whether it is fiction, the second (remembering the "suffocating cloud") because it contains a marked element of suddenness. The reference to "failed humans -- candidates for Limbo" is from "Screwtape Proposes A Toast," p. 56. On fighting "depraved hypersomatic beings at great heights" see C. S. Lewis, Perelandra (Macmillan paperback ed., New York, 1965), p. 24.

Venus Redeemed

- Eugene Warren

Since That Hideous Strength is an apocalyptic fantasy, its primary plot deals with the threat of Belbury (the N.I.C.E.) and the defeat of that threat by Ransom's company at St. Anne's. However, in keeping with the true nature of apocalypse, THS ends with healing: this is not yet the cosmic healing of Isaiah and John, but it is what Francis Schaeffer calls a "substantial healing."[1] The last chapter of THS, entitled "Venus at St. Anne's," describes the descent of the celestial Venus, Perelandra, on England, a descent which causes a joyful outburst of sexual activity.

I want to focus on the healing of the marriage of Mark and Jane Studdock, the modern couple about whom Lewis winds his main plot. "Modern" is the precise adjective: Jane is liberated enough to feel bound and bored in her marriage; Mark is free enough (so he thinks) of old-fashioned values to climb up in the N.I.C.E. without concern for other people. In the course of the struggle with N.I.C.E., Jane learns the true humility of a wife, and Mark recovers true values. I will follow mostly Jane's healing, especially her vision of Venus.

The Four Loves gives us Lewis's exposition of some of the ideas with which Jane struggles. In this book, Lewis calls sexual desire "Venus," and "being in love," "Eros."[2] His exposition of sexual and erotic love throws light on the healing which Jane and Mark undergo. First, he makes the point that Venus is most dangerous when she is taken with dead seriousness:

> We must not be totally serious about Venus. Indeed we can't be totally serious without doing violence to our humanity. It is not for nothing that every language and literature in the world is full of jokes about sex.... we must insist that they embody an attitude to Venus which in the long run endangers the Christian life far less than a reverential gravity.[3]

Her serious attitude toward Venus is one of the things Jane must unlearn. In the first chapter of THS we learn that she has begun a dissertation on Donne's '"triumphant vindication of the body."'[4] This information follows a paragraph describing the deadly dullness of her marriage--Jane's intellectualizing is evidently detached from the real troubles of her life. Lewis saw this split of the intellect from the feelings as one of the most serious errors of modern thought, resulting in "men without chests."[5] This disembodying and absolutizing of the intellect must be unlearned before Jane can be healed.

Ransom, the Director of St. Anne's, begins Jane's instruction when she comes to him terrified of a dream-vision involving Belbury. When she wishes to join the company at St. Anne's, he insists she get Mark's approval, and analyzes the root of her marriage's failure: '"...you do not fail in obedience through lack of love, but have lost love because you never attempted obedience."'[6] In insisting that Jane should not act independently of Mark, Ransom shocks her "modern" ideas of equality, explaining,

> "Yes, we must all be guarded by equal rights from one another's greed, because we are fallen.... Equality is not the deepest thing, you know."[7]

This lesson is one that Jane must learn finally through experience and vision, and not solely through Ransom's instruction.

In the course of her healing, Jane sees a vision of the terrestrial Venus, who is an earthly representative of the celestial Venus, the Oyarsa of Perelandra. The underlying significance of Jane's encounter with the fallen Venus is that she must become a Pagan before she can become a Christian; she must retrace, step by step, the path to a whole life in which spirit, mind and body are in harmony.

The description of Venus (sexual desire) in The Four Loves gives her the same attributes that she has in Jane's vision: "She herself is a mocking, mischievous spirit, far more elf than deity, and makes game of us."[8] Jane has this vision after helping Mother Dimble prepare a cottage for the reunion of Tom and Ivy Maggs.[9] Left alone in the cottage, Jane muses over archaic wedding jokes and customs, becoming aware of a person in the cottage with her:

> A flame-coloured robe, in which her hands were hidden, covered this person from the feet to where it rose behind her neck in a kind of ruff-like collar, but in front it was so low or open that it exposed her large breasts. Her skin was darkish and Southern and glowing, almost the colour of honey.[10]

To Jane, this person resembles Mother Dimble--but with something left out. The woman is accompanied by a crowd of mischievous dwarfs who undo all the careful work of Jane and Mother Dimble. The woman apparently sets the cottage on fire, but the flames turn to vegetation, at which point Jane passes out.

Later, Ransom explains the vision to Jane, assuring her of its reality, and relating it to her situation, saying, '"I'm afraid there's no niche in the world for people that won't be either Pagan or Christian. Just imagine a man who was too dainty to eat with his fingers and yet wouldn't use forks!"'[11] Lewis seems to be saying that the modern intellectual is in worse shape, is further from the true good, than the Pagan--because the Pagan at least recognizes the existence of a world beyond nature.

In her vision, Jane learns deeper truths about the world beyond nature with which she's come in contact, and which she is not yet sure she likes. Ransom continues,

> "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 as the dwarfs scattered the carefully made bed. 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 relationship

to it. You had better agree quickly with your adversary."[12]

The allusion in the last sentence to the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:25), underlines the fact that it is Jane's unwillingness to yield herself to God or Mark that is the root of her unhappiness. Since she has married Mark, she must be a true wife to him. But even had she not married, the duty and necessity of obedience would still exist in the deeper reality of the soul's submission to God. After this interview with Ransom, she goes alone into the garden and realizes her conversion:

> A boundary had been crossed. She had come into a world, or into a Person, or into the presence of a Person. Something expectant, patient, inexorable met her with no veil or protection between.... This demand which now pressed upon her was not, even by analogy, like any other demand. It was the origin of all right demands and contained them. In its light you could understand them; but from them you could know nothing of it.... In this height and depth and breadth the little idea of herself which she had hitherto called me dropped down and vanished,....[13]

In this experience, Jane learns that submission to God is not slavery but freedom. Lewis's phrase, "this height and depth and breadth," alludes to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, where the phrase describes Christ's love (Eph. 3:18-19). Having been submerged in the divine love, Jane is ready to return to Mark with a truer understanding of human love. The light imagery used here also recalls biblical imagery, as in the prologue to John's gospel, where Christ is the light, or as in Psalm 36:9, "in thy light we shall see light." Having been enlightened in the truest sense, Jane has learned that she was "...made to please Another and in Him to please all others...."[14] Her giving up of herself is the root of all joy.

After the gods descend and empower Merlin to destroy Belbury, Venus/Perelandra remains at St. Anne's to carry Ransom back to the third heaven with her. Lewis here seems to be merging Paul's account of being caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2) with the traditional association of Venus with love, thereby redeeming the Pagan goddess and making her a servant of the God who is love.

As Venus/Perelandra lingers over St. Anne's, her presence stimulates an outburst of courting and mating. Animals, from the mice behind the wainscotting to the elephants escaped from Belbury's experimental cages, cavort on the grounds of St. Anne's. When the skeptic, MacPhee, exclaims that the goings-on are indecent, Ransom replies, '"On the contrary,"... "decent in the old sense, decens, fitting, is just what it is. Venus herself is over St. Anne's."'[15] The N.I.C.E.'s plans were anti-life; therefore, the celebration of animal fertility is a fitting conclusion to the defeat of the N.I.C.E.

Mark Studdock, having pursued his ambition to its destruction (which could well have been his own), comes to St. Anne's to give Jane her freedom. Whereas Jane has had to admit and transcend Venus (sexual desire) and to learn the erotic necessity of submission, Mark has had to learn to see Jane as a person, not simply as a physical convenience. In The Four Loves, Lewis says, "Now Eros makes a man really want, not a woman, but one particular woman."[16] Mark must learn to be a true husband to Jane, to give himself for her; referring to Paul's view of marriage, Lewis writes,

> The husband is the head of the wife just in so far as he is to her what Christ is to the Church. He is to love her as Christ loved the Church--read on --and gave his life for her (Eph. V, 25).[17]

While Jane has to learn submission, Mark has to learn self-giving love. He had forfeited his right to Jane's obedience by his selfish disregard of her needs. While Lewis's (or Paul's) view of marriage would not satisfy Women's Liberationists, it seems from this analysis that neither man could be fairly called a male chauvinist.

As he approaches St. Anne's, Mark realizes the true nature of his marriage and how he has treated Jane:

> ...he thought of his own clumsy importunity.... Inch by inch, all the lout and clown and clodhopper in him was revealed to his own reluctant inspection;.... How had he dared?[18]

After finally learning to appreciate Jane for what she is, Mark determines to free her. This decision is his first real act of love for her, as it shows he loves her more than himself. So, paradoxically, having given Jane up, he receives her again at the end. She returns to him freely. When he reaches the wall of St. Anne's, Mark also sees a vision of Venus, but of the celestial Perelandra, of

> ...a great lady standing by a doorway in a wall.... It was not human, though it was like a woman divinely tall, part naked, part wrapped in a flame-coloured robe. Light came from it. The face was enigmatic, ruthless he thought, inhumanly beautiful. It was opening the door for him. He dare not disobey ("Surely," he thought, "I must have died"), and he went in: found himself in some place of sweet smells and bright fires, with food and wine and a rich bed.[19]

This figure is described much like the woman whom Jane saw--only the dwarfs are gone and the coarseness is replaced by a superhuman authority. This person is the redeemed Venus, the Oyarsa of Perelandra. Perhaps it is not too much to say that what Mark enters here is a foreshadowing of the bliss of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb at the consummation of all things. In The Four Loves, Lewis says that our human loves are an enactment of "...all the masculinity and femininity of the world,.... The man does play the Sky-Father and the Woman the Earth-Mother;...."[20] Lewis emphasizes the play involved in human love, since Venus is most dangerous when taken most seriously. The main point, though, is that all healthy sex is a playful image of greater forces.

The significance of Mark's and Jane's healing should not be overshadowed by the more dramatic defeat of Belbury. If the victory does not lead to healing of ordinary people in their common lives, then it is not true victory. The theme of humility and sacrifice is related to the cosmic vision which underlies the whole of Lewis's trilogy. Mark and Jane enter the cosmic dance which Ransom sees in a vision at the end of Perelandra, where it is said,

> 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.[21]

Because of this deepest reality, which sex reflects, sex can have a deeper meaning than the biological, as Jane and Mark learn. After all, both the Old and New Testaments consistently use images of marriage and betrothal for the relationship between God and his people. Since physical Venus can participate in this ultimate love, she can be redeemed.

Perelandra ends with a litany of praise from men and eldila, as Ransom sees the cosmos as a great dance. That Hideous Strength ends as Mark and Jane become true lovers for the first time, their love being one movement in the great passages of light.

So, Jane comes to Mark, passing among the courting creatures,

> ...descending the ladder of humility. First she thought of the Director, then she thought of Maleldil. Then she thought of her obedience and the setting of each foot before the other became a kind of sacrificial ceremony.[22]

Their marriage healed, Mark and Jane are not reunited on an abstract, "spiritual" level, but rather on a common level. The last image of the book is Jane's fond concern because Mark has carelessly let his shirt sleeve hang over the window sill. Lewis says, in The Four Loves, "The highest does not stand without the lowest."[23] This apothegm informs the deepest themes of his trilogy. Lewis portrays redemption as something that occurs in the world; and however cosmic and visionary it may be, redemption affects all of life.

NOTES

[1]Francis A. Schaeffer, Pollution and the Death of Man (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971) p. 66.

[2]C. S. Lewis, The Four Loves (Collins Fontana Books, 6th impression, 1968) p. 85.

[3]Ibid., pp. 91-92.

[4]C. S. Lewis, That Hideous Strength (New York: Macmillan, 1965) p. 14.

[5]See The Abolition of Man for his primary discussion of this (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1967).

[6]That Hideous Strength, p. 147.

[7]Ibid., p. 148.

[8]The Four Loves, p. 92.

[9]The Maggs's marriage repeats on a different level the separation and reunion theme: "Thus in old comedies the lyric loves of the hero and heroine are at once parodied and corroborated by some much more earthy affair between...a valet and a chambermaid." (The Four Loves, p. 94).

[10]That Hideous Strength, p. 304.

[11]Ibid., p. 315.

[12]Ibid., p. 315-316.

[13]Ibid., p. 318.

[14]Ibid., p. 319.

[15]Ibid., p. 376.

[16]The Four Loves, p. 88.

[17]Ibid., p. 97.

[18]That Hideous Strength, p. 380-381.

[19]Ibid., pp. 381-382.

[20]The Four Loves, p. 95.

[21]C. S. Lewis, Perelandra (New York: Macmillan, 1965) p. 200.

[22]That Hideous Strength, p. 382.

[23]The Four Loves, p. 94.

HIGH

Scriptural, Biblical!
Luther of Wittenberg
Tried to reform us but
Hadn't the pull;

Held to his theories
Justificational,
Firmly believing that
They were no bull.

DR

Biblical, Scriptural!
Calvin of Switzerland
Sorted mankind 'twixt
The damned and the saved.

He knew theology
Predestinarian:
"Luther it is who's
Innately depraved."

RW

&

Hippety-Harkety
Two Wesley Bretheren
Shunned the excesses of
Charles and of Pym

Traveled the ocean to
Found a society
Methodologically
Praises to Hymn.

IR

(on numinem , lumineum)
Institutes , Institutes ,
All us good Calvinists
Unlike your ghoulish church
Don't eat our dead

Denying your arguments
Panemutational
God may be there but the
Bread is still bread

JL

low

A Study of C.S.Lewis's DYMER - J.R.Christopher

If, as Northrop Frye believes, the romance "often radiates a glow of subjective intensity,"[1] then Dymer (1926) has a strong claim, for C. S. Lewis writes of its composition:

> I am told that the Persian poets draw a distinction between poetry which they have "found" and poetry which they have "brought": if you like, between the given and the invented, though they wisely refuse to identify this with the distinction between good and bad. Their terminology applies with unusual clarity to my poem. What I "found," what simply "came to me," was the story of a man who, on some mysterious bride, begets a monster: which monster, as soon as it has killed its father, becomes a god. This story arrived, complete, in my mind somewhere about my seventeenth year. To the best of my knowledge I did not consciously or voluntarily invent it, nor was it, in the plain sense of that word, a dream. All I know about it is that there was a time when it was not there, and then presently a time when it was.[2]

In addition to this upwelling from the unconscious (which will be considered more fully later), there are other romance and romantic motifs in the poem: the feast prepared in the empty palace, Dymer as the Wanderer (of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley), and the failure to ask the proper question.[3]

But if the genre is that of the romance, the poem is much more in the tradition of Shelley or Spenser (of The Faerie Queene, Books III, IV, and V) than of the typical medieval adventure-romance such as King Horn and Havelok the Dane. The first canto, telling of Dymer's individual revolt against school and "the Perfect City" (of Platonic regimentation), is balanced against the excesses of Bran's mass revolt (using Dymer's name for rallying purposes) in Canto IV. The point seems to be that of Lewis's reaction to school (detailed in chapters six and seven of his autobiography, Surprised by Joy) answered with the realization of the chaos which would develop if everyone felt this way: a not-unusual double vision for a young man of about twenty-seven, feeling both his youthful rebelliousness and his growing desire for security.

In between these two rebellions lies the complex episode of Dymer's visit to the castle. Directed to the castle by the sound of music (a common symbol for Sehnsucht in Lewis's writings), Dymer attempts to satisfy his longing with physical objects--fancy clothes, food and wine, and finally physical love.[4] The result seems to be guilt feelings, personified in the third canto by the hag who keeps Dymer from returning to where he left the maiden; the result is also shown in the storm at the beginning of Canto IV. But, while the girl on the literal (or physical) level of meaning may be a substitute for Sehnsucht, she is also, it is made clear later in the poem, a goddess who causes the original longings but whom Dymer has used in an improper way.[5] Her ambiguity is bothersome to interpretation, but I assume her later appearance as an abused goddess does not keep the sexual mis-use from being given to a physical girl at this point.

The fifth canto sums up the Romantic reaction to what has preceded it: revolution and love have both been tried and (in one way and another) frustrated. Carlyle's "Everlasting No," the Romantic experience of the dark night of the soul, overcomes Dymer:

> Now, when he looked and saw this emptiness
> Seven times enfolded in the idle hills,
> There came a chilly pause to his distress,
> A cloud of the deep world-despair that fills
> A man's heart like the incoming tide and kills
> All pains except its own. In that broad sea
> No hope, no change, and no regret can be.[6]

But this world-weariness is followed in stanzas twenty-two through twenty-five by an episode where Dymer almost falls over a cliff and instinctively struggles to save himself; the acknowledgement of the desire for life is followed by a lark's song as he lies on the earth by the cliff:

> It seemed to be the murmur and the voice
> Of beings beyond number, each and all
> Singing I AM. Each of itself made choice
> And was: whence flows the justice that men call
> Divine. She keeps the great worlds lest they fall
> From hour to hour, and makes the hills renew
> Their ancient youth and sweetens all things through.[7]

Dymer arouses with the lark's song still stirring "him at the heart":

> It was not fear
> That took him, but strange glory, when his eye
> Looked past the edge [of the cliff] into surrounding sky.
>
> He rose and stood. Then lo! the world beneath
> --Wide pools that in the sun-splashed foothills lay,
> Sheep-dotted downs, soft-piled, and rolling heath,
> River and shining weir and steeples grey
> And the green waves of forest. Far away
> Distance rose heaped on distance: nearer hand,
> The white roads leading down to a new land.[8]

This regeneration through nature is, of course, typical of the Romantics, of Wordsworth leaving the city for the country to store up images in his memory and, more clearly parallel, of Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh who finds "The Everlasting Yea" while visiting some high tablelands.

The two-canto episode which follows in Dymer seems curiously misplaced. Lewis in his later autobiographical writings saw his early interest in the occult as another attempted substitute for the cause of Sehnsucht, but here the visit to the wizard follows the romantic reaffirmation as an incident unrelated to the earlier music and the visit to the palace. It is as if Lewis had not yet seen the connection or as if the mania and death of a spiritualistic friend had sundered the autobiographical sequence.[9] But this may be a matter of over-reading in terms of Lewis's later beliefs. Perhaps the best approach is to see Dymer's attempt to regain the girl through magical dreams under the influence of

"the Master" as a misdirected attempt to regain the lost experience of longing through one of the previous objects to which longing had attached itself.[10]

However one interprets the relationship to what has gone before, the actual episode is not confusing. The Master offers a world of dreams, and a contact in this world with the "ghost" who is the maiden.[11] Dymer rejects this on two bases: first, his experience of a dream which proves it to be his (sexual) fantasy, not the original experience; second, the madness of the wizard which is revealed when Dymer rejects his beliefs.[12] The former reason shows the difference between Sehnsucht and sex (which Freudians like to identify), and the latter shows the results of occult research (as Lewis then believed them to be).

The last two cantos trace the thoughts of Dymer as he lies dying from the wizard's gunshot wound. In Canto VIII the woman with whom he had made love in Canto II appears. Dr. Hart in her dissertation compares the conversation between Dymer and the woman to that between Boethius and Lady Philosophy[13]--certainly Lewis is attempting to explain his 1926 philosophy here (the anatomy canto of this romance, in Northrop Frye's terms), which seems to be a modified Lucretianism. The woman explains that those of her kind ("the gods") come to humans in whatever form the humans desire:

> "Waves fall on many an unclean shore,
> Yet the salt seas are holy as before.
>
> "Our nature is no purer for the saint
> That worships, nor from him that uses ill
> Our beauty can we suffer any taint.
> As from the first we were, so are we still:
> With incorruptibles the mortal will
> Corrupts itself, and clouded eyes will make
> Darkness within from beams they cannot take."[14]

Dymer accepts the idea that he has reacted wrongly to the gods (to the call of Sehnsucht), but before any proper reaction is clarified the woman vanishes.

At the end of the eighth canto and the beginning of the ninth, Dymer staggers into a graveyard, where he collapses (and, I assume, dies) while his spirit is whirled up to at least the third sphere.[15] Here he meets his monster-like son, fights with him, and dies (perhaps at the moment his body on earth dies?). Upon his death, the vegetation in that heavenly sphere is reborn, and the angel-sentinel of that place sees that

> no brute was there,
> But someone towering large against the skies,
> A wing'd and sworded shape, whose foam-like hair
> Lay white about its shoulders, and the air
> That came from it was burning hot.[16]

Thus the story which came to Lewis is completed. However I am not certain of my reaction to the framing "myth" of this romance: Dymer meets an unknown girl (later revealed to be a goddess) by whom he has a son; Dymer and his son meet in fight, Dymer is killed, and the son is deified. This situation, on the surface, is so obviously an Oedipal complexioned story, that the temptation is to read it in terms of Lewis's life--the death of his mother when he was ten (hence the vanishing goddess), the difficulties with his father.[17] Perhaps the fairest interpretation is to put the story in Freudian terms: as all men (not just Lewis) are to varying degrees sufferers of the Oedipus complex, so this romantic retelling of their fate should bring with it an empathy from all masculine readers. "There is one story, and one story only."

But working against this Oedipal empathy is the structural (and mythic) shift in the reader's identification with the protagonist. Dymer may act as Oedipus in his love of the goddess, but at the end of the story Dymer becomes the equivalent of Laius slain by the young Oedipus. Thus the reader (whether or not he responds to any subconscious identifications) is left with a shift in point of view, a structural irony, in which the protagonist, the young rebel who has gradually learned four things--the dangers of rebellion, the improper response to the gods, the Romantic affirmation of life, and the dangers of occultism--is suddenly killed. Is the suggestion that Dymer has learned all he can, and a new generation must carry on? Or is the shift the result of Lewis trying unsuccessfully to combine a "given story" with an autobiographical Bildungsroman? All I can do is testify that to me the shift is too sudden to be successful: I am left feeling not "What a glorious rebirth!" but "How odd!"

FOOTNOTES

[1]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 304. I fail to see any reason why a narrative in verse does not fit the same generic conventions as the narratives in prose which Frye is classifying--his discussion of the romance is on pp. 304-307, and of the anatomy (which I mention later) on pp. 308-312.

[2]C. S. Lewis, Dymer (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1950), pp. ix-x. The "Preface", from which this is quoted, did not appear in the first edition (1926); the most recent appearance of the poem and its 1950 preface is in Lewis's Narrative Poems, ed. Walter Hooper (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1969).

[3]Ibid., pp. 16-17 (II:13-16); passim; p. 86 (VIII:6), respectively. For another, slightly different discussion of this point (in terms of myth, with different examples), see Dabney Hart's dissertation, C. S. Lewis's Defense of Poesie (University of Wisconsin, 1959; University Microfilms, No. 59-3194), pp. 172-174. Her whole discussion of Dymer is one of the best yet done (pp. 162-174). In connection with the romance tradition, note her suggestion that George MacDonald may have derived his approach in Phantastes and Lilith from German Romanticism, particularly Novalis, and that Dymer is a verse imitation of MacDonald's romances (pp. 156-162).

[4]Lewis, Dymer, pp. 13-15 (II:5-11), 16-18 (II:13-18), and 22-23 (II:31-33). I am interpreting this sequence following the music (pp. 8-9 [I:23-25]) in light of Lewis's subsequent writings in which he said he had learned physical things to be inadequate substitutes for Sehnsucht by having tried them. See the preface to the Third Edition of The Pilgrim's Regress (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), pp. 8-9. Nevill Coghill also interprets the mysterious maiden in this section this way, as a type of the Brown Girls who appear in The Pilgrim's Regress, in his comments on Dymer in "The Approach to English" (in Light on C. S. Lewis, ed. Jocelyn Gibb [London: Geoffrey Bles, 1965], pp. 57-59).

[5]Lewis, Dymer, p. 97 (IX:12-14) for the goddess as the cause of Sehnsucht, and pp. 88-89 (VIII:13-16) for the misuse of the divinity.

[6]Ibid., p. 49 (V:3). To this first quotation in this chapter of Lewis's verse, let me add that Dr. Hart's dissertation (cited in the third note) has an extended discussion of the style of the verse, finding it "Drab," not "Golden" as the romantic theme needs.

[7]Ibid., p. 57 (V:28).

[8]Ibid., p. 58 (V:31-32).

[9]The death of the friend is mentioned in the "Preface" to Dymer, p. xiii, and in Surprised by Joy (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1955), p. 192.

[10]For Lewis's early confusion of Sehnsucht and sex, see The Pilgrim's Regress, pp. 8, 29-30; Surprised by Joy, pp. 160-161.

[11]Lewis, Dymer, pp. 65-66 (VI:19-21).

[12]Ibid., pp. 77-78 (VII:17-18), 80-82 (VII:25-30, 32). There is a certain parallelism in the wizard trying to shoot Dymer with the same gun he was using to shoot larks with at the first of the sixth canto (just after a lark's song had led Dymer to his reaffirmation of life): the wizard is trying to destroy all reality for the sake of his dreams. I have not discussed in my text above the wizard as a portrait of W. B. Yeats for two reasons: first, because Lewis gives in his "Preface" to Dymer the basic biographical information; second, because a discussion of Dymer as a roman à clef seems to me to add little to the meaning. Lewis had a tendency this way (most satirists are sometimes personal), for, as several critics have pointed out, Horace Jules in That Hideous Strength is a caricature of H. G. Wells. (Besides, I have a paper, "The Eminent Domain Revisited," currently out for consideration to a scholarly journal, on Lewis's reactions to Yeats.)

[13]Hart, p. 174. For an interpretation of the goddess as the Muse and Dymer as the Romantic poet, see Marjorie Milne's "Dymer: Myth or Poem?", The Month, VIII (September, 1952), p. 172.

[14]Lewis, Dymer, pp. 88-89 (VIII:14-15). The same misuse of the gods through limited understanding is shown in Till We Have Faces, and the same feeling of the huge division between gods and men is shown in several of the lyrics in the first part--"The Prison House"--of Spirits in Bondage (London: William Heinemann, 1919).

[15]The movement to the third sphere is described on pp. 93-4 (IX:1-5), but I am not certain whether to take the phrase "he seemed to fly / Faster than light but free, and scaled the sky" (p. 94 [IX:5]) as indicating the movement up into a further sphere.

[16]Lewis, Dymer, p. 104 (IX:34).

[17]Cf. Lewis, Surprised by Joy, pp. 24-27 for his mother's death, pp. 116-122 for the most extended sketch of his father's personality.

Tarleton State College
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in review

MONSTER'S ADVOCATE

Richard C. West

John Gardner, Grendel (Alfred A. Knopf, 1971; $5.95). As the author is both novelist and medievalist (he has previously published The Wreckage of Agathon, set in ancient Greece, and translations of several Middle English poems, including The Complete Works of the Gawain-Poet), it is not surprising that he should combine the two activities and write a novel with a medieval inspiration. The book has much to interest other medievalists, and perhaps only they can fully enjoy the grim fun and daring of making one of the greatest villains of medieval story into the antihero of his own autobiography. At the same time, there is much to interest a reader without special knowledge of the Middle Ages. This Grendel is indeed a water-sprite (though part human), unable to endure much sunlight, charmed against cutting weapons, who kills and eats men. But as antihero he is of course part of a modern literary fashion. The story is told by Grendel in the first person and we thus see the medieval world through his consciousness, one alien to his contemporaries but quite modern in its anguished skepticism. The men on whom he wages war (for he does not see it as simple marauding) are barbarians in the popular as well as the anthropological sense. He listens to their poetry, but this merely turns their looting and raping into glorious illusions without really ennobling them. He studies their religion, but this merely imposes their hopes and fears onto the blind, mechanical chaos of the world. He sees himself as benefiting the Scyldings in mysterious ways: by forcing them to rethink their neat conceptualizations, by keeping them from conquering too widely, even (wryly) by saving them from starving to death if he let them overpopulate. He does not come off badly in comparison with warrior, poet, or priest. Even the authentic hero, Beowulf (Unferth tries hard, but cannot make his ideals practicable in the real world), suffers as a foil: he pragmatically and cold-bloodedly allows one of his band to be slain so that he may study Grendel's technique before coming to grips with him. The book expresses angst very well (see especially the dragon's disquisition on reality in Chapter 5), and is alive with black humor ("If I murdered the last of the Scyldings, what would I live for? I'd have to move"; p. 158). For full enjoyment one should be familiar with Beowulf, but explanations of the medieval allusions are worked into the text.

WIZARDS ARE PEOPLE, TOO

Richard West

John Bellairs, The Face in the Frost (Macmillan Co., 1969; $4.95). "Several centuries (or so) ago, in a country whose name doesn't matter, there was a tall, skinny, straggly-bearded old wizard named Prospero, and not the one you are thinking of, either." So opens this delightful and adventurous fantasy. Prospero and his good friend, another wizard named Roger Bacon (who is the one you are thinking of), find themselves and their world menaced by a third wizard named Melichus. Both Prospero and Melichus had served their apprenticeships together long before, but now Melichus is slowly deciphering a necromantic book in an unknown language, and by so doing is unleashing dark powers and fearful prodigies (one of them is a demonic face into which frost forests always melt, giving the book its title). Our heroes escape from Prospero's besieged house by shrinking (they use the magic words from the old "Mary Jane and Sniffles" series in the Looney Tunes comic book, since Prospero's magic mirror "wallows in the trash of future centuries"; p. 35) so that they can sail a model ship down an underground river, and, despite a stupid troll, demons, illusions, people suspicious of wizards, and gathering war, not to mention their own imperfect command of magic, they succeed in locating Melichus and destroying the terrible book. There are shivers enough in the tale, for the black evil they face (hatred, murder, man's inhumanity to man) is not there just for the fun of it; but there is a great deal of fun in the book, as Prospero ("'King Gorm converted his dungeons into handball courts, and he uses his rack to stretch taffy'"; p. 47) and Roger (who turns a squash into a carriage, using a double dactyl as a charm; p. 120) muddle through with warm humanity, humor, and humility. Illustrations by Marilyn Fitschen decorate the text.

C.S. Lewis, Distributist: His Economics as Seen in THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH - - Jared C. Lobdell

"One sees now that Denniston would never have done. Most emphatically not. A brilliant man at that time, of course, but he seems to have gone quite off the rails since then with all his Distributivism and what not. They tell me he's likely to end up in a monastery."[1]

The speaker is Curry, the listener Mark Studdock, and the unflattered subject, of course, Arthur Denniston, who had so nearly received Studdock's fellowship at Bracton, in C. S. Lewis's novel That Hideous Strength. Now Denniston does not, at least in the book, end up in a monastery, though the Manor at St. Anne's has certain similarities to one, and though it is likely (I have never been quite sure) that he becomes Pendragon of Logres--at least as holy a state.[2] Nor has he truly gone off the rails. But we may assume that Curry has been accurate in calling him a Distributivist, if indeed we know (or can find out) what it is that Curry is calling him.

Distributivism--or rather, to be strictly correct, Distributism--was an economic and political polity proclaimed and supported by the League for the Defence of Liberty by the Distribution of Property, chiefly (though not only) in the decade of the 1920's. In practice, it was the brain-child and ward of the late G. K. Chesterton, and the only lengthy exposition of the principles of Distributism that I have come across is to be found in his book The Outline of Sanity. A reading of that book, while it has not convinced me that Distributism is a workable economic doctrine, has convinced me that Denniston's "Distributivism" is not accidental and that as of 1943, Lewis's own economics were essentially Distributist.

It will be remembered that, in another context, Lewis gave something of his view of a fully Christian society. "We should feel that its economic life was very socialistic and, in that sense, "advanced," but that its family life and its code of manners were rather old-fashioned--perhaps even ceremonious and aristocratic."[3] But I find it hard to take the word "socialistic" to be exactly meant unless it is the socialism of William Morris's Dream of John Ball, socialism intended (one might say) in purely a Kelmscottian sense: not that the State should own factories, but that Everyman should own his own land. Likewise, though St. Anne's may be called "socialistic" or even "communistic"--for the property is held by the company of Logres, and the work is shared--it has little enough to do with the Socialism of the Fabians and nothing whatever that I can see to do with the Socialism of Mr. Harold Wilson. It is difficult not to convict Lewis of semantic inexactitude here--at the very least I wonder if his desire to speak colloquially did not lead him astray. Of course, it is quite possible that his listeners understood "socialistic" simply to mean "modern" or "non-feudal" or something of that sort. He may have gauged his audience more accurately than I can now.

In any case, however they understood "socialistic", it is clear that not a tithe of them--nor yet a tithe of any present-day graduate seminar in Economics--would have understood him had he said that the economic life of the Christian society would be Distributist. Yet if we are interested in Lewis's own economics, we should be able to understand such a statement.

Distributism, as Chesterton preached it, was essentially a doctrine that between the very similar evils of Monopoly (the end result, in Chesterton's view, of Private Enterprise) and Communism (the end result of Government Control), there is little to choose--and that, moreover, both Private Enterprise and Government Control hasten to their end result: accordingly, it becomes necessary to resist both, and the means of resistance lie in the widest possible distribution of private property.[4] This means that the small shop should be preserved as against the large one, the small farm preserved as against the large one (indeed, if necessary, the small farm created), the small factory--the true manu-factory--preserved as against the large one.[5] It sounds, on the surface, rather like the programme for an Industrial Counter-revolution, and that was indeed almost exactly what it was.

In passing, one curious thing may be remarked. Chesterton, writing in 1926, or rather up to 1926 (for the book is made up, in general, of earlier newspaper articles), has an oddly modern sound in much of what he says. "I think the monster emporium is not only vulgar and insolent, but incompetent and uncomfortable; and I deny that its large organization is efficient. Large organization is loose organization. Nay, it would be almost as true to say organization is disorganization."[6] Shades of Lawrence Peter, Northcote Parkinson, Robert Townsend, Patrick Moynihan, Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all: there, half a century ago, is the warning we have not yet heeded. But this is a digression, for the point at issue is not the truth of what GKC said, but what precisely his answer to the problems--Distributism--entailed.

The basic tenet, beyond the small shops and small factories, was the need for small landholdings, for a stable peasantry tied to their own land. Chesterton argues (with some justice, but again, that is not the point) that Capitalist Monopoly is a weed that grows in the waste places: it will not grow up where there are industrious small farmers owning their own farms, planting and harvesting their own crops.[7] Now what, it may be asked, has this to do with That Hideous Strength? And the answer, I think, is that in the Manor at St. Anne's, Lewis has envisioned what is almost precisely a Distributist economy in microcosm.

To begin with, the company raise their own vegetables (and, for that matter, their own bacon at least as well).[8] And on this Chesterton is clear. "Exchange and variation can... be given their reasonable place... but there would be somewhere in the centre of civilisation a type that was truly independent; in the sense of producing and consuming within its own social circle."[9] That is exactly what happens at St. Anne's, the centre of the civilization of Logres: the production and consumption goes on within that circle only.

Moreover, none of the company, except perhaps MacPhee, has any background in country-living. Ransom is a don, Grace Ironwood a doctor, Dimble and his wife scholars (don and don's wife), Arthur and Camilla Denniston also, Jane Studdock a scholar (if "not perhaps a very original" one[10]), Ivy Maggs a housekeeper. MacPhee, one supposes, was a tutor, like his model, the Great Knock: but perhaps the Great Knock could trench celery with the best of them.[11] In any case, one turns to Chesterton and finds that the nucleus of his England of small farms is to come from the cities. "We have to consider whether there are any materials out of which to make peasants to make a peasantry... the number of people who would like to get out of the tangle of mere ramifications and communications in the town, and get back nearer to the roots of things, where things are made directly out of nature, I believe to be very large."[12] In yet a second way, then, St. Anne's is a microcosm of Distributism at work.

In addition, though this does not deal directly with St. Anne's, there is an instructive comparison to be made between the "no doubt recalcitrant and backward"[13] labourers enjoying their thick sandwiches and mug of beer at the Two Bells in Cure Hardy, and the imported impersonal workmen hired by the N.I.C.E. at Edgestow. The scene at Cure Hardy is, precisely, idyllic. The scenes of the workmen at Edgestow are like something taking place on the near outskirts of Hell--the scrum which results in the breaking of Henrietta Maria's window, the raucous voices disturbing the funeral, and of course, Miss Hardcastle's riot.[14] The idyll is a Distributist idyll (though it is more than merely that), and the outskirts of Hell are the outskirts of a Socialist experiment, the N.I.C.E.--remember how, in Mark's editorial for the popular paper, he accuses the enemies of the National Institute of being in favour of "the liberties... of the capitalists."[15]

One must be careful not to belabour the point. Evidently there is much more to St. Anne's and to the book than Distributism. But in view of the fact that this particular clew to Lewis's economic beliefs has been so generally overlooked--I have in fact heard him described in a meeting of Lewis aficionados as a Socialist--it seems to me worthwhile to point out that the clew is there.[16]

Before we leave the subject of Lewis's views on economics as seen in That Hideous Strength, one other passage ought to be noted. Mark, it will be remembered, had "recommended that certain classes of people should be gradually eliminated: but he had never been there when a small shopkeeper went to the workhouse or a starved old woman of the governess type came to the very last day and hour and minute in the cold attic. He knew nothing about the last half cup of cocoa drunk slowly ten days before."[17] I have, I confess, seldom heard the anger in Lewis's voice more clearly than I hear it in these words: reflect for a moment on the fact that the elimination of certain classes is part of the modern Socialist dogma, and then ask if Lewis is a Socialist, if it is still necessary to ask. To say he was is to play Humpty-Dumpty's game with words.

He was not, to be sure, a Capitalist--that is, he was not an advocate of that unrestrained entrepreneurship in a laissez-faire economy which some consider the Capitalist ideal. But in this book as elsewhere he was Chesterton's disciple in many ways (note for example the similarities between the robing scene at the end of That Hideous Strength and the robing scene before the meeting with Sunday in The Man Who Was Thursday), and not least was he Chesterton's disciple in the matter of economics.

NOTES

[1]C. S. Lewis, That Hideous Strength (New York, 1946), p. 9.

[2]To the best of my knowledge and that of Walter Hooper (letter to the author, 15 March 1970), Lewis never explicitly said who was to follow Ransom as Pendragon. But Mr. Hooper agrees with me that Denniston probably was the choice.

[3]C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (New York, 1952), p. 66.

[4]G. K. Chesterton, The Outline of Sanity (London, 1926), pp. 9, 11-12, et seqq.

[5]Ibid., esp. pp. 61-69, 115-127, 141-150.

[6]Ibid., p. 62.

[7]Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[8]That Hideous Strength, pp. 190 ("trenching celery"), 306 ("the pigs are kept in a stye and killed for bacon").

[9]Chesterton, Outline, p. 136.

[10]That Hideous Strength, p. 2.

[11]See above, n. 8. MacPhee has been recognized as a portrait of Kirkpatrick ("the Great Knock") at least since Chad Walsh, C. S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics (New York, 1948).

[12]Chesterton, Outline, p. 123.

[13]That Hideous Strength, p. 93.

[14]Ibid., pp. 100, 140, 172 et seqq.

[15]Ibid., p. 149.

[16]At a meeting of the New York C. S. Lewis Society in August 1970, it was debated whether Lewis was in fact a Socialist. At that time, I think the verdict was at best a Scotch "not proven"--but my recollection may be at fault.

[17]That Hideous Strength, p. 212.

Brollachan, Morrigan
Richard's Tolkienians
Delve in the treasures of
Epics and Lays

Protohistorical
Stuff of race-memory
Surely will Garner them
Their meed of praise.

DR

Aglar'ni editors,
Richard especially,
In whom do duty and
Mercy combine:

Growing in grace as he
Indefatiguably
Answers ridiculous
Letters like mine.

$

moot point letters & notes

L. Sprague de Camp
278 Hothorpe Lane
Villanova, Pa. 19085
1 October 1971

Dear Mr. West:

Many thanks for sending me Orcrist V. Your encyclopedic piece on the critics of Tolkien and Lewis will be of great value to me if my projected book Heroic Fantasy ever materializes. (I do think that you expect the writers on whom you comment to have read more pertinent works than most people can get around to in one lifetime; but that is a minor quibble.)

Regarding the Christian background of the authors in question, it is a noteworthy coincidence that Tolkien and the late Lord Dunsany were both at least nominal adherents of the Roman Catholic Church; but neither one let this inhibit his creation of a cosmos rather widely at variance with the orthodox, traditional Christian Weltanschauung. This applies more particularly to Dunsany, with his pantheons of synthetic gods. The Plunketts (including the Barons Dunsany) are an old Catholic Irish family who, by fast footwork, managed to hold on to their property through all the persecutions and confiscations. I am told that this was usually done by having one member of the family convert to Protestantism and hold the property in an informal trust for the others, but I don't know if the Plunketts did this. One of them, the Blessed Oliver Plunkett, an Irish Catholic Archbishop, fell victim to the Popish Plot hoax engineered in the 1670's by Titus Oates, and was hanged, drawn, and quartered on charges of plotting to land a French army in England.

For that matter, the devout high-church Anglican Lewis (who says he was converted from atheism to Christianity by a sudden rush of conviction while on his way to visit the zoo) also drew on non-Christian sources. His concept of planetary spirits comes from neo-Platonism, and his assumption that this planet is run by a bad deity, or at least a neurotic or incompetent one (the "bent Eldil") comes from Gnosticism, which got it from Zoroastrianism.

I am interested, for biographical reasons, in locating, to borrow for photocopying, unpublished letters (other than those in the Lovecraft Collection at Brown University or in the hands of my colleague Glenn Lord) by H. P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, and other members of the Lovecraft-Weird Tales circle of the 1930's. Any help that readers of Orcrist could give me in this matter would be deemed a great favor.

[Some preliminary work for Mr. de Camp's book on fantasy, on Lovecraft as "Eldritch Yankee Gentleman", appeared in the June and August, 1971 issues of Fantastic. And let me refer readers of Orcrist who do not already know Mr. de Camp's own fiction to such works as The Incomplete Enchanter, The Castle of Iron, and The Wall of Serpents, which I particularly recommend. I myself do not understand why people are surprised that devout Christians are interested in other mythological traditions; myths and symbols are multivalent, and the broader one's study of them, the deeper one's appreciation of all. Lewis's Deep Heaven mythos is strongly indebted to the medieval Christian worldview, which had absorbed such things as Platonism (which Lewis also knew at first hand); consult his study, The Discarded Image. Lewis tells the long story of his conversion, which he claims was mostly a matter of reasoning, in his autobiography, Surprised by Joy; the moment of epiphany during the trip to the Whipsnade Zoo is mentioned at the very end of that book. --RCW]

Glen GoodKnight
The Mythopoeic Society
P.O. Box 24150
Los Angeles, Cal. 90024
11 June 1971

Dear Richard,

Orcrist looks very fine as far as written material goes. #5 suffers even more than #4 did in the general quality of artwork. No offense to Ivor, but it is very jarring to me to read scholarly material of a good quality and serious level, in the same issue with so much juvenile artwork. Some items are good, but most are not becoming to the issue. The plaid turtle drawings of #4 had many people groaning in unbelief.

I don't mean to sound too critical, but only have said this as friendly criticism. I am very enthusiastic about the written material in both 4 and 5. Keep up the fine work. I marvel at how close the interests of Orcrist and Mythlore overlap, if not at times superimpose!

[I wish that you had been more specific on your criticisms of the "artwork". We, of course, are not satisfied with everything we print, but I'm not sure that we even agree there. Your only specific comment was on the "plaid turtle" drawings. Are you objecting to the concept of a plaid turtle, the subject matter of the drawings, or the style of execution? Check your credits and you will discover that D.W. also drew the "nascetur" drawing on p. 7 of #4. Therefore you must consider the other drawings a deliberate adoption of a particular style. You may not care for this style, because most of what I see in Mythlore stresses a bland sophistication of line that brings a quasi-realism to fanciful subjects, and I prefer a more open, fragmented style. Incidentally, the style of the turtle drawings is the style of three generations ago, and most artistic unsophisticates reject this style because it isn't "in" yet (as Beardsly and Rackham are "in" today). I selected these illustrations because they are in the same style as Tolkien's drawings. I actually feel that they show better control of line than Tolkien's drawings, but because they are in the same style as Tolkien, and because they illustrate certain fantasy concepts in a manner that would be meaningful to Tolkien, I feel they belong in Orcrist. The plaid turtle is a colophon of the Turtle Press where these drawings first appeared. There is another problem. We are concerned with art rather than illustration, and this leads to "artwork" that is sometimes less than perfect illustration. I hesitate to use my own work for this very reason. My things are quite heavy and tend to the Expressionistic, which I don't feel is suitable for most of Tolkien and Lewis. I only use it when someone doesn't come through on an assigned piece. We will print more and better artwork when more and better artists submit, but we want more than just clever illustrators. (Budding artists should know that we cannot use work done in blue ball point pen, that pieces below 5" x 3" are too small for even column filler, and that we reject a high percentage of material sent us--so high that we can't return artwork unless you send a stamped, addressed envelope.) --IR]

Sharyn Lawler
36 West Miller Street
Springfield, Ohio 45506
12 September 1971

Dear Mr. West et al.:

Due to moving and other minor mix-ups, I have just recently received my Orcrist 4/Tolkien Journal 13, and even though you folks have probably forgotten what you put in it by now, I just felt I had to write and let you

know how delighted I was with it. The serious articles were most interesting, especially the report on the Variorum Tolkien and Deborah Rogers' dissertation proposal. And the humor was delightful. If this letter is informal to the point of impertinence, I am sorry, but you really must blame Mrs. Carroll's splendid satire: after reading it three times, I feel as though I know all of you, a little. I heartily enjoyed the double dactyls, and I am glad to know what they are and how they are made, because I have run across them before. There are two very pleasant (and formally perfect) ones in a little fantasy tale by one John Bellairs entitled The Face in the Frost. If by chance you have not met this one yet I think it would be worth your while. I think you will find a secondary world with much substance and many memorable characters.

Mrs. Christensen's report on the perversions, what else can you say, of The Hobbit was most depressing. I was disappointed enough in the children's play made from Lewis's The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe which was presented at our summer arts festival here, and yet it was a nice enough play: somebody just considered the deep meaning of the book too much (or possibly too controversial?) to handle, so the Christian symbolism (for lack of a better word) was excised by ending the book in the middle with a premature battle scene, and Aslan (pronounced Ay-slan, surely that isn't right?) reduced to a symbol of courage by means of a final summarizing monologue! The result, compared to the book, was certainly unfortunate; but these monstrosities Mrs. Christensen describes sound like deliberate and malicious sabotage, and one is at a loss to understand why.

Sandra Miesel
8744 N. Pennsylvania St.
Indianapolis, Ind. 46240
16 November 1971

Dear Mr. West:

One utterly trivial scrap of Tolkien lore I'd like to get into the record: the Ivy Bush inn in the Shire may take its name from a famous old inn in Wales, site of the revival of "druidism" in the 19th century (from The Druids by Stuart Piggot). And there may be Mesopotamian models for several names: Uruk, a term for orcs, was one of the great cities of ancient Sumeria (Gilgamesh's own). The same city was called Erech in Hebrew (the evil Hill of Erech?) and Orcoi in Greek (which sounds like a false plural form of orc).

Nan C. Scott
1638 Barker Avenue
Lawrence, Ka. 66044
9 June 1971

Dear Mr. West,

I am amused to find my letters in your Tolkien bibliography--you are thorough! I wouldn't have thought them sufficiently important, though perhaps the one re Ace Books in the Saturday Review is, at that. If you're including really minor stuff, such as my letter to Niekas, I might mention that I also had two letters in Tolkien Journal 10, one disagreeing with Ed Meskys's evaluation of Swann's musical settings, and one inquiring into readers' interest in nature in Tolkien (as well as fantasy, linguistics, etc.), back-to-the-land movements, etc. My husband and I also wrote (on Dick Plotz's invitation) a birthday message to Professor Tolkien in TJ III:1, but the title page of that issue contains a serious error: I did not bring to Professor Tolkien's attention the Ace edition. Indeed, he brought it to mine! But I did thereafter get into the thick of correspondence, publicity, and so forth about that edition, and I may have been, in very small part, a contributor to the climate of public opinion that influenced Ace to pay royalties. I hope so, but I don't claim any such credit as Plotz gives me in his notes in that issue.

I have also written a long paper, "War and Pacifism in The Lord of the Rings", which I delivered at the Belknap Tolkien Conference in October, 1968. That has not been printed anywhere (so far as I know) since the Conference Proceedings have not been published...

Orcrist, which I just encountered at Belknap, gets better and better. Bravo for your attack on Ready's ghastly book.

the hunting of the HNAKRA

Karen Rockow
345 Haward St.
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Mr. West:

In the second number of Mythlore (April, 1969), I observed that C. S. Lewis' hnakra, the mythic creature which makes such a brief but memorable appearance in Out of the Silent Planet, might very well be an anagram for snark. More immediate academic matters have monopolized my attention in the intervening years, but I have finally been permitted to return to the problem, and I do so with ill-concealed eagerness. It is not, I readily admit, an issue of earth-shaking proportions, nor will it ever be. But its unravelling does shed some light on the involuted cerebrations, the imperturbably academic frame of reference and humorous sensibilities of the man we know as Clive Staples Lewis. More importantly, our investigation will disclose Lewis' true identity; for there can be little doubt that the name is a pseudonym. All the necessary (and some unnecessary) evidence is present in the anagram itself and in its originator's name. The reader will surely agree that close inspection of the respective texts would be quite superfluous in this case and would only serve to confuse the issue.

Not even the British could be so unfeeling as to name a second son Clive Staples. Lewis himself never used anything but the initials, and we can safely assume, I submit, that the names themselves are comic inventions. The use of initials merely serves to mislead us as to their relative importance. For the evidence confirms that the intermediate s is a ruse, an artful dodge, to mask the elusively simple fact that "C. Lewis" is, and can be nothing but, a pseudonym (and not a very clever one at that) for "Lewis Carroll," which is, in turn, a pseudonym for Charles Dodgson, the tongue-tied Oxford don.

The argument is clinched when we turn to the word hnakra itself. Lewis' (I will continue to call him that from sheer habit) philological preoccupations have been largely overshadowed by his friend Tolkien's, and great has been the loss. There is ample evidence of Lewis' abiding interest in language; was not Ransom a Cambridge philologist? We also know that this interest sometimes verged on the impish, as when he christened the creator of the universe "Maleldil," although fully aware that the semanteme mal means "bad" in the Romance languages.

Painstaking observation will reveal that hnakra has a superfluous a and h and lacks only an s to be a full-grown snark. This discrepancy is not at all surprising, since the word snark lends itself to wondrously few pronounceable combinations, although I must admit that aknrs has a certain primitive energy and sknar, a melodic ring. Nor should we overlook the Malacandrian preference for initial h. Lewis may have omitted the s because of his deep-seated English orientation, in which the letter calls forth visions of plurality; he wished, perhaps, to stress the uniqueness of the Malacandrian beastie. On the other hand, one could make a strong argument that the missing s turns up as that same diversionary middle initial which we previously remarked, stapled on, as it were, to Lewis' name. And lest the careless reader overlook the hilarity of the anagram,

Lewis added two letters, one of the few two-letter combinations in English capable of dual interpretation. Ah and ha, as the poet said. In short, ah-ha!

There are, admittedly, certain constitutional weaknesses in the foregoing argument. For one thing, the reader may object that no one pursued the hnakra with thimble, care (a prehistoric weapon not unlike a kazoo), forks, hope, railway-shares, smiles, soap, or any combination thereof. This is probably a mere oversight, if not a textual corruption, as I hope to demonstrate at a later date. Or, perhaps, the hrossi had grown disillusioned with the traditional hunting methods (which, under other circumstances, had produced only a frumious bandersnatch and one fateful boojum) and turned to a more advanced technology. Again, skeptics may ask how an Oxford mathematician could successfully masquerade as a Cambridge medievalist. There have, however, been similar cases of scholarly switch-hitting; did not Francis J. Child, the great ballad scholar, begin his teaching career as a tutor in mathematics?

In the end, we are left with the conundrum of why a man of Carroll's stature (a little under 6 feet) would have written his most serious works under a pseudonym. Names, we know, are very serious things, fully susceptible to Frazerian "contagious magic;" I leave that matter in the hands of students of psychology, who have already had their proverbial field-day with Carroll's unusual personality. The final solution must await their verdict. But we may confidently draw a picture, I think, of the aging mathematician vainly juggling figures in a futile effort to conceal the fact that he published the first book of the Deep Space trilogy at the age of 106.

Q E D

Orcrist and the MLA

Scholarship, Fellowship!
Orcrist our Bulletin
Claims a new status with
Pardonable pride:

Formerly cheerfully
Extracurricular,
By sanctions official it's
Now dignified!
--Sharyn Lawler

Jaded society,
Hearken to fantasy,
Gamesome and gay and yet
More than a toy:

Treating reality
Unrealistically,
Joys to o'erwhelm you and
Bring you to Joy.
--Sharyn Lawler

MAGDALEN COLLEGE,
OXFORD.

Sept 19th 1955

Dear Vinaver

Thank you very much for the copy of your lecture. Ever since I heard it at the Arthurian I have wished for more of it than memory could carry – as it is now a sine qua non for any reading of Malory.

About holes in VI vi, it may interest you to note that my own MS. note on the passage gives "Hole = fenestra" (Catholicon Anglicum 1487) – a reference I probably got from the N.E.D. But can you throw any light on "hole of the tree" in VI ii? Your knowledge of "F." will enable you to say at once whether this is merely an error for "bole", or whether we must consider further. (Tolkien showed me O.E. Healh = angulus > fork (of a tree) but this is difficult phonologically.)

Thanks also for your very kind reference in a footnote to my somewhat pert review.

I do wish you could see your way to give us a commentary as well as a text when you bring out the W. MS. – it is badly needed for all aspects of the work and whose business is it if not yours?

With many thanks,

yours

C. S. Lewis