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THE SACRAMENT OF VIOLENCE:
MYTH AND THE GREAT WAR IN C.S. LEWIS'S RANSOM TRILOGY

by

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B.S. Grove City College, 2008

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ABSTRACT

My primary aim for this study is to illuminate the Ransom trilogy's inherent psychological and spiritual themes, as well as demonstrate how these themes clarify Lewis's philosophical and political goals for the text. Specifically, by investigating Lewis's mythic imagery and suffering motifs in light of psychoanalytic and theological literary criticisms, I elucidate the reasoning behind Lewis's unique—and at times, horrific—portrayal of fear, violence, and death. I also investigate how Lewis integrates his theology with the horrors of personal and intrapersonal suffering, as well as how he utilizes imagination and myth to explicate the practical (or political) implications of his theodicy. As a whole, I present a systematic study of the relationship between the Great War, myth, and the three Ransom novels, one which reveals how Lewis manipulates his personal traumatic experiences to fashion a romantic Christian understanding of evil and violence in the modern world.

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A ROADMAP

“Very often Lewis does manage to take us inside his thinking as he reflects theologically about a world in which many different things interest him and arouse his questioning intellect. This, indeed, is much of the key to reading Lewis: recognizing the degree to which he is focusing on things *outside* himself and trying to make sense of them *for* himself.” – Gilbert Meilaender

Before introducing the theories, methods, and arguments associated with my topic, I wish to first present the reader with a roadmap – a way of understanding the context and development of my particular approach to the Ransom Trilogy. While most interpretations of Lewis’s novels approach the works from one perspective—i.e. genre, ethics, or theology—this paper will attempt to view the series through multiple lenses, integrating a number of disciplines in order to create a more holistic understanding of Lewis’s goals for the texts. Thus, it is best to read my following argument as a pyramid. Where the opening chapter establishes a broad context, each subsequent chapter presents an additional interpretive layer, each layer growing more specific as the thesis progresses. Accordingly, the end of chapter four and the whole of chapter five contain my primary arguments and conclusions.

So, more specifically, how is the thesis structured? Chapter two, or the first content-driven chapter, presents a review of the literature – a history of previous interpretations regarding the trilogy. I cover a variety of authors, both sympathetic and critical, and detail the specifics of their conclusions. I also introduce one particularly compelling article: Robert Plank’s “Some Psychological Aspects of the Ransom Trilogy,” a brief introduction to the relationship of

psychology and ethics in Lewis's writings. I then transition into the history and place of psychology in literature and introduce the relationship between psychology and theology.

Following that same theme, chapter three presents the trilogy as an extended myth, exploring as well the psychological implications of mythic literature. It is here that I first argue for the necessity of multiple interpretations. Because of the inherently symbolic nature of myth, the story cries out for psychological, ethical, and in this case theological, lenses. In the same way, specific as well as universal messages litter the pages of the trilogy, indicating the presence of modern and ancient themes. Thus, the rest of the chapter explores the Ransom trilogy, notably its violence and ethics, in light of transcendent archetypes, ideas reinterpreted and reimagined for a modern audience.

Chapter four, then, focuses specifically on the theological aspects of the trilogy, or Lewis's "intended" message. If we are to understand the trilogy as myth, I argue, we must view the story's spiritual themes in light of Lewis's idea of "myth becoming fact." As a Christian, Lewis married the spiritual with the physical, creating a certain sacramentalist understanding of war, violence, and redemption. Thus, by couching violence within myth, Lewis baptized the sufferings of war with a spiritual purpose, effectively merging theology with psychology and ethics and creating a "sacrament of violence."

After reaching my primary argument in chapter four, I explain the importance of my conclusions in chapter five – i.e. how a sacramental understanding of violence creates additional interpretive layers for post-war fantasy literature, especially within the writings of Lewis and the

other Inklings. The end of the chapter, then, details areas for future study and research and places the thesis within the greater context of theology and war.

THE MAN, THE TRILOGY, AND THE WAR

“An accurate reading of the trilogy must...be based upon an accurate reading of Lewis’s life. Though Lewis wrote a memoir of his early years, and though he revealed his personal values in all of his books, his life and mind remain something of a mystery. Even his closest friends reported a certain reticence on his part to speak of anything personal, a habitual veiling of his inner self. Consequently, there remain some basic questions about Lewis the man that cannot help but shape one’s interpretations of Lewis the author.” – David C. Downing

Published in 1938, 1943, and 1945 respectively, *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength* compose what is popularly called “The Space Trilogy” or, by some, “The Ransom Trilogy.” Prior to their release, the author, C.S. Lewis, was commonly known in academic circles for his engrossing lectures and *The Allegory of Love*, his study of the allegorical treatment of love in the late Middle Ages. These novels, however, quickly vaulted Lewis into the realm of “popular author” and were soon followed by other beloved works such as *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *Mere Christianity*, and *Till We Have Faces*.

Despite the general popularity of the trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength* met with primarily mixed reviews. According to David C. Downing, a present day Lewis scholar, the novels “are widely praised for their intellectual vigor, for their mythopoeic qualities, and for the fluency and vividness of Lewis’s prose style,” while “negative commentary about the trilogy has tended to focus on a few key issues: effectiveness of characterization, an antiscientific bias, sexism or even misogyny, and *inappropriate violence*”

(Downing 140, emphasis mine). While each of these critiques presents a compelling argument¹, I find the “inappropriate violence” assessment particularly interesting. For example, many of Lewis’s contemporary reviewers found Weston’s humiliation in *Out of the Silent Planet*, the physical destruction of the Un-Man in *Perelandra*, and “the victory of Ransom and Merlin” in *That Hideous Strength* as “brutal,” “uncomfortable,” “horrific,” and of the scene in *That Hideous Strength*, as “one of the most savage scenes in modern literature” (152). Whether one agrees with these interpretations or not, it is obvious that physical violence and suffering play a large role in the development of Lewis’s novels. And, like any other major literary theme, it is appropriate to ask “why.”

Though, before I get into my specific reasoning for studying the issue of violence within the trilogy, I wish to present a brief overview of previous critical interpretations. In general, most scholars have viewed Lewis’s series through only a few lenses: genre, theme, or theology. An early debate regarding genre lay in the classification of the Ransom Trilogy. Should Lewis’s series be considered legitimate science fiction or should the trilogy fall under an alternate umbrella – for example, fantasy, utopian fiction or possibly a hybrid genre like mythopoeia? Popular Lewis scholar, Chad Walsh, explains in his article *The Reeducation of the Fearful Pilgrim* that “C.S. Lewis, a traditionalist in so many things, was not a rebel against the great tradition of science fiction when he wrote the tale of Ransom’s forced visit to Malacandra and his adventures and experiences there” (64). His use of space travel, symbolism and faithfulness to the science of the day (the characteristics of Venus and Mars) all indicate a general adherence

¹ For an excellent summation of common critiques of “The Space Trilogy” see “The Achievement of C.S. Lewis: Assessing the Trilogy,” in David C. Downing’s *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis’s Ransom Trilogy*.

to the necessary elements of science fiction. The heavy philosophic and religious themes, Walsh explains, do not force the Ransom Trilogy into a separate genre, but a separate “mansion” within the vast realm of science fiction. Inspired by novels like Stapledon’s *Last and First Men* and Lindsay’s *Voyage to Arcturus*, Lewis’s stories fall into the “kind of science fiction in which life on other planets illumines by contrast life on this. These are the stories that pose, and sometimes imaginatively resolve, the great philosophic, religious, and metaphysical questions that will not be shamed or intimidated into disappearing” (65).

In the same way, Doris T. Myers asserts that “Each of Lewis’s three science fiction novels represents a different effort to explore the limits of the genre...he presents science fiction as one species of ‘fantastic or mythopoeic literature in general’ (C.S. Lewis in Context, 36-7). Like H.G. Wells before him, Lewis preferred a science fiction which dealt more with the human mind, fantasy and new sensations instead of technical plot elements. “In creating the Ransom trilogy,” Myers comments, “Lewis contributed substantially to the development of the ‘scientific romance’ into a serious, philosophical mode of fiction.” (38) Similar to Walsh, Myers sees the trilogy as merely a subgenre of science fiction, not a complete departure.

Kath Filmer, however, introduced an alternate interpretation of the novels in the early 1990s. In his book, *The Fiction of C.S. Lewis*, Filmer likens the Ransom Trilogy to political fiction, a genre popularized by the utopian novelists Aldous Huxley and George Orwell. He states that:

Lewis’s penchant for answering the works of other authors (John Bunyan in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, William Blake in *The Great Divorce*, Apuleius in *Till We*

Have Faces, and the Biblical epistles and to some extent Jonathan Swift in *The Screwtape Letters* is also evident in his Ransom trilogy. *Out of the Silent Planet* is very clearly (from the parallel plot structure, as well as Lewis's prefatory note) an answer to H.G. Well's *The First Men in the Moon*; *Perelandra* is a response to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and *That Hideous Strength* is a retelling of the story of the Tower of Babel from the Bible; the setting of the evil scientific company is a town called Belbury, which has resonances with the word 'Babel.' The very fact that Lewis choose to 'answer' other texts is highly polemical; the Ransom trilogy is perhaps the most overtly political of all his fiction (58).

Though scientific elements resonate throughout the books, their presence is less a function of the fantastical genre than Lewis's disapproval of the modern, its philosophical, scientific, and technological aspects. Moreover, Filmer explains, because Lewis's novels enter the same debate as Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984*, they should be understood in light of Lewis's dystopian, rather than scientific, vision. His polemic is the primary, not secondary, form.

Echoing Filmer's hybrid understanding of the novels, scholars Jared Lobdell and Martha Sammons argue that Lewis's trilogy should not be categorized under the standard science fiction genre. "The Ransom stories" he says, "are inspired by "scientifiction," and may be considered as science fiction, but in my view should also be considered as part of the this genre, this broad area, of which science fiction is largely a current subgenre" (*The Scientifiction Novels of C.S. Lewis*, 2). Scientifiction, or science fantasy, Lobdell explains, predates the modern divide between science fiction and fantasy, usually encompassing the indeterminate period of the 1940s

and 1950s (pre-Ray Bradbury). As political and religious satire, the novels are certainly within the realm of science fiction; however, Lewis's style indicates an older, broader genre: Arcadian pageant. "In Lewis's Arcadian world," Lobdell says, "things are likewise either simple, or rural, or at least familiar, even if conventional Arcadia is conventional. But it is, like much of the classical, a stylized world" (3). The fact that the primary action occurs in space is incidental – it is the highly stylized, theological and allegorical elements which indicate the trilogy's genre. And in this case, the "scientifiction" novels of C.S. Lewis are much more like a fantastical pageant play than a science fiction adventure story. According to Sammons, Lewis combined scientifiction with the supernatural, also adding a taste of mythopoetic literature as well. By creating his own myth of "Deep Heaven" (heavily influenced by Biblical, Arthurian and Medieval legend) within a scientific setting, Lewis "[tried] to "redeem" the science fiction form for imaginative purposes" (100). In essence, he baptized the genre with mythic or "other-worldly" flavors.

This idea of "myth" heavily influenced the thematic discussion of the Ransom trilogy as well. In 1957, Charles Moorman published "Spaceship and Grail: The Myths of C.S. Lewis," an article detailing the significance of myth within *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*. Early on, he argues:

Myth itself represents an ultimate and absolute reality; myth in literature represents a reflection of that central reality, capable of conveying the meaning and, to some extent, the power implicit in the myth itself. Lewis thus implies that myth functions in literature as a suggestive archetype to which ordinary fictional

situations may be referred by allusion. In this way, myth lends its own total meaning and inherent power to the fictional situation (405).

Myth, in other words, represents definitive truth – a higher reality that day to day life cannot touch without the assistance of imagination. Through this myth, Lewis fashions an ideal setting in which to communicate his particular worldview, and ultimately, the general message of his stories. As Moorman explains, “Lewis's main aim in the creation of his silent planet myth is thus to create and maintain a metaphor which will serve to carry in fictional form the basic tenets of Christianity and present them from a non-Christian point of view without reference to the usual Christian symbols” (402). Lewis, then, not only uses myth to articulate the message of Christianity, but to persuade skeptics of its truth as well.

A couple decades later, a few other scholars explored another predominant theme within the trilogy: ethics. Among them was popular Lewis scholar, Gilbert Meilenander. In his book, *The Taste of the Other: The Social and Ethical Thought of C.S. Lewis*, Meilenander examines Lewis’s view on one particular ethic – the relationship of humanity to the outside world, or creation and created things. Here, he introduces a popular concept often attributed to Lewis, that of “sehnsucht” or “longing.” “The key to understanding the concept—a key which Lewis himself was a long time finding,” Meilenander explains, “is that it is a longing for something never directly given in experience...To try to satisfy this longing with any object given in experience will be futile and will inevitably spoil the genuine pleasure which the object might have given” (14-5). Like Moorman’s use of myth, Meilenander uses the concept of “sehnsucht” to understand the permeating sense of “Otherness” present within Lewis’s novels. For example,

Ransom's pilgrimage from Malacandra to Perelandra and finally back to earth represents, in a sense, the individual's own continual search for this undefined "Other," the truth that will ultimately lend meaning and purpose to human existence. And through this intangible "Other," Meilenander argues, Lewis offers his readers a suitable way of understanding the familiar, or the tangible and created world. Accordingly, "What we are to remember—and what is so easy to forget—is that they are *created*; they are gifts of the Creator meant to be received. This is the key to understanding the picture Lewis paints. The proper posture for the creature is one of receptivity" (17-18). In distinguishing creation from man, and man from the "Other," Lewis communicated a clear idea of human stewardship, one which greatly influenced the heart of all three novels.

In 2003, author Jeffrey Folks reintroduced Meilenander's idea and also expanded its scope. He explains that:

Lewis asserted ethical principles that flew in the face of prevailing theories of ethics, for their conception required belief in a purposeful creation with both individual life and collective human history enacted within the bounds of a divine plan. From this perspective, human life is understood to be integral, meaningful, and purposeful so that, in terms of ethics, each moment of human life involves moral choice guided by an understanding of the end or telos of existence (Telos and Existence: Ethics in C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy and Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge," 111).

By glorifying cultural traditions, classicism, and medieval scholasticism, Lewis, in effect, antagonized prevailing modern tenets – the superiority of science, “creative genius” and religious humanism. Specifically, “Lewis’s presentation of Weston is an implicit critique of the moral failing of science, and more broadly of all humanistic learning, when it is set up as self-sufficient, for by itself scientific experimentation can never arrive at first principles” (112). And later, Lewis explicitly denounces the devaluing of the individual for the collective good, further emphasizing his displeasure with modern ethical and social philosophy. In light of these claims, Folks argues, the entirety of the Ransom trilogy should be understood as an impassioned response to the rapid increase of post-war empiricism and positivism within Western society.

One of the most recent critiques of Lewis’s trilogy comes in Sanford Schwartz’s 2009 book, *C. S. Lewis on the Final Frontier: Science and the Supernatural in the Space Trilogy*. Schwartz explains that though many previous scholars, like Folk and Meilenander, have interpreted Lewis’s novels as an attack on empiricism, evolutionary theory, and anthropocentrism, the novels may be more easily understood as a “sanctified” version of these theories, not an explicit attack on their tenets. By “adopting Augustine’s ‘privative’ notion of evil as nothing other than the distortion of the Good,” Schwartz states, “Lewis turns the apparent antithesis between Christianity and the post-Darwin currents of modern thought into a relationship between a transcendent original and its parodic imitation” (138). Thus, in Lewis’s mind, the unfallen communities within Malacandra and Perelandra depict a definitive understanding of Creation (a Platonic “Form”) while modern evolutionary theory only imitates this Form. Consequently, “the affirmative vision of creative evolution is not so much negated as perfected in the mobile new Eden, transfigured both by the reinstatement of divine transcendence

and by the voluntary submission and self-giving required to preserve the beneficial dynamism of the natural order” (148.) The trilogy, then, is not so much a complete denunciation of evolutionary theory and the possibilities of a dynamic created order but a call to interpret these theories in light of classical Augustinian and Neo-Platonic views.

Though Schwartz’s treatise may be the most recent addition to the dialogue surrounding the Ransom Trilogy, I wish to conclude with an article written forty years earlier, one which introduces an argument I find particularly compelling. In defense of his methodology, author Robert Plank states:

A man’s mind, however much expanded, is an organic whole, and if we try to reconstruct his confession from the fragments, especially if we do so with the benefit of insights arrived at by psychoanalysis, we need to see it as a whole. We see the writer’s inner conflicts reflected-but also purified by having been filtered through the creative process-in his work (“Some Psychological Aspects of Lewis’s Trilogy,” 39).

To accurately understand an author’s arguments, one must understand the author himself, his beliefs and the possible motivations behind his work. Accordingly, Plank goes on to explain Lewis’s psychological and emotional involvement in the novels through the nature of the hero, Dr. Elwin Ransom, the one connecting point amongst all three works. And because Ransom is the *one* connecting point, his importance is enhanced. “Now normally in such a case the author would elaborate the portrait,” Plank explains, “he would add. Lewis does rather the opposite. He subtracts. As the trilogy progresses, Ransom’s features are shed. He becomes less individual and

more an allegory. Growing more exalted, he becomes less human” (27). Though at first peculiar, this phenomenon, in truth, speaks volumes about the nature of Lewis. Personally, Lewis distrusted the science of psychology as well as the understanding gained from looking inward. He much preferred viewing himself in light of his spiritual sanctification, his growth in Christ, and more importantly, he preferred growing in his understanding of God in light of the outside world rather than furthering his knowledge of himself. Thus, by spending more time enlarging “the range of sensual experience” (40) over developing the inward workings of the primary character, Lewis revealed his own priorities, the truths which most accurately represented his personal desires.

Though interesting and thought-provoking in its own right, this introduction of psychoanalysis into literary theory, in general, has made many scholars nervous. Many view the process as a dangerous attempt to psychoanalyze an author, a person most of whom have only encountered through his or her literary works, while others dismiss the validity of psychoanalysis altogether. However, psychoanalytic literary criticism continues to persist. Many popular scholars such as Harold Bloom, Peter Brooks, and Julia Kristeva consistently employ psychoanalysis within their literary analyses, molding Freud’s methodology with other more recent literary developments – post-structuralism and post-modernism for example. Commenting on this trend, literary scholar Leonard Jackson asserts:

If psychoanalysis is false, psychoanalytic interpretations are of no interest and we should stop making them...If it really is the case that we cannot do without some psychoanalytic interpretations, then this has important consequences for the

theory. The main consequence is that it is overwhelmingly likely that the theory itself contains some truth (*Literature, Psychoanalysis, and the New Sciences of Mind*, 97-8).

In essence, the very use of psychoanalytic theory argues for its validity. Though not flawless by any means, the unique ability of psychoanalysis to explore possible unconscious themes makes it a compelling option for literary critique. And, moreover, because the roots of psychoanalysis lie in literature itself, the marriage of the two disciplines should not be discouraged. As Mr. Jackson eloquently explains:

Much of psychoanalysis actually came in the first place from literature or literary theory. The concept of catharsis came from the theory of tragedy. The principle of interpreting symptoms by finding a meaningful narrative in which they are embedded goes back to tribal witch-doctoring, but the interpretive method is literary. Literature gives us not only the basic concept, but many of the most subtle details, and the most brilliant fictional illustrations, of the theory of the unconscious mind...It may well be that that is what literature is for: to enable us to come to terms with traumatic experience in fantasy, before or after we have to cope with the real thing (60).

Thus, if psychoanalytic literary criticism—and with it Plank's analysis—is a legitimate interpretive form, how else may it offer insight into the trilogy? Like Jackson mentions, could Ransom's journey reflect a previous traumatic experience or even serve as an attempt at catharsis? In my mind, quite possibly.

Recounting a conversation Lewis had with his friend Owen Barfield, Lewis scholar, Chad Walsh, explains an interesting tendency within Lewis's writings – what he calls a “curious impersonality, an unwillingness to explore the inner self, the creation of a personality turned outward for public debate”(9). To Barfield, as well as Walsh, Lewis was a man whose private and public personas displayed the same personality, character, and even disposition. Jack, the man, and C.S. Lewis, the scholar, did not greatly differ. However, as Walsh and Barfield indicate, it wasn't so much that Lewis commonly revealed his private self to the masses; instead, he fashioned a public self which eclipsed any indication of a private existence. A wall existed within Lewis's identity, either serving as the end or concealing part of his inner self. In reference to this wall, Barfield comments on Lewis's relationship with psychology in general. He explains:

If it is true that Lewis was not much interested in depth-psychology, it is not true that he had never thought about it. As a young man, for instance, he had been quite aware of the technique of diagnosing the psyche in terms of its latent perversion—and quite capable of applying this technique to himself, and incidentally to me. What I think is true is, that at a certain stage in his life he deliberately ceased to take any interest in himself except as a kind of spiritual alumnus taking his moral finals. I think this was part of the change to which I have referred; and I suggest that what began as deliberate choice became at length (as he had no doubt always intended it should) an ingrained and effortless habit of soul. Self-knowledge, for him, had come to mean recognition of his own weaknesses and shortcomings and nothing more. Anything beyond that he sharply suspected, both in himself and in others, as a symptom of spiritual megalomania.

At best, there was so much else in letters and in life, that he found much *more* interesting! (9).

Paradoxically, Lewis's loss of interest in himself as anything but a "spiritual alumnus" makes him all the more fascinating. As I mentioned previously, could his singular focus on the Christian life (and rejection of inward study) function as a coping mechanism, a way to find meaning in the midst of trying emotions, circumstances, and experiences? Again, it is entirely possible.

What, then, could have caused this aversion to personal examination, and with it, psychological study? The Ransom Trilogy, I believe, sheds light on this issue. One theme that recurs throughout the three novels is one of struggle, suffering, and personal conflict. Ransom initially wages war against Weston, the physical embodiment of the evils of scientism, and later battles the "Un-Man," Satan himself. Lastly, in *That Hideous Strength*, he overthrows the National Institute for Coordinated Experiments (N.I.C.E.), Satan's primary stronghold on earth. Fear, violence, and death litter the pages of the trilogy, clothing Lewis's spiritual battle with physicality, and at the same time, baptizing the horrors of war with spiritual significance. It is this war, then, its horrific images and detailed savagery, which cause me to question Lewis's personal experience with battle, and ask, along with scholar Kath Filmer, "What personal fear of evil, what personal psychological agenda, would lead Lewis to create such a monstrosity?" (33).

In November of 1917, Lewis, a second lieutenant in the Third Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry, arrived in Somme, France. After serving a few months on the front line, Lewis was hospitalized in the British Red Cross Hospital in Le Treport, suffering from a moderate case

of trench fever. A month later, Lewis returned to the trenches and served in the battalion until April 15th, 1918, when he was wounded on Mount Berenchon at the Battle of Arras. He recovered by October of the same year and after serving for another few weeks, he was discharged the following December. During his service, Lewis lost his very good friend and roommate, E.F.C. "Paddy" Moore, an experience which later led him to write "Death in Battle" for *Reveille* magazine, his first publication outside of school journals. Lewis returned to Oxford on January 13th, 1919 (Duncan, *The Magic Never Ends: The Life and Works of C.S. Lewis*, 38-40).

In the words of Lewis biographer, Lyle Dorsett, "What happens to a man when he goes into combat? What happens to him when his best friend is killed in combat? When men around him, men under his command are killed?" (38). Such trauma, Dorsett explains, could not possibly leave a man unaffected. "WWI had a profound impact on him. But in his era, being an Englishman and living in the early twentieth century, the last thing you did was pour it all out" (36). The culture and accepted practice of his day, in essence, limited Lewis's means of processing (or coping with) his experiences. In *Morning After War: C.S. Lewis and WWI*, KJ Gilchrist further details Lewis's time in the war. Throughout his analysis, Gilchrist interprets Lewis's experiences, and subsequent silence, as a symptom (or possible cause) of his inner "wall." The work "presents an understanding of what Lewis did not say about his war" (1), and, as a result, deconstructs the relationship between Lewis's personal trauma and his romantic vision of life. According to Gilchrist, these wartime experiences as well as the death of his wife, effectively "shattered" Lewis's ideal vision of reality, replacing it with a melancholic realism.

Though I agree with Dr. Gilchrist in that this specific trauma greatly influenced Lewis's future writings, I do not believe that the war effectively shattered his romantic disposition; what is more, I believe the war eventually reemphasized and solidified his idealism, with the Ransom Trilogy serving as the literary transition. Though his post-war compositions, *Spirits in Bondage* and *Dymer*, certainly reflect a disillusioned, melancholic mind, it must be noted that Lewis's subsequent conversion significantly altered his understanding of the war. His post-conversion novels (specifically, the Ransom Trilogy) do not include the same hopeless specters or "melancholic realism" which pervades his previous writings. Instead, these novels reflect a certain spiritualism, objective truth, and in my opinion, a renewed romanticism. The Ransom Trilogy, then, acts as Lewis's response to his initial cathartic works, *Spirits in Bondage* and *Dymer*. Though Lewis's mind still carried the burdens and images of war, he effectively reinterpreted his personal experiences in light of Christian beliefs.

However, before I detail the specific topics of the following chapters, I wish to clarify what this thesis does not intend to discuss, argue, or prove. I realize that, in addition to Gilchrist's investigation, other books have been written recently about Lewis's views on suffering (*C.S. Lewis: Light Among the Shadows* by Marie Conn) and evil (*C.S. Lewis and A Problem of Evil* by Jerry Root), so it would be unwise of me to merely repeat what these scholars have said. Thus, it is not my goal to broadly survey these thematic elements within Lewis's writings. Also, this study will not attempt to expound upon the implications of trauma beyond what is indicated within the trilogy itself. Like I mentioned, it is risky to psychoanalyze an author or endeavor to find a common unconscious thread within a person's writings. In my mind, the heavy amount of fear, violence, and death within the Ransom stories begs the use of a wartime

lens, but beyond that, an extended psychoanalytic interpretation would be stretching the boundaries of responsible scholarship. Lastly, I do not wish to claim that Lewis suffered from any significant mental illness, an illness such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or a form of anxiety or depression. Such analysis should be taken, if taken at all, by psychologists and those trained in disease research. Instead, I wish to follow the approach established by Carl Jung. As he explains in *On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetic Art*:

In order to do justice to a work of art, analytical psychology must rid itself entirely of medical prejudice; for a work of art is not a disease, and consequently requires a different approach from the medical one. A doctor naturally has to seek out the causes of a disease in order to pull it up by the roots, but just as naturally the psychologist must adopt exactly the opposite attitude towards a work of art. Instead of investigating its typically human determinants, he will inquire first of all into its meaning, and will concern himself with its determinants only in so far as they enable him to understand it more fully. Personal causes have as much or as little to do with a work of art as the soil with the plant that springs from it. We can certainly learn to understand some of the plant's peculiarities by getting to know its habitat, and for the botanist this is an important part of his equipment. But nobody will maintain that everything essential has then been discovered about the plant itself. The personal orientation which the doctor needs when confronted with the question of aetiology in medicine is quite out of place in dealing with a work of art, just because a work of art is not a human being, but is something supra-personal. It is a thing and not a personality; hence it cannot be judged by

personal criteria. Indeed, the special significance of a true work of art resides in the fact that it has escaped from the limitations of the personal and has soared beyond the personal concerns of its creator (6).

With that said, my primary aim for this study is to further illuminate the trilogy's inherent psychological and spiritual themes, as well as demonstrate how these themes clarify Lewis's philosophical and political goals for the text. Specifically, by investigating Lewis's mythic imagery and suffering motifs in light of psychoanalytic and theological literary criticisms, I hope to better understand the reasoning behind Lewis's unique—and at times, horrific—portrayal of fear, violence, and death. I also intend to investigate how Lewis integrates his theology with the horrors of personal and intrapersonal suffering, as well as how he utilizes imagination and myth to explicate the practical (or political) implications of his theodicy. As a whole, I hope to present a systematic study of the relationship between the Great War, myth, and the three Ransom novels, one which reveals how Lewis manipulates his personal traumatic experiences to fashion a romantic Christian understanding of evil and violence in the modern world.

MYTH, SUFFERING, AND SYMBOL

“A man’s mind, however much expanded, is an organic whole, and if we try to reconstruct his confession from the fragments, especially if we do so with the benefit of insights arrived at by psychoanalysis, we need to see it as a whole. We see the writer’s inner conflicts reflected—but also purified by having been filtered through the creative process—in his work.” – Robert Plank

When one mentions psychoanalysis, psychotherapy or psychoanalytic theory, most initially think of Austrian neurologist, Sigmund Freud, the universally recognized father of the field. During his lifetime, Freud contributed to the fields of medical science and psychology primarily through his work with the unconscious and psychosexual development as well as philosophy and religion. However, Freud also developed a theory regarding the relationship of psychology and literature, claiming that man’s most important instinctual fantasies may be revealed within his works of art. Specifically, Freud claimed that the Oedipus complex—the most important feature of human personality—may be found “hidden behind any human artifact of strong emotional force,” driving and shaping its various images (Jackson, 69). For example, Freud famously interpreted Shakespeare’s Hamlet in light of this particular complex, arguing that Hamlet’s violent behavior as well as his struggle with his mother’s remarriage to Claudius stemmed from repressed sexual desire and latent patricidal tendencies. But how, one might ask, can an invented literary character possibly have unconscious motives? “Unconscious fantasies in the writer,” Freud argues, “are unconsciously written into the text; they form the unconscious of a character and are responded to unconsciously by an audience which has the same patterns in the unconscious” (75-6). Human characteristics are naturally reflected within human creations,

thus, leaving these creations open for similar psychoanalytic interpretation. Literature, then, according to Freud, serves as a mere extension of the self, an unconscious dialogue between the writer and reader.

However, psychoanalytic literary interpretation did not begin *and* end with Freud's analysis. His one-time colleague and intellectual successor, Carl Jung, furthered (and altered) his work within the field, postulating the existence of a "collective unconscious" along with each individual's personal unconscious. According to Jung, the collective unconscious "does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn...this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals" (*The Archetypes of Collective Unconscious*, 3). Over the course of human history, this construct has evolved to aid men in the understanding of recurring situations—i.e. life experiences common to men of all races, cultures, and ages—while also providing a framework for emotional response. He further explains that:

Whereas the personal unconscious consists for the most part of "complexes," the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of "archetypes." The concept of the archetype, which is an indispensable correlate of the idea of the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere. Mythological research calls them 'motifs'; in the psychology of primitives they correspond to Levy-Bruhl's concept of "representations collectives," and in the field of comparative religion

they have been defined by Hubert and Mauss as 'categories of the imagination'... (42).

In more scientific terms, archetypes may also be understood as the “subjective side of a biological instinct” or more simply, as “general frameworks for the reception, production and analysis of experience, and action upon it” (Jackson, 108). Unlike Freud who reduced most biological instincts to a singular psychosexual complex—i.e. the Oedipus complex—Jung accounts for a number of archetypes, each capable of influencing biological reactions or creative expressions. The four universal archetypes, as indicated in *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, include Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, and Trickster. However, in addition to these universal archetypes, Jung also describes a variety of archetypal figures, archetypal events, and archetypal motifs. Though too numerous to be explained in depth, some common archetypal figures include the Wise Old Man, the shadow, the devil, and the hero, while birth, initiation, and death represent familiar archetypal events and the Apocalypse, the Deluge, and Creation, archetypal motifs. Accordingly, a work of art, music, or literary creation may house a host of these archetypal images as well, communicating universal human experience through the integration of personal experiences and their universal images. Again, according to Jung, literature inherently contains the ability to serve as an extension of the unconscious self.

So, how is one to apprehend these archetypes? How does the conscious mind disclose unconscious material to the outside world? As one might expect, Jung argues that “archetypes can be apprehended only by images that act as symbols” (113). These symbolic images—in their most primitive form—are primarily found in dreams, acting as disjointed expressions of

unconscious processes. However, the waking mind adds meaning to these disjointed expressions through universal conscious frameworks – i.e. religious beliefs, myths, or fairytales.

Consequently:

When we examine these images more closely, we find that they give form to countless typical experiences of our ancestors. They are, so to speak the psychic residua of innumerable experiences of the same type. They present a picture of psychic life in the average, divided up and projected into the manifold figures of the mythological pantheon. But the mythological figures are themselves products of creative fantasy and still have to be translated into conceptual language. Only the beginnings of such a language exist, but once the necessary concepts are created they could give us an abstract, scientific understanding of the unconscious processes that lie at the roots of the primordial images. In each of these images there is a little piece of human psychology and human fate, a remnant of the joys and sorrows that have been repeated countless times in our ancestral history, and on the average follow ever the same course. It is like a deeply graven river-bed in the psyche, in which the waters of life, instead of flowing along as before in a broad but shallow stream, suddenly swell into a mighty river. This happens whenever that particular set of circumstances is encountered which over long periods of time has helped to lay down the primordial image (*On the Relation of Analytic Psychology to Poetic Art*, 14).

Thus, as time continues, these rudimentary primordial images are translated into concrete mythical symbols, or “the fragmentary images from dreams or elsewhere are filled out from the vast mythological store of the world” (Jackson, 104). Active imagination, fantasy, and their compatriots, then, fill in the gaps left by unconscious images or dreams, creating a coherent interpretation of universal human experience. And as these devices appear in literature, they communicate not only personal psychological substance, but this collective history as well.

To continue the history of psychoanalytic interpretation, I would need to detail the subsequent contributions of Jacques Lacan, his work with linguistic processes and the like. However, because of the highly fantastical and mythical nature of Lewis’s work, I believe it is best to remain a while longer with Jung. Though Lewis did not necessarily see his writing as “archetypal” or even psychologically compelling, he certainly made a point to employ a number of universal mythic images. And, because of Jung’s firm grasp on the relationship of archetypes and myth, his analysis of archetypal and “secondary mythical” literature may be particularly helpful in understanding the trilogy. For example, how is Jung’s “vast mythological store of the world” revealed in the Ransom trilogy? And more importantly, what implications does this use of mythology have for the text?

As mentioned earlier, Lewis’s trilogy reveals an intimate understanding of the war with many of his images indicating a man familiar with the realities of trench warfare as well as the challenges of a soldier’s day to day existence. However, these brutal accounts and images do not stand alone. They do not merely represent one man’s personal experiences during WWI or serve as the textual home for jaded memories and lingering pain. Instead, these images are couched

within the context of highly mythical settings, language, and imagery, suggesting a grander, more universal purpose. By diffusing man's universal stories and myths throughout the text, Lewis adds a second interpretive layer to the novels – in a sense, almost begging for a psychological, or at least metaphorical, interpretation. While some authors unconsciously include mythological or symbolic allusions in their text, Lewis seems to intentionally identify himself with the collective. As Jung explains:

It might well be that the poet, while apparently creating out of himself and producing what he consciously intends, is nevertheless so carried away by the creative impulse that he is no longer aware of an "alien" will, just as the other type of poet is no longer aware of his own will speaking to him in the apparently "alien" inspiration, although this is manifestly the voice of his own self. The poet's conviction that he is creating in absolute freedom would then be an illusion: he fancies he is swimming, but in reality an unseen current sweeps him along...*Works that are openly symbolic do not require this subtle approach; their pregnant language cries out at us that they mean more than they say.* We can put our finger on the symbol at once, even though we may not be able to unriddle its meaning to our entire satisfaction. A symbol remains a perpetual challenge to our thoughts and feelings (8-11, emphasis mine).

Though these mythical images may “cry out” for a symbolic interpretation, how can we be confident that Lewis intended for his mythical references to point to a truth beyond the story

itself? Couldn't we consider the Ransom trilogy a Romantic² science fiction story and nothing more?

In *Out of the Silent Planet*, Lewis describes his hero's feelings after speaking with Oyarsa, the lord and protector of Malacandra. While reflecting on this experience as well as observing the culture and significant accomplishments of the Malacandrians, Ransom makes the following observation:

There were gigantic feats of engineering, about which he had learned nothing; feats accomplished, if all were true, before human history began...before animal history had begun. Or was that only mythology? He knew it would seem like mythology when he got back to Earth (if he ever got back), but the presence of Oyarsa was still too fresh a memory to allow him any real doubts. It even occurred to him that the distinction between history and mythology might itself be meaningless outside the Earth (143-144).

Outside the Earth, where the greater "Form" of truth and reality existed, mythology may stand on equal footing with history. While history could detail a planet or race's particular experiences and events, mythology could provide a context for interpretation *across* races, pointing all peoples to a truth beyond themselves. In the second novel, *Perelandra*, Lewis further expounds upon this theme. Ransom, in contemplating his impending battle with Weston, the "Un-Man," returns to his ideas of myth and history. He states:

² By "Romantic," I mean the style of literature which emphasizes imagination, myth-making, and the ideal over Realism and its tenets.

It was fortunate that something so horrible should be so obviously out of the question. Almost, but not quite, Ransom decreed that whatever the Silence and the Darkness seemed to be saying about this, no such crude, materialistic struggle, could possibly be what Maledil really intended. Any suggestion to the contrary must be only his own morbid fancy. It would degrade the spiritual warfare to the condition of mere mythology. But here he got another check. Long since on Mars, and more strongly since he came to Perelandra, Ransom had been perceiving that the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact was purely terrestrial—was part and parcel of that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall. Even on earth the sacraments existed as a permanent reminder that the division was neither wholesome nor final. The Incarnation had been the beginning of its disappearance. In Perelandra it would have no meaning at all. Whatever happened here would be of such a nature that earth-men would call it mythological. All this he had thought before. Now he knew it. The Presence in the darkness, never before so formidable, was putting the truths into his hands, like terrible jewels (122).

In these two examples, Lewis not only references mythological stories, he comments on the nature of mythology itself, explicitly stating that myth and truth need not exist as separate entities. Myth, in a sense, baptizes historical fact, adding meaning to an otherwise transparent event. Or, in the words of Charles Moorman, “Myth itself represents an ultimate and absolute reality; myth in literature represents a reflection of that central reality, capable of conveying the meaning and, to some extent, the power implicit in the myth itself” (*Spaceship and Grail: The*

Myths of C.S. Lewis, 405). Thus, “Lewis implies that myth functions in literature as a suggestive archetype to which ordinary fictional situations may be referred by allusion. In this way, myth lends its own total meaning and inherent power to the fictional situation” (405). Consequently, Lewis does not create a fantastical world for the mere purpose of satire (which will be explored further later), creativity, or literary freedom – he creates the medium specifically for the message, a message which demands symbolic language.

Leonard Jackson also comments on this specific type of literature – i.e. novels which reinterpret previously established myth in order to fashion a new or modern message. Describing their particular relationship to Jungian theory, he states,

There is a kind of writing that translates very readily into Jungian interpretations. It is the kind that we might call ‘secondary mythical.’ Examples are Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Wagner’s *Ring*, and *Parsifal*, and a vast body of contemporary popular fantasy. All of these are recycling ancient myths, and providing their own new meanings for these. In cases like this there may well be a conflict, or at least a disconnection, between the meaning intended by the artist, and perhaps accepted by the culture, and the meaning conveyed by the ancient archetypes. In fact it could be, and with an original artist usually is, a three-way split. There is the original archetype; the archetypal image, worked over by a long and complex cultural tradition, and carrying a great deal of social meaning over and beyond its archetypal meaning; and there is the new meaning found by the artist within his own new work (127).

Thus, because Lewis paints these ancient archetypes with symbolic *and* modern messages, his text seemingly demands multiple interpretations. What do these mythical references say in light of Jungian theory? And conversely, what does Lewis intend for them to say? Is there even a difference? According to Jackson, this effect is not necessarily one of conflict. He explains:

What happens often is that the power of the ancient mythologeme is strengthened in the very process of applying it to say something new. Often the artist is using, as an essential part of his own technique, the very method of ‘active imagination’...He is drawing on a wealth of intertextual reference and cultural suggestion, at the same time as using the symbol for its original purpose and his own (127).

So, the question then becomes: does Lewis’s employment of myth produce this particular result? And more importantly, how does Lewis’s intended message relate to the unconscious message of the mythic archetypes?

To be sure, the trilogy certainly piles up a wealth of mythical images: Greek and Edenic myths in *Perelandra* as well as Arthurian legends in *That Hideous Strength*. Lewis also pens his own mythic creation—the realm of “Deep Heaven”—which he introduces in *Out of the Silent Planet*. He writes:

Now, with a certainty which never after deserted him, [Ransom] saw the planets—the “earths” he called them in his thought—as mere holes or gaps in the living heaven—excluded and rejected wastes of heavy matter and murky air, formed not by addition to, but by subtraction from , the surrounding brightness.

And yet, he thought, beyond the solar system the brightness ends. Is that the real void, the real death? Unless...he groped for the idea...unless visible light is also a hole or gap, a mere diminution of something else. Something that is to bright unchanging heaven as heaven is to the dark, heavy earths..." (41).

Drawing on a Medieval understanding of the cosmos, Lewis's "living heaven" unites each inhabited planet (Malacandra, Perelandra, and Earth), serving as the permanent residence for unchanging reality or ultimate truth. In Platonic language, Deep Heaven represents the "Form" while the planets exist as mere approximations of that Form. Any earthly or planetary experience, then, points to an already established reality birthed in the recesses of eternity. Furthermore, as Martha Sammons explains, "the myth of Deep Heaven is a true story—the story of earth's past and future, the choices we will make, and what side each of us will be on in a present and ever worsening battle" (*A Far Off Country: A Guide to C.S. Lewis's Fantasy Fiction*, xv). These battles, and with them, pervasive violence and suffering, directly relate to the penultimate battles raging in Deep Heaven. And, in the same way, this myth not only points to the historical and personal realities of war, but the universal and spiritual implications of violence as well. As will be explored later, Lewis creates Deep Heaven to reinterpret the war and her atrocities, atrocities he experienced and could not adequately understand within an existing archetype. A romantic and fanciful mind such as Lewis's could not long survive with the conclusions of "melancholic realism."

Returning to Jung, how should we understand Lewis's inclusion of "Deep Heaven" or other mythological references? In his work *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Jung

details a number of common psychological and mythological references, placing them within overarching, collective categories. Among them, Jung describes the “Great Mother,” a protective, caring and unifying archetype common in many fantasy stories, religions, and myths. For example, in Christianity, the Great Mother manifests herself in Mary, the mother of God, and in Greek mythology, Hera and Artemis fill the role. However, according to Jung, this Great Mother does not necessarily appear in the figure of a woman or, for that matter, in human form at all. He explains:

Other symbols of the mother in a figurative sense appear in things representing the goal of our longing for redemption, such as *Paradise*, the Kingdom of God, the Heavenly Jerusalem. Many things arousing devotion or feelings of awe, as for instance the Church, university, city or country, *heaven*, earth, the woods, moon, can be mother-symbols (*Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 81, emphasis mine).

Thus, in this sense, Deep Heaven may be understood as Lewis’s personal version of the mother – an unchanging, yet living universe, a final home free from the sufferings and uncertainties of daily life. As Jung says, Deep Heaven represents the goal of our, or Lewis’s, longing for redemption. It is safety; it is “the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason...the place of magic transformation and rebirth” (82).

Though Deep Heaven may represent Lewis’s ultimate goal, it is not the only archetype which holds significance within his universe. *Perelandra*, in particular, describes a vast array of familiar archetypes, each heavy with symbolic implications. One, of special interest, is the

inclusion of the “Shadow,” or in its more mythological form, the “Trickster.” While the Shadow represents the dark or unknown realm of an individual’s unconscious, the “Trickster” signifies humanity’s collective darkness – he is, “a forerunner of the savior, and, like him, God, man, and animal at once. He is both subhuman and superhuman, a bestial and divine being, whose chief and most alarming characteristic is his unconsciousness” (263). He, in a sense, is the home for all negative projections, all the evil which humanity insists on disassociating from their collective unconscious, and consequently, is the primary antagonist for all mythical conflict.

Thus, not surprisingly, Lewis employs a manifestation of the Trickster in each novel. In *Out of the Silent Planet*, he is Weston, the amoral physicist hell-bent on the perpetuation of the human race. In *That Hideous Strength*, he is NICE, a scientific organization determined to exploit humanity for the benefit of a higher race. And, in *Perelandra*, the Trickster takes on his most mythic form as the Un-Man, or Satan himself. In describing this being, Lewis says:

It was impossible to point to any particular motion which was definitely non-human. Ransom had the sense of watching an imitation of living motions which had been very well studied and was technically correct: but somehow it lacked the master touch. And he was chilled with an inarticulate, night-nursery horror of the thing he had to deal with—the man-aged corpse, the bogey, the Un-Man (105).

This Un-Man is man’s absolute contradiction – i.e. the pure Incarnation of evil, yet, like the Trickster, is God, man, and animal as well. He has the appearance of man, claims himself as God, and, like the animal, lacks the image of God. Both mythic and supernatural, the Un-Man houses all that is wrong with the universe as well as all that is unacceptable with society, and, on

a more personal level, “represents a vanishing level of consciousness which increasingly lacks the power to take express and assert itself” (265). The conscious mind, or Lewis in this case, projects the evil and shameful aspects of human nature onto the Un-Man or Trickster, so that it may “free itself from the fascination of evil and no longer live it compulsively” (266). The Trickster is pitted against the Self as a literary representation of man’s inner struggle, and in a collective sense, society’s endless wars. However, in *Perelandra*, Ransom may not only represent the Self, but the Savior as well. According to Jung:

If, at the end of the trickster myth, the savior is hinted at, this comforting premonition or hope means that some calamity or other has happened and been consciously understood. Only out of disaster can the longing for the savior arise—in other words, the recognition and unavoidable integration of the shadow create such a harrowing situation that nobody but a savior can undo the tangled web of fate (271).

In this case, the savior is not only hinted at, he engages the Un-Man in direct battle.

Contemplating the impending battle, Ransom makes the following observation:

And at that moment, far away on Earth, as he now could not help remembering, men were at war, and white-faced subalterns and freckled corporals who had but lately begun to shave, stood in horrible gaps or crawled forward in deadly darkness, awaking, like him, to the preposterous truth that all really depended on their actions; and far away in time Horatius stood on the bridge, and Constantine settled in his mind whether he would or would not embrace the new religion, and

Eve herself stood looking upon the forbidden fruit and the Heaven of Heavens waited for her decision (121).

Lewis, then, does not mean for this altercation to symbolize one man's experience with war, but instead, every man's life-altering (and even world-changing) moments. This integration of Savior and Self elevates human action, allowing man the capacity to impact his "the tangled web of fate." Though Lewis recognizes the darkness of his own suffering as well as the evils of society, he is not bound by them. The Savior, the power of choice, "brings liberation from imprisonment...and is therefore a bringer of light as well as of healing" (Jung, 272). In Ransom, in the powers and principalities of Deep Heaven, there is hope.

As Ransom comes upon the culmination of his battle, he enters into what Jung would call, a period of Transformation. Washed on the shore of another island, Ransom discovers a cave, a common symbol for rebirth or conversion. It is here that Ransom finally defeats the Un-Man. In Jung's words, "Anyone who gets into the that cave, that is to say into the cave which everyone has in himself, or into the darkness that lies behind consciousness, will find himself involved in an—at first—unconscious process of transformation" (135). Within the darkness, Ransom defeats darkness, marking an experience of spiritual rebirth. In a conversation with Ransom after his journey through the cave, the eldils, Malacandra and Perelandra state,

Today is the morning day...The world is born today...Today for the first time two creatures of the low worlds, two images of Maleldil that breathe and breed like the beasts, step up that step at which your parents fell, and sit in the throne of what they were meant to be (169).

Again, not only does Ransom's victory mean an individual victory over the Shadow, but a world's victory as well. By rejecting the Un-Man, the *entire* world reaches its actualization, or more appropriately, its intended purpose. This intensity culminates in a grand celebration of the faithfulness and providence of Maledil and the reunion of Perelandra's first man and first woman, Tor and Tinidril. In psycho-mythological terms, Tor and Tinidril represent the Animus and Anima, the true masculine and the true feminine. United, they are the "Syzygy" or Divine Couple. According to Jung, the "archetypal form of the divine syzygy first covers up and assimilates the image of the real parents until, with increasing consciousness, the real figures of the parents are perceived – often to the child's disappointment" (67). Thus, as the child grows into adulthood, he continues to mythologize his parents in an attempt to find the wholeness, completion, or balance which his real figures failed to provide. Consequently, as a collective, "nobody can stand the total loss of the archetype. When that happens, it gives rise to that frightful "discontent in our culture," where nobody feels at home because a "father" and "mother" are missing" (69). As Ransom exclaims,

Do not move away, do not raise me up. I have never before seen a man or a woman. I have lived all my life among shadows and broken images. Oh, my Father and my Mother, my Lord and my Lady, do not move, do not answer me yet. My own father and mother I have never seen. Take me for your son. We have been alone in my world for a great time (176).

By concluding *Perelandra* with the union of this divine couple, Lewis establishes his ideal foundation and order for society – the perfect union of male and female, a balance of protection,

accountability and submission, and most importantly, mutual sacrificial love. The absence of this perfect parentage and society's misplaced fulfillment, Lewis indicates, is the root of much societal brokenness, strife, and suffering. And, as I will argue next, is the center of his conscious symbolic message as well.

As explained earlier, mythic stories such as Lewis's often convey multiple meanings – i.e. one archetypal message and one intended message. The intended message of the trilogy—namely, the evils of scientism and the power of the Christian myth³—has been explored and analyzed previously by a number of Lewis scholars. Again, to paraphrase, “Lewis asserted ethical principles that flew in the face of prevailing theories of ethics...human life is understood to be integral, meaningful, and purposeful so that, in terms of ethics, each moment of human life involves moral choice guided by an understanding of the end or telos of existence (*Telos and Existence: Ethics in C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy and Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge*, 111).” Specifically, Lewis pens men such as Weston and Devine as well as the organization, NICE (National Institute for Coordinated Experiments), in order to depict the logical, and possibly devastating, implications of an unchecked scientific positivism. In other words, “Lewis presentation of Weston is an implicit critique of the moral failing of science, and more broadly of all humanistic learning, when it is set up as self-sufficient, for by itself scientific experimentation can never arrive at first principles” (Folks, 112). This elevation of creation and created things at the expense of humanity and morality flies in the face of Lewis's worldview. Thus, what Lewis does in *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*, as Gilbert Meilanender

³ Lewis's theological message as indicated in his preference for the “Christian myth” will be analyzed more fully in my third chapter.

argues, is provide the reader with “his picture of the appropriate attitude toward created things.” Moreover, “What we are to remember—and what is so easy to forget,” he says, “is that they are *created*; they are gifts of the Creator meant to be received. This is the key to understanding the picture Lewis paints. The proper posture for the creature is one of receptivity” (17-18). Creation is to be enjoyed and used for our benefit (out of thankfulness to the Creator, or Maledil), not exploited or deified as the source of all true knowledge and wisdom. Consequently, the mythology Lewis creates and employs in *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra* together with his intended message, set the stage for Lewis’s ultimate battle for the soul of humanity in *That Hideous Strength*. Here, Lewis’s archetypes, the Great Mother, the Trickster, and the Transformation, converge yet again in a final mythic and modern struggle: Britain v. Logres.

In *Perelandra*, Lewis hints at this upcoming battle through the words of Perelandra’s King. He says:

But there will be one matter to settle before the beginning right begins...The siege of your world shall be raised, the black spot cleared away, before the real beginning. In those days Maledil will go to war—in us, and in many who once were hnau on your world, and in many from far off and in many eldila, and, last of all, in Himself unveiled, He will go down to Thulcandra. *Some of us will go before. It is in my mind, Malacandra, that thou and I will be among those. We shall fall upon your moon, wherein there is a secret evil, and which is as the shield of the Dark Lord of Thulcandra—scarred with many a blow.* We shall break her. Her light shall be put out. Her fragments shall fall into your world and

the seas and the smoke shall arise so that the dwellers in Thulcandra will no longer see the light of Arbol. And as Maledil Himself draws near, the evil things in your world shall show themselves stripped of disguise so that plagues and horrors shall cover your lands and seas. But in the end all shall be cleansed (182, emphasis mine).

In *That Hideous Strength*, Lewis reveals this secret evil. He describes a race who, through the powers of science (and the Dark Lord), have abandoned their humanity, their flesh, in pursuit of greater knowledge, and ultimately, immortality. And NICE, the Earthly, or Thulcandrian, representation of the Dark Lord, has harnessed this power for its own planetary domination and preservation. Thus, according to Jung, as a societal representation of the devil, NICE “represents the Shadow, and one which goes far beyond anything personal and could therefore best be compared with a principle, such as the principle of evil” (322). Accordingly, Ransom and his new band of followers, represent the Self, “the wholeness that transcends consciousness” (164), or the antithesis of the Shadow. This group, or remnant of “Logres,” has interesting implications within the archetype of Transformation as well. During Ransom’s communion with the Perelandrians, he experiences what Jung would call, “the transcendence of life.” By the ‘transcendence of life,’” he says:

I mean those experiences of the initiate who takes part in a scared rite which reveals to him the perpetual continuation of life through transformation and renewal. In these mystery-dramas the transcendence of life, as distinct from its momentary concrete manifestations, is *usually represented by the fateful*

transformations—death and rebirth—of a god or a godlike hero. The initiate may either be a mere witness of the divine drama or *take part in it* or be moved by it, or he may see himself *identified through the ritual action with the god...* what really matters is that an objective substance or form of life is ritually transformed through some process going on independently, while the initiate is influenced, impressed, “consecrated,” or *granted “divine grace” on the mere ground of his presence or participation* (117, emphasis mine).

Ransom did not leave Perelandra a mere man. Like his name implies, Ransom—identifying himself with Maleldil or Christ—“bought back” the Perelandrians. Like the others, Ransom, in an act of personal sacrifice, saved the Perelandrians from ultimate death, thereby essentially transforming himself into a godlike hero. As Maleldil explains to Ransom, “It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom...My name is also Ransom” (125-6). Therefore, by identifying himself with Maleldil, Ransom returns to Earth as a Jungian hero, a symbolic figurehead for transformation. Thus, through association with this godlike hero, Ransom’s followers participate in his transformation as well, aligning themselves with the will and purpose of Maleldil.

On a mythic level, the NICE v. Ransom’s loyal followers represents a modern interpretation of the people of Britain against the mythic realm of Logres. Aptly named the Pendragon, Ransom gathers unto himself a remnant of medievalism, a small group of people loyal to the Arthurian order of society (a kingdom under Christ/Maleldil). In Arthurian mythology/legend, Logres corresponds to Arthur’s realm before the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons, a land untouched by the barbarity of these foreign peoples. Similarly, in Lewis’s mind,

Logres is the last land untouched by the evils of NICE, the only land still under the reign of Maleldil. In Jungian terms, this land is the Great Mother sanctified, a shelter set-apart for God's holy people and the true Thulcandrian kingdom in Deep Heaven. Explaining this modern Logres to a resurrected Merlin, Ransom explains:

In the order of Logres I may be Pendragon, but in the order of Britain I am the King's man... The poison was brewed in these West lands but it has spat itself everywhere. However far you went you would find the machines, the crowded cities, the empty thrones, the false writings, the barren beds: men maddened with false promises and soured with true miseries, worshipping the iron works of their own hands, cut off from Earth their Mother and from the Father in Heaven. You might go East so far that the East became West and you returned to Britain across the great Ocean, but even so you would not have come out anywhere into the light. The shadow of one dark wing is over all Tellus... The Hideous Strength holds all this Earth in its fist to squeeze as it wishes. But for their one mistake there would be no hope left. If of their own evil will they had not broken the frontier and let in the celestial Powers, this would be their moment of victory. Their own strength has betrayed them. They have gone to the gods who would not have come to them, and pulled down Deep Heaven on their heads (290-292).

As a consequence, Logres and Britain are caught in an inevitable battle. Either Maleldil and Deep Heaven or the Dark Lord and his scientific humanism will control the fate of the universe. "Good is always getting better and bad is always getting worse: the possibilities of even apparent

neutrality are always diminishing...Everything is getting more itself and more different from everything else all the time...Minds get more and more spiritual, matter more and more material” (281). In the battle of good and evil, there is no compromise: only medievalism or empiricism, Logres or Britain, the Self or the Shadow.

After Ransom’s victory over NICE (the battle will be analyzed in more detail in a later chapter), Lewis ends his trilogy with one last strike against empiricism. In the way of Enoch and Elijah, Ransom is taken up into Heaven, exempt from the pain of death. According to Jung:

When a figure that is conditioned by this archetype is represented as having been taken up into heaven, the realm of the spirit, this indicates a union of earth and heaven, or of matter and spirit. *The approach of natural science will almost certainly be from the other direction: it will see in matter itself the equivalent of spirit*, but this “spirit” will appear divested of all, or at any rate most, of its known qualities, just as earthly matter was stripped of its specific characteristics when it sated its entry into heaven. Nevertheless, the way will gradually be cleared for a union of the two principles. *Understood concretely, the Assumption is the absolute opposite of materialism*. Taken in this sense, it is a counterstroke that does nothing to diminish the tension between the opposites, but drives it to extremes” (108-9, emphasis mine).

Symbolically and concretely, then, Lewis drives home his displeasure with the current direction of society. By removing his hero from the physical realm and uniting him with Deep Heaven, Lewis emphasizes the necessity of combining the physical with the spiritual. The material can in

no way arrive at first principles alone – it is only with the aid of the spiritual that man, and his world, may arrive at actualization and rest.

Thus, in the true nature of the word, Lewis's trilogy is certainly satirical – it taps into the feeling of the collective unconscious *and* comments on society's impending crisis. This, according to Jung, is the secret and power of great art and its effect upon the reader. He says:

The creative process, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present, and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life. Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking. The unsatisfied yearning of the artist reaches back to the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present. The artist seizes on this image, and in raising it from deepest unconsciousness he brings it into relation with conscious values, thereby transforming it until it can be accepted by the minds of his contemporaries according to their powers" (*On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetic Art*, 15-16).

By utilizing collective images, Lewis unconsciously unites himself with the rest of his society. As a member of this collective, then, he employs the power of literature in an effort to influence, or even transform, the minds and hearts of his peers from the inside out. Scientism, war, and

good/evil are not only personal battles, but battles in which society must take a stand. For Lewis, neutrality is not an option.

Hence, as a result of the aforementioned examples, Lewis's Ransom trilogy serves as a fascinating study of the psychology of the collective unconscious; however, on a different note, can these novels be understood as personal cathartic expressions as well? Within a Jungian framework, can literature in general be considered a personal coping mechanism for the author? Returning to my previous quote regarding the relationship of psychology and literature, Leonard Jackson states:

Much of psychoanalysis actually came in the first place from literature or literary theory. The concept of catharsis came from the theory of tragedy. The principle of interpreting symptoms by finding a meaningful narrative in which they are embedded goes back to tribal witch-doctoring, but the interpretive method is literary. Literature gives us not only the basic concept, but many of the most subtle details, and the most brilliant fictional illustrations, of the theory of the unconscious mind...It may well be that that is what literature is for: to enable us to come to terms with traumatic experience in fantasy, before or after we have to cope with the real thing (60).

Literature, then, may be considered another form of projection. Instead of projecting negative feelings and emotions on another human being, the author manipulates his own universe to produce desired outcomes. Characters, images, themes, and environments may all reflect

conscious and unconscious cathartic motives, each providing a glimpse into the author's current mindset. As Jackson further explains:

Every mechanism of defense that is used unconsciously by people in their ordinary lives is available to writers in the unconscious processes that underlie composition, and to readers when they follow a work. A work of literature can therefore at once enact unconscious wishes, and provide defenses against becoming conscious of them. The difference between these processes as they act in art and as they act in life is that in art there are fewer reality-checks. Projection of hostile internal feelings can be made just as well onto a wholly imaginary character as onto a real one; in both cases a vicious character will be created from whom evil actions may be expected; in art we will have a fictional story of really evil actions; in life we will have a paranoid interpretation of the actions of a real person. Art thus enables us to live out in fantasy unconscious wishes and fears, and also to construct elaborate ego-defenses against them which, within the work of art, are reinforced by a contrived success in the denouement (65-66).

Thus, by defeating the Evil One's demonic forces in his trilogy, Lewis, in a sense, attacks his own demons – i.e. his personal experience with earthly manifestations of evil. These personal experiences may be seen quite clearly in the images Lewis himself paints in the novels. Images of soldiers, war, fear, violence, and death litter the pages of the trilogy – not as mere intellectual descriptions of these emotions and events, but as intimate, detailed, and vivid pictures. Not surprisingly, these images did not go unnoticed by Lewis's critics. According to David Downing:

The ending of *That Hideous Strength* has elicited the greatest concern by far about Lewis's use of violence. One reviewer complained that the victory of Ransom and Merlin was achieved "by brutal, quite unethical, force, by, in fact, mass murder." Another called this "one of the most savage scenes in modern literature." Yet a third objects to the "excessive horror" of the closing pages of *That Hideous Strength* (*Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*, 152).

In *That Hideous Strength* as well as *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*, Lewis not only executes scenes of violence and death but describes them in horrific detail. Another scene described in such a way occurs in *Perelandra*. Ransom, noticing a curious looking creature, stoops down to examine it:

It was a damaged animal. It was, or had been, one of the brightly coloured frogs. But some accident had happened to it. The whole back had been ripped open in a sort of V-shaped gash, the point of the V being a little behind the head. Something had torn a widening wound backward—as we do in opening an envelope—along the trunk and pulled it out so far behind the animal that the hoppers or hind legs had been almost torn off with it...He called aloud upon heaven to break the nightmare or to let him understand what was happening. A trail of mutilated frogs lay along the edge of the island...Weston, still clothed but without his pith helmet, was standing about thirty feet away: and as Ransom watched he was tearing a frog—quietly and almost surgically inserting his forefinger, with its long

sharp nail, under the skin behind the creature's head and ripping it open. Ransom had not noticed before that Weston had such remarkable nails. Then he finished the operation, threw the bleeding ruin away, and looked up. Their eyes met (93-95).

Here, Lewis gives the reader a picture of ultimate cruelty. The Un-Man tears open a trail of defenseless animals for the sheer joy of violence, leaving them to suffer and rot without the mercy of a quick death. He does this in a world which has never known pain. Describing this scene, scholar Kath Filmer states, "Lewis piles horror upon obscenity...in his descriptions of the Un-Man's cruelty to animals...and of the Un-Man's dealing with Weston's body. Well might readers enquire what personal fear of evil, what personal psychological agenda, would lead Lewis to create such a monstrosity?" (*The Fiction of C.S. Lewis*, 33). Lewis's Shadow, Devil, or Un-Man does not masquerade as an angel of light; instead, he openly harasses, tortures, and destroys every good and pure creature he encounters. So, as Filmer aptly asks, is it possible that Lewis relieves some internal conflict through the creation of this horrific character? Is there a possible psychological agenda—beyond the personification of the Shadow/Trickster—behind the Un-Man?

A clue, I believe, comes later in the novel. During an intense physical battle with the Un-Man, Ransom reflects on his actions. He says,

Then an experience that perhaps no good man can ever have in our world came over him—a torrent of perfectly unmixed and lawful hatred. *The energy of hating, never before felt without some guilt, without some dim knowledge that he was*

failing fully to distinguish the sinner from the sin, rose into his arms and legs till he felt that they were pillars of burning blood. What was before him appeared no longer a creature of corrupted will. It was corruption itself to which will was attached only as an instrument. Ages ago it had been a Person: but the ruins of personality now survived in it only as weapons at the disposal of a furious self-exiled negation. It is perhaps difficult to understand why this filled Ransom not with horror but with a kind of joy. The joy came from finding at last what hatred was made for (132, emphasis mine).

As an ex infantry man, Lewis most certainly witnessed periods of excessive violence, suffering, and death, and, because of his place, he most certainly was required, at times, to participate in this violence. Accordingly, to psychologically cope with his actions, Lewis needed to reconcile his duty with his internal hatred, shame, and guilt. Though I do not know if Lewis employed other internal coping mechanisms, this fantastical projection, in my opinion, serves as a clear construct for the relationship of evil and violence. By “finding what hatred was made for,” Lewis paints black and white strokes over a morally gray war and his possible morally gray actions. His “real-life” experiences reflect the mythic clash of good and evil, and though his actions may not be considered completely “good,” they symbolize the appropriate reaction to corruption and ultimate evil.

So, how can we be sure that the Un-Man—as well as Weston and NICE—allow Lewis to effectively deal with WWI instead of other possible internal issues? For example, the loss of his mother at a young age as well as painful experiences at boarding school may also require

psychological processing and a new understanding of the meaning of suffering. Why, then, is WWI significant? Lewis, again, gives us clues to his understanding of the various battles through the novels' imagery and the reflections of his main character, Ransom. Early in the trilogy, Lewis informs the reader that Ransom spent time in the army, serving as a soldier during the First World War. Commenting on Ransom's experience, a friend exclaims, "God! You must have enjoyed the army. Jogging along to Thingummy, eh?" Ransom replies:

No, no. It's just the opposite of the army. The whole point about the army is that you are never alone for a moment and can never choose where you're going or even what part of the road you're walking on. On a walking-tour you are absolutely detached. You stop where you like and go on when you like. As long as it lasts you need consider no one and consult no one but yourself (18).

Here, Ransom makes it very clear that his past experiences in the army do not evoke positive memories; however, these experiences do not leave him un-feeling either. Later on, in the heat of battle, Ransom recalls the ugliness of the trenches. He says:

At that moment, far away on Earth, as he now could not help remembering, men were at war, and white-faced subalterns and freckled corporals who had but lately begun to shave, stood in horrible gaps or crawled forward in deadly darkness, awaking, like him, to the preposterous truth that all really depended on their actions" (121).

Alone, these quotations may seem insignificant or simply serve as references to the reality of the current war (WWII); however, in the length of the series, Lewis makes over one hundred

references to the army or war, indicating a deeply personal understanding of the effect of war-time suffering on the hearts and minds of men. The feelings and experiences of an ex-soldier consistently intermingle with Ransom's current situations, leaving the reader no choice but to associate the Great War with the plot of the story and the actions of its protagonist. Through Ransom's mind, Lewis not only addresses the violence associated with war, but the fear, excessive horror, and reality of death as well. Thus, everything Ransom thinks and experiences may easily mirror Lewis's own thoughts and experiences, acting, in part, as mythic reinterpretations of personal/historical events.

So, in addition to serving as a reinterpretation of classic mythic archetypes and a psychological method of coping, can the trilogy also be considered an example of Lewis's particular attitude toward war, his belief in the possibility of just conflict? Similarly, should it also be understood as an imaginative account of the Christian's proper relationship to evil and war? The theological and political implications of the Ransom Trilogy will be discussed in the next chapter.

MYTH, SUFFERING, AND SACRAMENT

“Now as myth transcends thought, Incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, *without ceasing to be myth*, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It *happens*—at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences...To be truly Christian we must both assent to the historical fact and also receive the myth (fact though it has become) with the same imaginative embrace which we accord to all myths.” – C.S. Lewis

As I mentioned earlier, in describing Jung’s relationship to myth-making, Leonard Jackson states:

There is a kind of writing that translates very readily into Jungian interpretations. It is the kind that we might call ‘secondary mythical’...There is the original archetype; the archetypal image, worked over by a long and complex cultural tradition, and carrying a great deal of social meaning over and beyond its archetypal meaning; and *there is the new meaning found by the artist within his own new work* (127, emphasis mine).

In the previous chapter, I explored the possible mythical archetypes (and personal psychological expressions) within the trilogy; so, in this chapter, I wish to investigate Lewis’s spiritual archetypal images as well as the “new meaning” which he brings to the myths. Although I already touched on Lewis’s message against the “evils of scientism,” I now intend to explore what is, in my mind, the more significant of his intended messages. Interestingly enough, Lewis describes this particular relationship between archetypal images and the author’s specific

purpose. In a commentary on literary criticism, he states, “We should get as the basis of all critical theory the maxim that an author should never conceive himself as bringing into existence beauty or wisdom which did not exist before, but simply and solely as trying to embody in terms of his own art some reflection of eternal Beauty and Wisdom” (*Christianity and Literature*, 177). Though phrased in a more Platonic language, Lewis’s statement certainly aligns with the spirit of Jackson’s. Literature, especially good literature, often houses collective images, images which reflect the greater needs of the human psyche, and in Lewis’s mind, a possible ultimate reality. In the words of Charles Moorman:

Myth itself represents an ultimate and absolute reality; myth in literature represents a reflection of that central reality, capable of conveying the meaning and, to some extent, the power implicit in the myth itself. Lewis thus implies that myth functions in literature as a suggestive archetype to which ordinary fictional situations may be referred by allusion. In this way, myth lends its own total meaning and inherent power to the fictional situation (*Spaceship and Grail: The Myths of C.S. Lewis*, 405).

Thus, nothing good or true is completely new—only rephrased and repackaged for a new audience. The message Lewis consciously intends for his trilogy, then, is not one of his own creation, but a message which has existed for thousands of years—specifically, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Before I develop this final layer of Lewis’s trilogy, I wish to note two things. First, I believe it necessary to further clarify Lewis’s particular “brand” of Christianity, and secondly, I

desire to unpack what Jung says about the origin and function of religion – again, Christianity in particular. As a layman in the Church of England, Lewis adhered to the 39 articles of the Anglican Church as well as the Apostles and Nicene creeds. While his theology could be considered more Reformed,⁴ Lewis consistently advocated for an ecumenical Christianity, a Christianity which focused on the essential tenets of the religion (the Trinity, the death and resurrection of Christ, etc) and not on adiaphora, or theological matters not essential to the faith. To Lewis, Christianity in its purest form is a unified body, not a collection of differing sects, and thus should be understood as one, consolidated Truth.

Returning to Jung, in his collection of lectures, *Psychology and Religion*, he states that:

Religion, as the Latin word denotes, is a careful and scrupulous observation of what Rudolf Otto aptly termed the “numinosum,” that is, a dynamic existence or effect, not caused by an arbitrary act of will. On the contrary, it seizes and controls the human subject, which is always rather its victim than its creator. The numinosum is an involuntary condition of the subject, whatever its cause may be. At all events, religious teaching as well as the consensus gentium always and everywhere explains this condition as being due to a cause external to the individual. The numinosum is either a quality of a visible object or the influence of an invisible presence causing a peculiar alteration of the consciousness. This is, at least, the general rule (4).

⁴ Pertaining to the works of Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Calvin – Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide.

In other words, Jung argues that religion begins as a collection of stories (or myths) used to explain the existence of the “Other” or phenomena perceived to be outside of oneself. However, he carefully refrains from arguing for the reality or necessity of an *external* numinosum. To him, it is the perception of the numinosum which is key. Similarly, Lewis also analyzes the function of this numinosum in his treatise, *The Problem of Pain*. He states:

In all developed religion we find three strands or elements, and in Christianity one more. The first of these is what Professor Otto calls the experience of the *Numinous*... You feel wonder and certain shrinking—a sense of inadequacy to cope with such a visitant and of prostration before it—an emotion which might be expressed in Shakespeare’s words ‘Under it my genius is rebuked.’ This feeling may be described as awe, and the object which excites it as the *Numinous* (5-6).

Lewis continues with a description of the second and third elements. “The second element in religion,” he says, “is the consciousness not merely of a moral law, but of a moral law at once approved and disobeyed,” and “the third stage in religious development arises when men identify them—when the Numinous Power to which they feel awe is made the guardian of the morality to which they feel obligation” (11). Following this same train of thought, Jung explains the second two elements this way: “Unfortunately there is no doubt about the fact that man is, as a whole, less good than he imagines himself or wants to be. Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual’s conscious life, the blacker and denser it is” (93). Consequently, this struggle between Self and Shadow serves as the foundation for much of Jung’s understanding of the function of religion. Out of the psyche’s need to understand the numinosum, its inner

struggle, and as its relation to the “Other,” man created the symbol (and subsequent myth) as a means of communicating subjective experience. As Jung explains:

Primitive man impresses us so strongly with his subjectivity that we should really have guessed long ago that myths refer to something psychic. His knowledge of nature is essentially the language and outer dress of an unconscious psychic process. But the very fact that this process is unconscious gives us the reason why man has thought of everything except the psyche in his attempts to explain myths. He simply didn't know that the psyche contains all the images that have ever given rise to myths, and that our unconscious is an acting and suffering subject with an inner drama which primitive man rediscovers by means of analogy, in the processes of nature both great and small (6-7).

The mind, attempting to defend itself from an overwhelming experience of the subjective, Shadow, or divine, fashioned the symbol as a functional bridge, a method of receiving “a premonition of the divine while at the same time safeguarding [itself] from immediate experience of it” (8). Thus, through the assistance of symbolic and mythical language, man gains the ability to communicate those experiences which no other can directly understand—experiences unique to each individual. Interestingly enough, Lewis also emphasized myth and its peculiar role in the development of religion. In describing the doctrine of Creation, he mentions that:

The story in Genesis is a story (full of the deepest suggestion) about a magic apple of knowledge; but in the developed doctrine the inherent magic of the apple

has quite dropped out of sight, and the story is simply one of disobedience. I have the deepest respect even for Pagan myths, still more for myths in Holy Scripture. I therefore do not doubt that the version which emphasizes the magic apple, and brings together the trees of life and knowledge, contains a deeper and subtler truth than the version which makes the apple simply and solely a pledge of obedience (66).

According to Lewis, the inclusion of myth is essential to the development and understanding of religion, Christianity notwithstanding. Though not necessarily historical in nature, Pagan myths, as well as their Christian counterparts, have much to say about human nature, the needs of the human mind, and man's relationship with the "Other." These myths, then, need not be incompatible with the truths of Christianity.

However, despite his emphasis on the compatibility of myth with Christian doctrine, Lewis still held on to the necessity of one particular historical event, an event which he refers to as the fourth element in religion. He explains that:

There was a man born among these Jews who claimed to be, or to be the son of, or to be 'one with', the Something which is at once the awful haunter of nature and the giver of the moral law. The claim is so shocking—a paradox and even a horror, which we may easily be lulled into taking too lightly—that only two views of this man are possible. Either he was a raving lunatic of an unusually abominable type, or else He was, and is, precisely what He said. There is no middle way. If the records make the first hypothesis unacceptable, you must

submit to the second. And if you do that, all else that is claimed by Christians becomes credible—that this Man, having been killed, was yet alive, and that His death, in some manner incomprehensible to human thought, has effected a real change in our relations to the ‘awful’ and ‘righteous’ Lord, and change in our favour...Christianity is not the conclusion of a philosophical debate on the origins of the universe: it is a catastrophic historical event following on the long spiritual preparation of humanity which I have described (13-14).

This idea of myth merging with fact (one which I will explore more fully later) was essential to Lewis. The reality of Christ and his claims threw a wrench into the entirely mythical nature of religion as well its roots in the human unconscious. History and one objective event, in essence, collided with man’s deep psychological and subjective needs.

Conversely, because of his emphasis on psychical religious *experience*, Jung shied away from truth claims. The importance of religion, he argued, lay in personal understanding of the divine, not empirical fact. “The psychologist, in as much as he assumes a scientific attitude,” Jung explains, “has to disregard the claim of every creed to be the unique and eternal truth. He must keep his eye on the human side of the religious problem, in that he is concerned with the original religious experience quite apart from what the creeds have made of it” (7). The key to understanding religion must be found in the individual, his mind and experience, not in the accuracy of history. Consequently, according to Jung, people, not events, perpetuate the necessity of religion, and it is only within the collective human unconscious that its function (good or bad) may be truly understood.

However, before dismissing history altogether, Jung makes a point to address the relationship of Christian experience with developed Christian dogma. He says that:

The dogma owes its existence and form, on the one hand, to so-called “revealed” immediate experiences, such as the God-Man, the Cross, the Virgin Birth, the Immaculate Conception, the Trinity and so on, and, on the other hand, to the ceaseless collaboration of many minds and many centuries...The dogma is like a dream, reflecting the spontaneous and autonomous activity of the objective psyche, the unconscious. Such an expression of the unconscious is a much more efficient means of defense against further immediate experiences than a scientific theory. The theory has to disregard the emotional values of the experience. The dogma, on the contrary, is most expressive in this respect. A scientific theory is soon superseded by another. The dogma lasts for untold centuries. The suffering God-man may be at least five thousand years old and the Trinity is probably even older (56-57).

Where Lewis saw the Incarnation and the person of Christ as unique within the evolution of myth, Jung did not. To him, the development of the Christian myth was no different than the development of Oedipus Rex, Osiris and Horus, or any other cultural manifestation of the numinosum. No empirical data existed to prove otherwise. Thus, Jung dismissed any exploration of unique religious truth as futile and outside the realm of reasonable scientific enquiry.

Lewis, on the other hand, could not reach the same conclusion. Rooted in Medieval thought, he believed that every symbol—every myth—pointed to a truth beyond itself. “Every

created thing is, in its degree, an image of God,” he says, “and ordinate and faithful appreciation of that thing, a clue which, when truly followed, will lead back to Him” (“Commentary on *Arthurian Torso*,” 116). In other words, according to Lewis, the existence of a “type” necessitated the existence of an “archetype,” and the story of history revealed the essence of its Author. Caught between the objectivity of day-to-day events and the subjectivity of spiritual experience, humanity lives with a certain tension, the tension between knowledge and feeling. So, as Lewis concludes:

This is the dilemma—either to taste and not to know or to know and not to taste—or, more strictly, to lack one kind of knowledge because we are in an experience or to lack another kind because we are outside it...Of this tragic dilemma myth is the partial solution. In the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction (*Myth Became Fact*, 342-343).

And thus, according to Lewis, it is in the Incarnation of the God-man, when the great myth *became* historical fact, that the spiritual and psychological abstraction of the Numinous acquired physical form. Christ lived and enacted the need which the divine had planted—and subsequently evolved—within humanity’s collective unconscious. In one grand gesture, the archetype joined the type, and the symbolized joined the symbol. As Lewis continues:

Those who do not know that this great myth became Fact when the Virgin conceived are, indeed, to be pitied. But Christians also need to be reminded...that what became Fact was a Myth, that it carries with it into the world of Fact all the

properties of a myth. God is more than a god, not less... We must not be ashamed of the mythical radiance resting on our theology. We must not be nervous about 'parallels' and 'Pagan Christs': they ought to be there—it would be a stumbling block if they weren't. We must not, in false spirituality, withhold our imaginative welcome. If God chooses to be mythopoeic—and is not the sky itself a myth—shall we refuse to be mythopathic? For this is the marriage of heaven and earth. Perfect Myth and Perfect Fact (344).

So, what does Lewis's emphasis on a mythical yet physical Christianity mean for the Ransom trilogy? If Lewis intends to communicate a spiritual message along with his social commentary and cathartic expression, what is it that he wishes to say? According to Lewis scholar Charles Moorman:

Lewis's main aim in the creation of his silent planet myth is thus to create and maintain a metaphor which will serve to carry in fictional form the basic tenets of Christianity and present them from a non-Christian point of view without reference to the usual Christian symbols (*Spaceship and Grail: The Myths of C.S. Lewis*, 402).

In his mind, the Ransom Trilogy serves as a mythical representation of Christian doctrine – Ransom acting as a type of Christ and his experiences mirroring redemptive processes (i.e. justification, sanctification, and eschatological events). Though the story employs images from across the mythological spectrum, its message remains distinctively Christian.

Following the same train of thought, Wayne Schumaker, in his article “The Cosmic Trilogy of C.S. Lewis,” asserts that:

Lewis succeeds in making a body of reasoned theological doctrine perceptually available in quasi-realistic fiction. By embodying the doctrines in meaningful situations which coalesce as myth (something that in recent years has been much talked about by critics but almost never achieved by creative artists), he has contrived to transpose his opinions into images and thus to resist a temptation to which many propaganda novelists succumb, the urge to drive every perception home by logical assertion (254).

By “resisting the temptation” to present his religious convictions through a series of logical progressions, Lewis walks the line between objective fact and spiritual experience – he maintains the tension between history and myth in hopes of touching the reader’s mind *and* heart, his personal concrete experiences as well as the collective’s abstract knowledge of the Numinous. Though these ideas are certainly reflective of Lewis’s typical use of myth, I believe his message is much more specific in the Ransom trilogy, a message which echoes his aforementioned medievalism and his time in the war.

As mentioned previously, Lewis’s medieval worldview lead him toward a certain sacramentalism. In his mind, because earthly activity often reflects divine truth, the abstract often needs expression in the concrete. For example, as the medieval father, St. Augustine, explains:

A number of interpreters give a symbolic meaning to the whole of that paradise...They give a spiritual reference to those fruit-bearing trees, and the

others, turning them into symbols of virtues and moral qualities... There is no prohibition against such exegesis, provided that we also believe in the truth of the story as a faithful record of historical fact (534-535).

For Christianity in particular, the concrete is essential. Without historical fact—as expressed in the Incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection—the entire message of Christ crumbles.

Christianity *needs* physicality. And it is in the Ransom Trilogy, I believe, where Lewis drives home this message.

Soon after *Perelandra* was released, critic Ed Chapman argued that Ransom should have performed an exorcism on Weston—the Un-Man—instead of killing him (*Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*, 50). He deemed the physicality and violence of the act unnecessary and a particularly brutal response to a spiritual problem. So then, why did Lewis deem it essential to merge a physical battle with a spiritual one? A clue, I believe, may be found toward the beginning of the novel. While explaining the nature of his journey to *Perelandra*, Ransom says:

Now your idea that ordinary people will never have to meet the Dark Eldila in any form except a psychological or moral form—as temptations or the like—is simply an idea that held good for a certain phase of the comic war: the phase of the great siege, the phase which gave to our planet its name of Thulcandra, the *silent* planet. But supposing that phase is passing? In the next phase it may be anyone's job to meet them...well, in some quite different mode (22).

Here, Ransom seems to suggest that though psychological and moral battles may be very real, they are not the only battles which men might be called to fight. Evil may not only appear in abstract form, but as a tangible enemy as well. “It stood to reason that a struggle with the Devil,” he says, “meant a spiritual struggle...the notion of a physical combat was only fit for a savage. If only it were as simple as that...but here the voluble self had made a fatal mistake” (122). The modern notion that physical violence reflects a less developed and savage self, Lewis implies, is a result of faulty logic. Psychological and spiritual methods are not progressions from physical responses, but instead, parallel and equally legitimate realities. Again, as Ransom explicitly states before his battle with the Un-Man:

It was fortunate that something so horrible should be so obviously out of the question. Almost, but not quite, Ransom decreed that whatever the Silence and the Darkness seemed to be saying about this, no such crude, materialistic struggle, could possibly be what Maledil really intended. Any suggestion to the contrary must be only his own morbid fancy. It would degrade the spiritual warfare to the condition of mere mythology. But here he got another check. Long since on Mars, and more strongly since he came to Perelandra, Ransom had been perceiving that the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact was purely terrestrial—was part and parcel of that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall. Even on earth the sacraments existed as a permanent reminder that the division was neither wholesome nor final. The Incarnation had been the beginning of its disappearance. In Perelandra it would have to mean at all. Whatever happened here would be of such a nature that earth-men would

call it mythological. All this he had thought before. Now he knew it. The Presence in the darkness, never before so formidable, was putting the truths into his hands, like terrible jewels (122).

Like the Incarnation and horrid crucifixion before it, the physical destruction of Weston was essential to the divine's redemptive activity. Though the event, as Ransom explains, may be considered mythic on earth, its truth and reality is no less tangible and concrete.

In the same way, just as one man's physical death represents the defeat of evil, so does the engagement of a just war. When asked how a God-fearing Christian—one who is taught to "love his neighbor"—can justify supporting war, Lewis replies that:

Love is not an affectionate feeling, but a steady wish for the loved person's ultimate good as far as it can be obtained. It seems to me, therefore, that when the worst comes to the worst, if you cannot restrain a man by any method except by trying to kill him, then a Christian must do that ("Answers to Questions on Christianity," 330).

To Lewis, love does not imply pacifism or even tolerance; love, because it wishes more for a person's good than for his happiness, must be willing to take drastic measures in order for that goodness to be obtained. Though, as one might object, if a Christian individual's conscience prevents him from supporting an "unjust war," shouldn't pacifism also be an appropriate response? According to Lewis:

The rules for determining what wars are just were originally rules for the guidance of princes, not subjects. This does not mean that private persons must obey governments commanding them to do what they know is sin; but perhaps it does mean...that the ultimate decision as to what the situation at a given moment is in the highly complex field of international affairs is one which must be delegated...A man is much more certain that he ought not to murder prisoners or bomb civilians than he ever can be about the justice of a war...I feel certain that one Christian airman shot for refusing to bomb enemy civilians would be a more effective martyr (in the etymological sense of the word) than a hundred Christians in jail for refusing to join the army (“The Conditions for a Just War,” 523).

Thus, if a man’s government deems it necessary to enter into war, then his proper response should be to support the effort in any way (providing that it is not sinful) that he is asked – even if that means suffering in the trenches of France. “If war is ever lawful,” Lewis says, “then peace is sometimes sinful” (523). The defeat of a great evil may require great sacrifice.

This belief in the justice of war plays itself out in *That Hideous Strength*. In describing the upcoming conflict with those who follow Maledil, Lord Feverstone (Dick Devine), a servant of the Dark Eldil, says that:

You’ll hear people like Curry or James burling away about the ‘war’ against reaction. It never enters their heads that it might be a real war with real casualties. They think the violent resistance of the other side ended with the persecution of Galileo and all that. But don’t believe it. It is just seriously beginning. They know

now that we have at last got real powers: that the question of what humanity is to be is going to be decided in the next sixty years. They're going to fight every inch. They'll stop at nothing (39).

To defeat an enemy such as the Dark Eldil and his puppet organization, NICE, violence is not only necessary, it is welcome. Violence and conflict, to Lewis, are the appropriate responses to evil. Evil is not to be tolerated, reasoned with, or merely 'spiritually' engaged – it is to be destroyed. Therefore, it is no surprise that the key to succeeding at NICE, according to Cosser, is “never to quarrel with anyone” (84). Or, in other words, “The great thing is to do what you're told. If you turn out to be any good you'll soon understand what's going on. But you've got to begin by doing the work. You don't seem to realize what we are. We're an army”(97). Here, Lewis's use of military terminology is no accident. He creates NICE to function as a Christian's ultimate mortal enemy – an army of darkness whose primary goal is to annihilate any manifestation of the light. In such a battle, a Christian must “quarrel,” he must fight “every inch” until either light or darkness prevails.

At the end of *That Hideous Strength*, Lewis describes this epic, apocalyptic battle, a scene which elicited some of the heaviest criticism of the series. Again, according to Downing:

One reviewer complained that the victory of Ransom and Merlin was achieved “by brutal, quite unethical, force, by, in fact, mass murder.” Another called this “one of the most savage scenes in modern literature.” Yet a third objects to the “excessive horror” of the closing pages of *That Hideous Strength*” (*Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*, 152).

In this scene in particular, Lewis attacks the modern notion of equating physical violence with brutish savagery. The army of light does not claim victory in a scene of ethereal splendor, but in a horrific, bloody battlefield. As Lewis describes:

There was a growling close at hand. Mark, turned, thinking he had located the tiger. Then he caught out of the corner of his eye a glimpse of something smaller and greyer...A woman, standing with her back to the table, turned, saw it, tried to scream, next moment went down as the creature leaped at her throat. It was a wolf...Above the chaos of sounds which now awoke—there seemed to be a new animal in the room every minute—there came at last one sound in which those capable of understanding could take comfort...The noise maddened those who had made that door their goal. It seemed also to madden the animals. They did not stop to eat what they killed, or not more than to take one lick of the blood. There were dead and dying bodies everywhere by now, for the scrum was by this time killing as many as the beasts...After that, monstrous, improbable, the huge shape of an elephant thrust its way into the room...It stood for a second with Steele writhing in the curl of its trunk and then dashed him to the floor. It trampled him...continuously trampling like a girl treading grapes, heavily and soon wetly trampling in a pash of blood and bones, of flesh, wine, fruit, and sodden tablecloth...The pride and insolent glory of the beast, the carelessness of its killings, seemed to crush his spirit even as its flat feet were crushing women and men. Here surely came the King of the world (346-347).

In an overtly symbolic gesture, Lewis describes an onslaught of creatures torturing and killing the leaders of NICE. Here, creation revolts against perversion in a sweeping restoration of the divine order. Maledil's creatures, along with his servants, Ransom and Merlin, defeat darkness on a highly mythic (i.e. the presence of Merlin) and a highly material scale. In one final, symbolic, bloody conclusion, the divine claims his victory over the powers and principalities of the Dark Eldil – solidifying again the fusion of great myth and historical fact.

In this particular moment, Lewis describes what I wish to refer to as “the sacrament of violence,” a holy, righteous, and symbolic act of aggression. Though, before I go too far in explaining this suggestion, I wish to clarify what I mean by “sacrament” as well as its relationship to mythic literature. In one of his letters, Augustine describes a sacrament as being “a visible form of invisible grace” (*The Book of Sacramental Basics*, np) – meaning the sacramental aspects of Christianity require spiritual *and* physical elements. Although most sacraments at the time found themselves within the practices of the Church, Augustine did not shy away from regarding many historical events as sacramental in nature as well, predating the future work of Christ (*The City of God*, 534). Much of Augustine's theology, and subsequently Lewis's, relies on the truth of these historical events. To these men, one could not, and more importantly, should not be separated from the other.

Returning to the definition, the sacramental act begins with divine initiation and ends with a physical, yet spiritual experience by the believer. To Lewis, the sacrament was a holy event, the closest our senses could reach to a transcendent and righteous God. Consequently, sacramental experiences, along with the sacraments themselves (the Eucharist, Baptism, etc),

were essential to Lewis's understanding and practice of Christianity. Moderns, he explains, "have lost the solid objectivity both of the high universals (especially truth and goodness) and of the low particulars, the concrete world. Both have been dissolved into a vague, abstract, ideological-political-sociological-psychological mid-range" (*English Literature in the 16th Century*, 62). Truth, Lewis argues, does not lie in this mid-range but in a merging of the high universals and the low particulars. Truth, in essence, is sacrament; truth is myth.

Furthermore, because sacramental Christianity engages physical elements as well as spiritual ones, many doctrines emphasize the real presence of the divine in tangible articles such as water, oil, bread, and wine. As the 39 Articles of the Church of England⁵ state:

Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in him...Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but is also a sign of Regeneration or new Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed...The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another; but rather it is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and

⁵ I use the 39 articles because Lewis, in general, upheld orthodox Anglican theology.

with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ (The 39 Articles of the Church of England, Victorian Web).

Consequently, Lewis saw the institution of the sacraments into Christianity as the divine's method of bringing myth, as well as spiritual grace, from transcendent reality into temporal, day-to-day existence. Sacraments, then, bridge the chasm between the natural and supernatural, the noumenal and the phenomenal, the Self and the Other. In other words, sacraments are tangible myths – a touch of the Numinous on earth.

So, returning to the trilogy, why should Lewis's "excessively violent" scenes in *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength* be considered sacramental? Didn't Christ speak of loving one's enemies, telling his disciples to "turn the other cheek"? According to Lewis, one must not speak of the love, peace, and goodness of God without also speaking of his justice. In *The Problem of Pain*, he states:

The problem of reconciling human suffering with the existence of a God who loves, is only insoluble as long as we attach a trivial meaning to the word 'love,' and look on things as if man were the centre of them...To ask that God's love should be content with us as we are is to ask that God should cease to be God; *Because He is what He is, His love must, in the nature of things, be impeded and repelled by certain stains in our present character, and because He already loves us He must labour to make us lovable* (40-41, emphasis mine).

Accordingly, the justice and goodness of God demands the sanctification of His people, and thus, sufficient payment for sin. The Christian God is a *holy* God, one who requires just punishment to satiate his wrath. And if the human race—in its state of sin—is an object of God’s wrath (as Lewis believed), then this punishment is necessary and, more importantly, an act of love. As he explains in *Mere Christianity*:

God is the only comfort, He is also the supreme terror: the thing we most need and the thing we most want to hide from. He is our only possible ally, and we have made ourselves His enemies. Some talk as if meeting the gaze of absolute goodness would be fun. They need to think again. They are still only playing with religion. Goodness is either the great safety or the great danger--according the way you react to it. And we have reacted the wrong way (31).

Thus, for those under God’s judgment, those who have not believed in the death and resurrection of Christ, punishment is inevitable. Every man is an eternal being, destined either to an eternity with God or an eternity suffering his wrath.

The Old and New Testament detail a number of examples of God executing his wrath, foreshadowing his ultimate judgment. In Genesis, He floods the entire earth because of humanity’s wickedness, sparing only Noah and his family, and later, in another act of punishment, He engulfs the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in flame. A particularly horrific account of God’s justice occurs in 1st Samuel. He says:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, “I will punish the Amalekites for what they did in opposing the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt. Now go and attack

Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey” (*The C.S. Lewis Bible*, NRSV, 1st Samuel 15: 2-3).

Similar images appear in the New Testament as well. Christ’s crucifixion, for example, is described in violent and dramatic detail. He is paraded in a crown of thorns, flogged 39 times—one short of the 40 which signified death—forced to carry his own cross, and nailed to a cross until he suffocated (John 18-19). Describing the history and nature of crucifixion, Gerard Sloyan, an expert in Roman crucifixion, states:

Some victims are thrust head downward, others have a stake impale their genitals, still others have their arms outstretched on a crossbeam. The Jewish historian Josephus, writing of the Jewish War of the late 60s, is explicit about Jews captures by the Romans who were first flogged, tortured before they died, and then crucified before the city wall...Josephus calls it “the most wretched of deaths”...An especially grim description of this punishment...is from a didactic poem: “Punished with limbs outstretched, they see the stake as their fate; they are fastened, nailed to it with sharpest spikes, an ugly meal for birds of prey and grim scraps for dogs” (*The Crucifixion of Jesus: History, Myth, Faith*, 15).

In first century Jerusalem, crucifixion easily held the prize for the most gruesome and violent of deaths. Consequently, according to Lewis, God did not shy away from violence in enacting his plan of salvation. As Hebrews 9:22 states: “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” Even Christ, in

instituting the Eucharistic sacrament, says: “This [bread] is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me... This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my *blood*” (Luke 22:19-20). Simply, the broken bread and spilled wine, along with Christ’s crucifixion, echo the violence of God’s justice – suggesting as well the compatibility of Christianity with the shedding of blood. Therefore, in creating his own judgment myth (or sacrament), Lewis follows this same theme.

The destruction of the Un-Man and the annihilation of NICE, then, I wish to suggest, parallels the pouring out of wrath on Christ at the cross, creating a second sacrament of judgment – a sacrament of violence. While Christ’s crucifixion covers the sins of believers, those outside of Christ’s covering still await punishment. As the author of Hebrews writes:

How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified and outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know the one who said, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 9:29-31).

Though God’s final judgment, as described here and in the Revelation of St. John, will occur at the end of days, present day acts of violence and wrath (whether just or unjust) foreshadow God’s ultimate punishment of sin. Just as creatures, creation, and historical events, within a sacramental framework, reflect the image of God and the work of Christ, physical struggles echo his justice.

This similarity between the cross of Christ and the last judgment is not merely my own proposal but suggested within *That Hideous Strength* as well. Before Mark Studdock, the leaders of NICE, Ransom, and Merlin enter into their final battle, Mark is asked to commit one last act of loyalty to NICE, signifying his entrance into the “inner circle”:

In the Objective Room, something like a crisis had developed between Mark and Professor Frost. As soon as they arrived there Mark saw that the table had been drawn back. On the floor lay a large crucifix, almost life size, a work of art in the Spanish tradition, ghastly and realistic. “We have half an hour to pursue our exercises,” said Frost looking at his watch. *Then he instructed Mark to trample on it and insult it in other ways...* With the introduction of this Christian symbol the whole situation had somehow altered. The thing was becoming incalculable. His simple antithesis of the Normal and the Diseased had obviously failed to take something into account. Why was the crucifix there? Why were more than half of the poison-pictures religious? *He had the sense of new parties to the conflict – potential allies and enemies which he had not suspected before. “If I take a step in any direction,” he thought, “I may step over a precipice”* (331-332, emphasis mine).

With the introduction of the crucifix, *That Hideous Strength* reaches its climax. As Mark says, “If I take a step in any direction,” he thought, “I may step over a precipice.” In essence, his choice decides his fate – trample the cross and *be* trampled or refrain and be spared. It is the cross of Christ which saves Mark, and it is the same cross which destroys NICE.

Thus, Lewis's final battle—as a just and symbolic illustration of God's terrible wrath against sin—serves as a forerunner of the second coming of Christ, his Final Judgment and the establishment of his kingdom. While the Eucharist proclaims Christ's death and the salvation of believers until he returns, violence proclaims his righteous verdict, the annihilation of evil and the establishment of a new age. As the apostle John says:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See I am making all things new" (Revelation 21: 1-5)

So, in light of Lewis's sacramentalism—his emphasis on the spiritual *and* physical aspects of God's wrath—the fate of NICE should not be viewed as excessive or brutal, but proper, and arguably, almost beautiful. To Lewis, the enactment of God's justice, a justice rooted in holiness and love, should elicit praise and rejoicing from his creation. This does not mean that believers, as members of an imperfect world, need celebrate when an individual or group experiences horrific violence and loss, but they may rest in the fact that each occurrence of hostility and

aggression foreshadows God's ultimate judgment of evil. Violence will not go unpunished but receive the full extent of God's anger and vengeance.

Accordingly, what implications does this "sacrament of violence" have for Lewis's time in the war? Is this medievalist perspective another method for coping? As mentioned previously, the medieval mindset allowed Lewis to find meaning in everything. "The heavens are telling the glory of God;" the psalmist says, "and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). Nothing escapes the providence and knowledge of God, even that which reflects a fallen and broken world. Just as Ransom's battle with Weston in *Out of the Silent Planet*, the Un-Man in *Perelandra*, and NICE in *That Hideous Strength* look forward to God's destruction of evil, so do the atrocities and battles of WWI. Hence, Lewis's post-conversion attitude toward his activity in the war should be best understood in light of this sacramentalist worldview. For example, in Lewis's mind, if medieval theology could bestow meaning on horrid tragedies such as untimely death, Paddy Moore no longer died in vain; his sacrifice, instead, paralleled that of Christ's. In the same way, the taking of lives no longer lacked purpose; these actions reflected a Christian's proper response toward evil. Everything—even the ugliness of the trenches and the great loss of life from which Lewis could never escape—had a greater purpose.

In this way, maybe Owen Barfield was right. Maybe Lewis only wanted to view himself as "a kind of spiritual alumnus taking his moral finals" (Walsh, "C.S. Lewis: The Man and the Mystery," 9) because without this sacramental lens, he could not reconcile his wartime actions with the intelligent, Christian gentleman he now proclaimed himself to be. Not just any worldview could allow a man to regain his peace and purpose after such suffering and loss –

only one which united meaning and tragedy. Thus, by spiritualizing the war—putting God in the midst of violence—Lewis proclaimed again his Romantic idealism. He didn't play the slave to “melancholic realism” in the trilogy, but reveled in the deeper truths of a sacramentalist Christianity, a belief system which allowed myth to be fact and war to be sacrament.

SO WHAT?

“C.S. Lewis emerged as a twentieth-century icon in the world of Christian literature. His prodigious work combining acute intellectual reasoning with unparalleled creative imagination made him a popular figure not only in the Christian world but in the secular world as well...His work showed a marriage of art and science, a marriage of reason and creative imagination that was unparalleled...His was indeed a literary genius in which he was able to express profound Christian truth through art, in a manner similar to that conveyed by Bach in his music and Rembrandt in his painting... To be creative is the mark of profundity. To be creative without distortion is rare indeed, and yet in the stories that C.S. Lewis spun, the powers of creativity reached levels that were rarely reached before or since.” – R.C. Sproul

Though the idea that Lewis created a secondary mythical account of universal archetypes regarding suffering and transformation and merged myth with sacrament to create a thoroughly Christian spin on these archetypes is, at least in my opinion, quite fascinating, why should we as scholars care about Lewis’s understanding of myth and violence as espoused in the trilogy? What do we gain from a better appreciation of the relationship between Lewis’s sacramental theology and his fiction?

As Dr. Sproul commented, C.S. Lewis had the distinctive ability to marry art, specifically fiction, with theology, creating a unique picture of God’s redemptive activity within creation. He not only believed that God communicated his truth through scripture and human reasoning, but through myth and imagination as well. Like Dr. Sproul, I believe very few men have captured this dynamic interaction between art and theology in the same way as Lewis, leaving him and his

work as particularly attractive subjects for continued study. Although arguments may be made for George MacDonald, Charles Williams, and J.R.R. Tolkien, the enduring and overwhelming popularity of Lewis places him in a category of his own.

But what about the specific study of war, sacrament, and myth in the Ransom Trilogy? Why should Lewis's views regarding the world wars and violence be of special interest? As one might imagine, very few experiences unite humanity like that of suffering. All men feel the pain of loss, tragedy, and disappointment throughout the course of their lives, and, as Lewis so eloquently explained, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world" (*The Problem of Pain*). After 9/11, millions of Americans huddled around their television sets, stunned by the horrors of merciless violence and terrorism, yet, also gaining some solace in the commonality of their suffering. Church attendance rose over 25%⁶ after the attacks as an onslaught of distressed men and women looked to spirituality for the answers to their grief. Suffering and violence transcend time. Though the causes and cases of aggression continuously change, each age boasts a defining moment, a moment which alters humanity's views on suffering, loss, and even the meaning of life. And, for Europe in the first half of the 20th century, no event changed the hearts and minds of men such as WWI.

Thus, as a man writing in a time of political, cultural, and spiritual upheaval, C.S. Lewis had much to say about the nature of WWI and violence. And, for the many Christians who regarded—and still do regard—Lewis's words as those of truth and authority, his views on war

⁶ USA Today, 1/7/2002, <http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/2002/01/08/ncguest2.htm>, accessed 2/18/2012.

and suffering hold a great deal of merit. For them, whether Lewis viewed the tragedy of war from a Realist or a Medievalist perspective mattered. The difference between a meaningless and a sacramentalist violence mattered. And, the difference between a purely systematic theology and a mythic and imaginative Christianity mattered. Therefore, whether one agrees with Lewis's assertions or not, the fact that his beliefs impacted the faith (or lack thereof) of millions of men and women make the subtleties surrounding his treatment of war, myth, suffering, psychology, and violence of paramount importance. Lewis was not one to mince words or take his creative symbols lightly; neither should we.

So, in light of these proposed mythic and sacramentalist theories, how do I wish to further my research? Do additional avenues for expansion exist? Absolutely. First, I intend to address the interaction of suffering and sacrament within Lewis's other highly mythic works – i.e. *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, and *Till We Have Faces*. For example, why did Lewis choose myth as his primary method of communicating his views regarding theodicy and eschatology? Are there possible links between Lewis's employment of myth and sacrament and his popularity? And, moreover, what is it about narrative in general that enlivens theology?

Secondly, I plan to deepen my study of WW1 and its influence on Christian theology and literature. Though I stand by my assertion that the psychological impact of suffering and violence transcend time, WW1, as a historical event, uniquely shaped European society, culture, and religious life. In the words of Robert Hughes: "In the Somme valley, the back of language broke. It could no longer carry its former meanings. World War I changed the life of words and

images in art, radically and forever. It brought our culture into the age of mass-produced, industrialized death. This, at first, was indescribable” (*Shock of the New*). WW1 ushered in a new way of thinking – not only about language, literature, and art, but about history, God, and the future of society as well. Thus, the specific cultural influences surrounding post-war writers should not be ignored.

Lastly, I wish to explore additional cases of the medievalism/empiricism conflict within inter-war myth and fantasy. The writings of Charles Williams and T.S. Eliot, for instance, contain numerous examples of this tension, allowing, possibly, for a future comparative study. How do each of these authors treat tragedy and human suffering within their fiction, and, accordingly, what do these respective narratives say about their attitudes toward the necessity of violence? As I mentioned before, suffering will never cease to be relevant. Thus, going forward, I will continue to investigate how one of the world’s greatest minds, C.S. Lewis, and his contemporaries sought to explain the nature of war, violence, and pain in one of history’s most tumultuous of times.

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