

PARADISE RETAINED: PERELANDRA AS EPIC

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CHAPTER I

THESIS, PROGRAM, INTRODUCTORY

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Perelandra, the central novel of C. S. Lewis's space trilogy, is a modern Biblical epic which inherits and adapts the epic traditions to the prose novel format, while Biblical references and allusions provide the basis for the plot, place its universal significance and its creation-wide scope, and set the epic theme of the battle of good versus evil. Perelandra fits the definition of epic by employing the devices and characteristics of Western epic and by including echoes and shadows of, and references and parallels to, other epics.

The extreme richness of the material calls for the approach suggested by Lewis himself in The Allegory of Love: speaking of The Faerie Queene, he said, "The more concrete and vital the poetry is, the more hopelessly complicated it will become in analysis. . . . Oddly as it may sound, I conceive that it is the chief duty of the interpreter to begin analyses and to leave them unfinished. They are not meant as substitutes for the imaginative apprehension of the poem."¹ Therefore, I shall not attempt to discuss every possible epic device or echo, but shall offer sufficient examples to show the fruitfulness of this approach.

I must say with Lewis, "In order to take no unfair advantage I should warn the reader that I myself am a Christian, and that some (by no means all) of the things which the atheist reader must 'try to feel as if he

believed' I actually, in cold prose, do believe. But . . . my Christianity is an advantage. What would you not give to have a real, live Epicurean at your elbow while reading Lucretius?"²

Corbin Scott Carnell has said: "Lewis was without doubt one of the most adventurous and learned men of the twentieth century. His interests and accomplishments ranged over wide areas--poetry, criticism, fiction, theology--and he dared to assert the marvelous and devout in an age which often rejected them."³ Nathan Comfort Starr notes: "Lewis left a rich legacy. Apart from his brilliant teaching, he made lasting contributions in the fields of fiction, literary scholarship, and popular theology."⁴ Actually, Lewis's reputation depends largely upon his prominence as a popular Christian apologist. During World War II, he became widely known for his series of radio talks on basic Christianity. Even his fiction, his scholarly works, and personal letters were filled with the Christian tradition and theology. He became famous as what Chad Walsh refers to as a modern "apostle to the skeptics."⁵ As Moorman explains, "His theological writings are designed for and directed toward skeptical laymen who have been, in Lewis's opinion, unduly influenced by nineteenth-century liberalism and scientism and so have left the Church and its fixed moral code for the greener pastures of 'humane science' and moral relativism."⁶

In the literary world today, Christianity has pretty well become the present pet taboo, not only because of the emphasis upon the supposedly more "sophisticated" moral relativism, but also because Christianity is so often distorted by Christians as well as non-Christians, and because it is too challenging, wild and free for the timid. How many really want to encounter the truth which will make us free? As Lewis puts it, many fear being "drawn in."

Lewis has said, "When an artist is in the strict sense working, he of course takes into account the existing taste, interests, and capacity of his audience. These, no less than the language, the marble, or the paint, are part of his raw material; to be used, tamed, sublimated, not ignored nor defied. Haughty indifference to them is not genius nor integrity; it is laziness and incompetence."⁷ Therefore, the apostle to the skeptics sought for a way to take into account the existing taste, interests, and capacity of an audience with whom he shared few suppositions. Lewis believed (with virutally all peoples until quite recent ones) that human beings are not alone in the cosmos, that there are bright celestial entities to be sought and adored and dark infernal entities to be avoided and dreaded. He believed with the ancients that loyalty, majesty, nobility, magnanimity, courage, perseverance, valor, courtesy, grace, chastity, purity, splendor, glory, ceremony, ritual, and mystery are qualities or virtues at the center of what man was created to be. Moreover, these qualities, which read like a list of the virtues of Western epics, appeared to any pagan Greek or Roman, any Jew, any Christian up until less than 200 years ago as both natural and blissful. To awaken the stultified modern imagination to these eternal verities, Lewis began to write fiction. Because of his audience, therefore, his urbanity and wit are perhaps necessary. Moorman aptly notes that Lewis "thus appears in those works as [an] . . . advocatus Christi (we presumably no longer need an advocatus diaboli) attacking sophisticated skepticism with sophisticated Christianity, and moral relativism with ethical orthodoxy . . . to demonstrate . . . that morality was never unpopular at all among really clever people."⁸ In fact, his space trilogy--Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, and That Hideous Strength--along with The Screwtape Letters and The

Great Divorce, function partly as apologetic which takes particular account of the skepticism and hostility of the nonbeliever. Though Marjorie Hope Nicholson is of the opinion that in Perelandra "The Christian apologist has temporarily eclipsed the poet and artist" in several instances,⁹ this view may well be maintained because she has not noted that Perelandra is epic. As epic, it inherits some of the religious primary epic tone. Primary epic was customarily presented orally at a religious ritual or in the feast hall of some great lord; it was characterized, Lewis tells us, by solempne, a Middle English term which, like solemn, implies "the opposite of what is familiar, free and easy, or ordinary," but "does not suggest gloom, oppression, or austerity"; it is "the festal which is also the stately and the ceremonial."¹⁰ It is told in a festal and ceremonial tone with the solemnity of the hall or of the temple or forum. Lewis assures us that with epic we "are to 'assist,' as the French say, at a great festal action."¹¹

As for his general literary reputation, Lewis has been ranked among the half dozen best authors of children's literature of the twentieth century,¹² and Lewis's The Last Battle received the Carnegie medal for the best children's literature since the Jungle Books.¹³ Starr sums up Lewis's influence: "To thousands of people in England and America, the discovery of C. S. Lewis has been a momentous experience, akin to Keats' first reading Chapman's Homer. His writing not only opened old worlds of Christian belief all too often unexplored but also created new ones of unimagined richness and power through his mastery of theological exposition and mythical narrative. He was . . . a man of prodigious learning coupled with vaulting imagination."¹⁴

As for the space trilogy--Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, and That Hideous Strength--Gunnar Urang classifies these novels with the fiction for which Lewis was best known.¹⁵ Paul L. Holmer comments that with the scenes projected on another planet "where vices have no institutional status, where laws are not necessary, where shame is unknown, one sees in very stark and forbidding fashion what greed, ambition, and self-centeredness finally have done for our world and its inhabitants."¹⁶ Holmer adds that "Like Dante in The Divine Comedy, like Milton in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, like Samuel Johnson in Rasselas, and like the whole of the Holy Bible, Lewis thinks that hell and heaven, vice and virtue, wretchedness and happiness, grandeur and degradation are real possibilities for our thought."¹⁷ Lewis's statement in Mere Christianity provides the basis of his cosmic myth: "Christianity agrees with Dualism that this universe is at war. But it does not think this is a war between independent powers. It thinks it is a civil war, a rebellion, and that we are living in a part of the universe occupied by the Enemy--occupied territory--that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage."¹⁸ And we as readers are also drawn up into this campaign. As Holmer puts it, these novels "cause the reader to observe and to articulate the differences between the sinless and the sinful; one becomes increasingly aware of the mixed proportions that we humans are. Being neither completely vicious nor virtuous, . . . we have all the more reason given us to seek integrity and truth and to avoid compromising half-measures. A kind of longing for a purer state is born in us by the reading."¹⁹ And this is the response Lewis desired.

In a letter to Griffiths (April 16, 1940), Lewis takes a stand for art and literature committed to moral truth: "Art for art's sake is unhealthy balderdash," he says.²⁰ Art and literature should either provide innocent recreation or a clear moral intent. Lewis evangelizes through the imagination. However, Lewis's fiction is not didactic in the sense of teaching what ought to be believed about God and man and goodness, but it does focus on the questions of ultimate religious significance, the moral and spiritual issues all human beings must confront in order to maintain their true humanity. Most of all, as Holmer has said, "Lewis has the delightful and sane notion that good literature cannot be written save to be enjoyed and tasted just for itself."²¹ We may say with Roger Lancelyn Green, "Professor Lewis . . . is a writer in the main stream of English fantasy, and he contributes to it his own clear and original spring."²² Lewis himself says, "I wrote the books I should have liked to read. That's always been my reason for writing. People won't write the books I want, so I have to do it for myself: no rot about 'self-expression.'"²³

The Apostle to the Skeptics and the one who wrote books he would like to read combined interests in his trilogy of mythic fantasies which began with a space journey to the truth. And Perelandra is the epitome and apex of this joining with its plot based upon scripture and upon the scriptural account of man's fall in the Garden of Eden.

And on the subject of other worlds, Lewis wrote that "No merely physical strangeness or merely spatial distance will realize the idea of otherness which is what we are always trying to grasp in a story about voyaging through Space: you must go into another dimension. To construct plausible and moving 'other worlds' you must draw on the only real 'other world'

we know, that of the spirit."²⁴ From these basic concepts, Lewis created his trilogy.

Many critics have noted the parallels with the Biblical account and with Paradise Lost, the closest analogue, and, of course, many have commented on the Christianity inherent in Perelandra, but, to my knowledge, no one has dealt with Perelandra as epic. Lewis's own critical and scholarly writings, and especially his Allegory of Love on Spenser's Faerie Queene and his Preface to Paradise Lost (which he was working on while writing Perelandra), provide the best commentary.

ENDNOTES

¹C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963; rpt. 1981), p. 345.

²C. S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942; rpt. 1979), p. 65.

³Bright Shadow of Reality (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 14.

⁴C. S. Lewis's Till We Have Faces (New York: Seabury Press, 1968), p. 6.

⁵C. S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics (New York: Macmillan, 1949).

⁶Charles Moorman, Arthurian Triptyche: Mythic Materials in Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis, and T. S. Eliot, from Perspectives in Criticism, No. 5 (Los Angeles: University of Calif. Press, 1960), p. 103.

⁷C. S. Lewis, The World's Last Night and Other Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1952), p. 80.

⁸Moorman, p. 104.

⁹Voyages to the Moon (New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 251.

¹⁰Lewis, Preface, p. 17.

¹¹Lewis, Preface, p. 17.

¹²Teller of Tales, rev. ed. (London: E. Edmund Ward, Ltd., 1953), p. 259.

¹³Roger Lancelyn Green, in Richard B. Cunningham, C. S. Lewis: Defender of the Faith (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 152.

¹⁴Starr, p. 4.

¹⁵Shadows of Heaven: Religion and Fantasy in the Writings of C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1971), p. 5.

¹⁶C. S. Lewis: The Shape of His Faith and Thought (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 15.

¹⁷Holmer, p. 16.

¹⁸C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Macmillan Co., 1943; rpt. 1981), pp. 39-40.

¹⁹Holmer, pp. 15-16.

²⁰Donald E. Glover, C. S. Lewis: The Art of Enchantment (Athens, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1981), pp. 28-29.

²¹Holmer, pp. 19-20.

²²Roger Lancelyn Green, C. S. Lewis (New York: Henry Z. Walck, Inc., 1963), p. 9.

²³Green, CSL, p. 9.

²⁴Green, CSL, p. 27.

CHAPTER II

DEFINITION OF EPIC

As Lewis says in A Preface to Paradise Lost, "The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know what it is--what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used."¹ Therefore, let us begin with a definition of epic.

An epic will typically meet most, if not all, of the following criteria. It is a long narrative poem on a great and serious subject, related in an elevated style, and centered upon a hero of imposing stature who embodies the ideals of a particular nation or culture and upon whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the whole human race. Its setting is vast in scope, covering great nations, the world, or the universe. The action involves great deeds in battle requiring valor or superhuman courage. Its heroes are aided or hindered by divine or supernatural forces; that is, gods or supernatural beings direct or participate in the action. Though most commentators say the epic usually appears in the early stages of nationalistic or cultural consciousness, this is not necessarily true. Indeed, it seems more likely that epic will appear at the end of an era and look back to earlier cultural values just as they are about to be lost (or are being lost)--that is, to attempt to retrieve values about to fall apart. (The Aeneid, for example, seems to represent the latter view in the attitudes presented regarding the gods.)

In addition, epics usually employ the following conventions:

1. Statement of the argument or theme,
 2. Invocation of the muse to inspire the poet,
 3. Epic question (usually addressed to the muse),
 4. Beginning in medias res at a critical point in the action,
 5. Division into books and cantos,
 6. Catalogs (long lists of warriors, ships, weapons, etc.),
 7. Descriptions of weapons or armor (such aspects as their physical appearance, magical powers, previous history, etc.), of warriors (especially their dress and equipment), of battles, of games, etc.,
 8. Address to the host (a stirring speech made by the leader to inspire his followers to heroism in battle),
 9. Grandiose speeches (challenges, defiances, boastings, etc.) which reveal the diverse temperaments of the characters,
 10. Epic or Homeric simile (an extended comparison of wartime or unfamiliar incidents or things with more familiar or domestic situations; descriptions of nature are especially common in Homer),
 11. Stock epithet (a compound descriptive and adjective used repeatedly to refer to some person or thing, as "the wine-dark sea," "ox-eyed Hera"),
 12. Descent into the underworld; the hero learns something he could find out in no other way; the trip may symbolize facing the fact of death.²
- The above characteristics are those customarily agreed upon by critics attempting to define epic, characteristics which will be listed in reference books, literary handbooks and so forth. However, readings of the epics reveal other characteristics which should be added:
13. Funeral games,
 14. Prophecies,

15. Descriptions of the universe,

16. Purveying of recondite information; that is, epic is supposed to represent knowledge and to bring these matters to authoritative notice. It has a teaching function to deal with the origin of things; for example, the qualities of the Phaeacians are discussed in the Odyssey. All these aspects of definitions and conventions will be exemplified later (in Chapter IV).

In his Poetics, Aristotle "claimed for epic and tragedy a convincingness beyond ordinary probability and verisimilitude and a moral purposefulness in the pleasure they could create; both imitate men as they are and as they ought to be; both are concerned with actions consequent upon good moral choices, but also with errors and frailties, with happiness and unhappiness; both characteristically present outstanding and noble people, for such are famous for their deeds and for their suffering."³

The term "epic" is often applied to works which vary from these patterns, but which manifest an epic spirit in their scope, scale, or seriousness of subject, but for our purposes we shall expect to find many, if not all, of the above characteristics.

So what is epic? Elizabeth Sewall comments that though epic "has been supposedly embalmed and buried, and now falls under the heading of literary archeology," we may look to Wordsworth's proposal, in those pre-Excursion lines, to take over from Milton and be assured that "epic is as alive and prophetic as ever it was . . . changing and developing as it goes."⁴ Each poet in the epic tradition reinterprets that tradition so that it better fits the needs of his culture. As Sewall notes, "These are the metamorphoses of the poetic spirit of which Coleridge spoke, by which the human race forms for itself new instruments of power according

to its needs and activities."⁵ Indeed, this is the nature of any living tradition. "Epic, seen from the point of view of the working poet," Sewell says, "is a dynamic instrument concerned with heroic achievement, advance, exploration. The significance of these, in terms of man moving between earth and heaven, is inquired into in the person of the epic hero."⁶

So what happens to epic? The conventions, devices and concerns of the epic find their way into new forms. In the twentieth century, the epic has evolved into the novel, or drama, or satire which takes on many of the devices of the epic to talk about inconsequential things, sometimes in the form of mock epic which treats a trivial subject in the grand style, using epic formulas to make it ridiculous or ludicrous. Alexander Pope's The Rape of the Lock, undoubtedly the finest mock epic poem in English, satirizes in polished verse the trivial society of the belles and gallants of the eighteenth century by recounting the cutting of a lady's lock of hair. Anthony Trollope's Barchester Towers is an example of a mock heroic epic in novel form. Epic has also evolved into the short epic poem which tells the same kind of story traditional epic did. Paradise Regained is an excellent example, or Keats' fragmentary Hyperion. But most importantly, epic has evolved into science fiction. What remains of the epic then is whatever can be used. There is the freedom indicative of a living tradition. Different artists take what they need and leave the rest, thus giving new life to the devices.

The chart of the major epics recognized by scholars (Table 1) will help to illustrate the ways in which epic has evolved, always with what has gone before affecting everything that follows. (The two major Oriental epics--the Mahabharatta and the Ramayama--really had no effect on the other epics listed, but have begun to do so in the twentieth century.

TABLE I
CHART OF EPICS

Title	Author	Date Written or Published	Time of Events	Hero	Language	Poetic Form	Number of Lines
Gilgamesh		c. 2000 B.C.	Prehistory	Gilgamesh	Sumerian		1,300
Iliad ^F	Homer	c. 850 B.C.	c. 1100 B.C.	Achilles	Greek	dactylic hexa- meter	15,700
Odyssey ^F	Homer	c. 850 B.C.	c. 1100 B.C.	Odysseus	Greek	dactylic hexa- meter	11,300
Mahabharata ^{NI}	Vyasa	c. 500 B.C.- 500 A.D.	c. 1200 B.C.	Arjuna	Sanskrit	couplets	200,000
Ramayana ^{NI}	Valmiki	c. 500 B.C.- 200 A.D.	c. 500 B.C.	Rama	Sanskrit	couplets	48,000
Aeneid ^F	Virgil	29-19 B.C.	c. 1100 B.C.	Aeneas	Latin	dactylic hexa- meter	10,000
Beowulf ^F		c. 725	c. 515	Beowulf	Old English	half-lines, alliteration	3,200
Shah-Nameh ^{NI}	Firdausi	c. 1000	3600 B.C.- 651 A.D.	Rustem and others	Persian	couplets four-line stanzas	120,000
Song of Roland ^F		c. 1100	778	Roland	French	stanzas assonance	4,000
El Cid		1140	1040-1099	Ruy Diaz	Spanish	stanzas assonance	3,700
Lay of Igor's Campaign		c. 1185	1185	Igor	Russian	rhythmic prose	700

TABLE I (Continued)

Title	Author	Date Written or Published	Time of Events	Hero	Language	Poetic Form	Number of Lines
Nibelungenlied ^F		c. 1200	c. 400	Siegfried (Kriemhild)	German	half-lines alliteration four-line stanzas rhyme	10,000
Divine Comedy ^F	Dante	1321	1321	Dante	Italian	terza rima	13,500
Orlando ^F Furioso	Ariosto	1516	c. 770	Orlando	Italian	ottava rima	54,200
Lusiads ^F	Camoens	1572	1497-1498	Vasco da Gama	Portuguese	ottava rima	11,500
Jerusalem ^F Delivered	Tasso	1581	c. 1100	Godfrey of Boulogne	Italian	ottava rima	14,600
Faerie Queene ^F	Spenser	1596	c. 1550	Prince Arthur	English	Spenserian stanzas	35,200
Paradise Lost ^F	Milton	1667	creation	Adam	English	blank verse	8,500
Paradise ^F Regained	Milton	1671	Jesus's lifetime	Jesus	English	blank verse	2,070
Kalevala ^F	(Lönnrot)	1849	creation+	Vainamoinen and others	Finnish	trochees	22,800
The Four Zoas	Blake	c. 1797-1804	creation to apocalypse	Albion and Jerusalem	English	accentual cadence	3,600
Milton ^F	Blake	1800-1804	creation+	Albion, Milton	English	accentual cadence	1,965
Jerusalem	Blake	1818	apocalypse	Albion	English	accentual cadence	1,965

TABLE I (Continued)

Title	Author	Date Written or Published	Time of Events	Hero	Language	Poetic Form	Number of Lines
The Prelude: Or, Growth of a Poet's Mind ^F	Wordsworth	1805; 1850	c. 1795	Wordsworth	English	blank verse	6,704
Hiawatha	Longfellow	1855	pre- Columbian	Hiawatha	English	trochees	5,500
John Brown's Body	Benét	1928	1860-1865	Jack Ellyat	English	blank verse, qua- trains, prose	13,000
Conquistador	MacLeish	1932	1517-1521	Bernal Diaz	English	terza rima variations	2,200
Mountain Men	Neihardt	1915-1941	1815-1890	Mike Fink Hugh Glass Jed Smith	English	iambic pentameter couplets	7,800
Perelandra	Lewis	1944	WW II	Ransom Tinidril	English	prose	---
Paterson	Williams	1946-1958	1776-1945	Paterson (city and man)	English	free verse/prose	60,000

NI = no influence on Western epic.

F = familiar to Lewis as indicated by references in his works.

Moreover, they are major epics in their cultures; therefore, I have included them in order to give a complete picture of the time frame within which epics arose.)

We may safely assume that Lewis was familiar with those epics marked, for he has mentioned them in various writings. And it is highly likely that he was familiar with all those listed from the Song of Roland through The Prelude. We are, of course, not sure that he was influenced by epics other than those he has mentioned, but direct influence is not the point here. I merely wish to illustrate that all epics look back to prior epics, follow many of the same conventions, and at least partially reject past values represented in order to build their own structure and value system based upon these predecessors. John Brown's Body, Conquistador, Mountain Men, and Paterson may all be seen as at least adaptations of the epic.

Not only has the epic genre evolved, but change is in the very epic tradition. A quality found in all great epics seems to be a rejection of the values exhibited in prior epics as partial, incomplete views of values. As Karl Kroeber perceptively notes, "Genuine literary epic is inspired by the sense that past epics convey only a partial consciousness of the human predicament."⁷ Even Homer's Odyssey somewhat rejects the values Homer himself had portrayed in The Iliad, for in a time and place --that is, at the edge of the Greek world, isolated and on their own-- where the older heroic battles are not enough to enable one to overcome, Odysseus has the new virtue of wit and trickiness which allows him to survive and to protect his kingdom of Ithaca. Another example of a rejected past tradition may be seen in the telling of one's name and "pedigree" to an opponent in battle, a common practice in the Iliad, for it insured that

one was fighting a worthy opponent so that one might gain glory and recognition. However, when Odysseus told his name and lineage to the Cyclops, Polyphemus, this boast only brought trouble. Because Polyphemus knew Odysseus's name, he could complain to his father, the god Poseidon. As a result, Poseidon hounded Odysseus mercilessly in revenge. Then Virgil presented Aeneas as embodying virtues which were totally unlike those of Homer's heroes: Aeneas the pius, meaning responsible, true, having reverence for the gods, filial devotion, loyalty to friends, and loyalty to one's fatherland. As Lewis has said, Virgil introduces the "sense of vocation" to epic.⁸ And Spenser presented his epic heroes and heroines (and having heroines was a change in itself) as emphasizing the inner virtues; it did not even matter so much whether the hero won his battle or not so long as his inner motivation, his heart, was right. The quest was really an inward one--to achieve the Christian and Aristotelean virtues. Paradise Lost might be said to be the culmination of this rejecting of older values (in order to present a more acceptable and complete value system) as far as Christian epic can go, for Paradise Lost combines Homer's emphasis on heroic deeds and Virgil's sense of vocation, of a holy calling to a task, with Spenser's emphasis upon the inner virtues and presents the point of view that both proper inner virtues and outer deeds are necessary for one to be heroic. Paradise Lost is an exemplification of the scriptural statement that "faith without works is dead." But The Prelude, which may be considered a new form of epic, for its heroic quest is inward, with its subject being the birth and early growth of the imaginative power (Books I-VI), its impairment (Books VII-XI), and its eventual restoration (Books XII-XIV), takes this rejecting of past epic values even further. It embodies the idea that modern civilization, the

human creation meant to foster and to protect man's dignity as a man, is itself in this fallen world the most dangerous enemy of man's "civil" virtues and reduces man to machinery part, robs him of his individuality. Kroeber says, "Wordsworth in The Prelude is the prototype of the contemporary hero: the man who fights against his culture."⁹ Perelandra is in the epic tradition of partial rejection of past values, also, like The Prelude emphasizing those values of the culture to be rejected. However, in his rejection of man spreading throughout the universe, Lewis seems also to be rejecting the same attitude as the exploitative explorations of Camoens' Vasco da Gama in the Lusiads. He says, "we know what our race does to strangers. Man destroys or enslaves every species he can. Civilized man murders, enslaves, cheats, and corrupts savage men. Even inanimate nature he turns into dust bowls and slag-heaps."¹⁰ Further, he says, "I have wondered before now whether the vast astronomical distances may not be God's quarantine precautions. They prevent the spiritual infection of a fallen species from spreading."¹¹ Moreover, following Paradise Lost, Perelandra emphasizes the necessity of inner virtue being combined with outer deed, for Ransom has to physically do battle with the forces of evil. Lewis also emphasizes an aspect of the Christian value system not dealt with in Paradise Lost--that of the worth of each individual. Thus, while Milton's epic heroes were Adam and Eve--"Grand Parents" of the entire human race, or even Christ, God's own, only-begotten Son--Lewis's is a not-very-distinguished university don. Lewis is emphasizing that since the Incarnation and Sacrifice of Christ, any and every Christian represents God and thus is in a high position to allow them to be epic heroes.

Perelandra also tells of the birth and early growth of the imaginative power--in the Green Lady--and of Satan-in-Weston's attempt to impair and pervert it. Perelandra also presents Weston, appearing in his shirt, shorts and pith helmet (the symbol of the white man's domination over the colored races of the Earth) with his space ship, punt, gun, primus stove, tins, tent and paraphernalia as representative of the dangers of "civilization." This also follows in the tradition of Spenser and Milton, for both often employ the association of objects of handicraft or art shaped and formed by man with evil. (Mercilla's throne in The Faerie Queene, Book V, Canto IX, for example.) In Spenser, art (that is, artifice) is evil as opposed to nature as good. The artful Bower of Bliss is thus evil, whereas the natural Garden of Adonis and the natural Garden of Venus are good. Milton generally disdains objects of technology such as weapons for the military, metal gardening tools, mining, and so forth.¹² Artful and technologically-created Pandemonium is thus evil and natural Eden good. Since the Green Lady of Perelandra chooses to follow in Maleldil's will rather than to set herself up as equal to God to choose and make her own life, she and her descendants will never have to fight their own culture (as does the poet in The Prelude) in order to preserve their individuality. And since she has chosen to walk in Maleldil's will rather than to seize choice, she and the King are given freedom to guide their world.

Lewis says, "To enjoy our full humanity we ought, so far as is possible, to contain within us potentially at all times, and on occasions to actualize, all the modes of feeling and thinking through which man has passed."¹³ He quotes Traherne to support his point: "Men do mightily wrong themselves when they refuse to be present in all ages and neglect to see the beauty of all kingdoms."¹⁴ Epic, with its encyclopedic

inclusion of the thoughts and values represented in past epics, does "actualize all the modes of feeling and thinking through which man has passed."¹⁵ Thus Lewis's uses of Biblical material and epic references and devices are, as he says of Milton's learned similes and allusions, "not done for display, but in order to guide our imaginations with unobtrusive pressure into the channels where the poet wishes them to flow."¹⁶ Donald E. Glover says that when discussing his theory of literature, Lewis "insisted upon a message that would bring the reader closer to truth."¹⁷ Glover adds, "He even seemed to suggest that an author's indirect approach to the message might work best because it would slide past the reader's inhibitions and prejudices and catch him unaware."¹⁸ In fact, Frederick H. Candelaria has noted that "the epic is the genre of the heroic age, and so succeeds better than any other form in evoking (and perhaps provoking) the heroic spirit in our unheroic age."¹⁹

Though the epic does evoke and provoke the heroic spirit, this cannot properly be classified as an unheroic age. Besides such visible heroic figures as Gandhi, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, Solzenitzhen, Anwar Sadat, this age has more than its share of unsung heroes--the ordinary, common, garden variety of hero who may not get recognition for his heroism but is nonetheless truly heroic: the "ordinary" person who dares to get involved, to take a firm stand for the side of goodness and right when it would be so much safer and easier to maintain a supposedly neutral position; the "ordinary" person who acts upon what he thinks is right--these are the unsung heroes. And this is the main rejection of past epic values with the heroes having to be of royal or aristocratic blood and the main addition Lewis is

bringing to prior epic values--the emphasis upon each "ordinary" person being a child of God, so that any one is qualified to be an epic hero.

ENDNOTES

¹A Preface to Paradise Lost (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942; rpt. 1972), p. 1. Lewis's definition and discussion of epic are detailed in A Preface to Paradise Lost and in Allegory of Love (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963; rpt. 1981).

²Definitions and definitive discussions of epic may be found in M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 4th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981); C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature, 4th ed. (Indianapolis, 2nd: Bobbs-Merrill, 1980); Alex Preminger, ed., Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, Enlarged Ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974).

³Alex Preminger, ed., Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, Enlarged ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 242.

⁴"The Oprhic Voice," in Perspectives on Epic, eds. Frederick H. Candelaria and William C. Strange (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1965), p. 140.

⁵Sewell, p. 141.

⁶Sewell, p. 141.

⁷"Wordsworth: The Personal Epic," in Perspectives on Epic, eds. Frederick H. Candelaria and William C. Strange (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1965), p. 100.

⁸Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, p. 37.

⁹Kroeber, p. 101.

¹⁰C. S. Lewis, The World's Last Night and Other Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1952), p. 89.

¹¹Lewis, World's Last Night, p. 91.

¹²David Shelley Berkeley, class lecture on Milton, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, December, 1975.

- ¹³Lewis, Preface, p. 64.
- ¹⁴From Lewis, Preface, p. 64.
- ¹⁵Lewis, Preface, p. 64.
- ¹⁶Lewis, Preface, pp. 44-45.
- ¹⁷C. S. Lewis: The Art of Enchantment (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1981), p. 3.
- ¹⁸Glover, p. 3.
- ¹⁹Frederick H. Candelaria and William C. Strange, eds., Perspectives on Epic (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1965), p. v.

CHAPTER III

SCIENCE FICTION AS A SUCCESSOR OF EPIC GENRE

The central novel of Lewis's space trilogy, Perelandra, is of the genre of science fiction with its journey to another planet and beings of another world. Therefore, back to our corkscrew or cathedral, we must be sure we define science fiction. Wordsworth in "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" noted that when science becomes man's environment, the poet "will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science . . . at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of science itself. . . . The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or mineralogist will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any."¹ This is what has happened with the genre of science fiction. It is fiction based upon extrapolations of possibilities generated by some area of science, which has become at least a major part of man's environment.

Many definitions of science fiction have been proposed. According to Kingsley Amis: "Science fiction is that class of prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is hypothesized on the basis of some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology, whether human or extra-terrestrial in origin." Some stories involve "perfectly plausible extensions of existing theories and techniques"--robots, for instance. Others fabricate ways of getting around existing science--in space travel, for

example. However, science fiction maintains a respect for fact or presumptive fact. It presents "with verisimilitude the human effects of spectacular changes in our environment, changes either deliberately willed or involuntarily suffered."² As Sam Moskowitz says, "Science fiction is a branch of fantasy identifiable by the fact that it eases the willing suspension of disbelief of its reader by utilizing atmosphere of scientific credibility for its imaginative speculations in physical science, space, time, social science, and philosophy."³ Donald A. Wolheim adds: "Science fiction is that branch of fantasy, which, while not true of present day knowledge, is rendered plausible by the reader's recognition of the scientific possibilities of it being possible at some future date or at some uncertain period of the past."⁴ Therefore, John Aquino sums up: "Science fiction is a world that lies in scientific speculation,"⁵ but he also classifies science fiction as "a literary genre, or at least a sub-genre under fantasy."⁶ According to Isaac Asimov: "Science fiction and fantasy (which we may lump together as 'surrealistic fiction' if we wish) deal . . . with events played against social backgrounds that do not exist today,"⁷ but with a surreal background which "could conceivably be derived from our own by appropriate changes in the level of science and technology."⁸ In contrast, Ursula K. LeGuin says: "Science fiction is often described, and even defined, as extrapolative." But she adds, "Fortunately, though extrapolation is an element in science fiction, it isn't the name of the game by any means. It is far too rationalist and simplistic to satisfy the imaginative mind";⁹ therefore, LeGuin says science fiction may be considered as "a thought experiment." And she goes on to explain: "In a story so conceived, the moral complexity proper to the modern novel need not be sacrificed, nor is there any built-in

dead end; thought and intuition can move freely within bounds set only by the terms of the experiment. . . . The purpose of a thought-experiment . . . is not to predict the future . . . but to describe reality, the present world. Science fiction is not predictive; it is descriptive."¹⁰

Thus we note that there is a broad range of definition of science fiction by its more literary practitioners. However, all the definitions suggest that the air of scientific plausibility should be included; and though there is no doubt that science fiction and fantasy are closely related, often with many characteristics in common such as the entry into another world, a journey, a gathering of experts, etc., it is this insistence upon fact or presumptive fact which marks science fiction. As Amis notes, "It might be thought that, to push it to the limit, a fantasy story could be turned into a science fiction story merely by inserting a few lines of pseudo-scientific patter. . . ."¹¹ However, science fiction differs in the kind of "scientific patter" used to justify its marvels. Even when these marvels are pure "flim-flam," like fantasy magic, "the scientific patter contains an implicit assertion of the truth of the scientific world view and an assurance that, while the laws of the cosmos may not be fully understood, still there are laws."¹² This allows for comments on our social functions and institutions, our religions, our philosophies; in other words, this bases science fiction, no matter how far removed the universe or creatures being presented, in our world.

If we are going to have science fiction, the field can scarcely have existed in a true sense until we had what may be recognized as science. Of course, science and technology have advanced throughout history, but the changes were so slow and gradual in time and spread so slowly and imperceptibly in space that change was not visible within an individual's

lifetime. With the Industrial Revolution, however, change speeded up so that its effects were visible within an individual lifetime, and science fiction as a genre was begun as a response. Table II shows the gradual nature of science and technology up to the Industrial Revolution and the proliferation and increased speed of inventions, findings, and changes after the Industrial Revolution. The table also reveals that writers in earlier centuries used fantasy to create alternative societies, and even employed devices, plots, and themes of science fiction, so we do have significant precursors to science fiction. Retroactively, examples of supposed science fiction have been traced as far back as Plato (see Table II), but Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, published in Great Britain (the true home of the Industrial Revolution) in 1816, is the first true science fiction.¹³ However, the term "science fiction" was not coined until 1929 when Hugo Gernsback invented it as he launched a magazine for this kind of story.

Table II reveals the shifting emphases in the genre of science fiction. It began with an emphasis upon the human. In her introduction to Frankenstein, Mary Shelley notes that it "affords a point of view to the imagination for the delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield."¹⁴ Then the field underwent a period of interest mainly in the hardware, the technology, and the tools of science, shown in Table II in the references to the science fiction magazines which were founded; this period came to be called the "space opera" era of science fiction, but it ended rather thoroughly as far as the main stream of science fiction is concerned in the so-called New Wave of the 1960's with a change to a more speculative, less scientific fiction. The science fiction of the

TABLE II

A CHART OF KEY EVENTS IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION, SCIENCE,
AND TECHNOLOGY CORRELATED WITH EPIC
AND SCIENCE FICTION WORKS

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
Pre-historic	Discovery of Fire, of Wheel; Domestication of Animals		
c. 4000 B.C.	Villages/Towns		
2600 B.C.	The Great Pyramid		
2000 B.C.		<u>Gilgamesh</u> ^E	
c.1900-1400 B.C.	Stonehenge		
c.1750-1500 B.C.	Minoan Culture	Myths of Theseus & the Minotaur ^{PSF, SFE}	
c.1200 B.C.	Trojan Wars	Job ^E	
850-600 B.C.	Homeric Greece	<u>The Iliad</u> ^{E, SFE} <u>The Odyssey</u> ^{E, pSF}	Homer Homer
753 B.C.	Rome Founded		Romulus & Remus
6th Century B.C.	Concept That Permanence Is Illusion; the Only Reality Is Change		Heraclitus
5th Century B.C.	Atomic Structure of Matter		Lucretius
414 B.C.		<u>The Birds (Ornithes)</u> ^{pSF}	Aristophanes
400-270 B.C.	Rome Conquers Italy		
c. 387 B.C.	Plato Finds the Academy	<u>The Republic</u> ^{pSF}	Plato
c. 300 B.C.	Geometry		Euclid
3rd Century B.C.	Hydrostatics		Archimedes
c. 230 B.C.	Earth's Circumference		Eratosthenes
27 B.C.	Roman Empire Established	<u>Aeneid</u> ^E	Virgil

TABLE II (Continued)

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
100-475 A.D.	Goths, Vandals and Huns Raid the Roman Empire	<u>Metamorphoses</u> ^{PSF}	Apuleius
165 A.D.		<u>A True History</u> ^{PSF}	Lucian of Samosata
306-337	First Christian Emperor		Constantine I
410	Rome Sacked by Visigoths		Alaric
449	Angles, Saxons, Jutes Begin Conquest of Britain		
6th Century	Water Wheel		
687	Frankish Kingdoms United		Pepin of Heristal
8th Century	Stirrup		
c. 725		<u>Beowulf</u> ^E	
9th Century	Rudder		
835	Vikings Raid England and the European Continent		
c. 850	Feudalism in Europe		
962	Holy Roman Empire Founded		
1066	Normans Conquer England		
c. 1085	First University--in Bologna, Italy		
1095	Crusades Begin		
11th Century	Movable Type		Pi-Sheng
12th Century	Windmill		
c. 1100		<u>Song of Roland</u> ^E	
1140		<u>El Cid</u> ^E	

TABLE II (Continued)

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
c. 1185		<u>Lay of Igor's Campaign</u> ^E	
c. 1200		<u>Nibelungenlied</u> ^{E, pSF} <u>Arthurian Romances</u> ^{pSF}	Chrétien de Troyes
1273		<u>Summa Theologica</u> ^{pSF}	Aquinas
1295	Marco Polo Travels to China		
1298	Spinning Wheel		
c. 1300	Renaissance Begins		
14th Century	Gunpowder and Mariner's Com- pass in Europe		
1321		<u>The Divine Comedy</u> ^{E, SFE}	Dante
1337	Hundred Year War		
1339		<u>Tales</u> ^{pSF}	Boccaccio
1347	Black Death Plague Strikes Europe		
1353		<u>Decameron</u> ^{pSF}	
15th Century	Age of Explora- tion Begins		
c. 1450	Printing Press		Gutenberg
1470		<u>Le Morte D'Arthur</u> ^{pSF}	Mallory
1492	Discovery of America		Columbus
1497			Vasco da Gama (Sails for India)
1501-02	South America Explored		Amerigo Vespucci
1516		<u>Utopia</u> ^{pSF}	More
1516		<u>Orlando Furioso</u> ^E	Ariosto

TABLE II (Continued)

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
1517	Protestant Reformation		Luther
1520	Rifle		Kotter
1543	Discovery That Earth Orbits Sun	<u>De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium</u>	Copernicus
1556		<u>De Re Metallica</u>	Agricola
1559	Scientific Map-Making		Mercator
1572		<u>Lusiads</u> ^E	Camoens
1581		<u>Jerusalem Delivered</u> ^E	Tasso
c. 1589	Knitting Machine		Lee
1590	Microscope		Jansen
c. 1592	Laws of Motion		Galileo
1596		<u>Faerie Queene</u> ^{E, SFE}	Spenser
1600	Magnetism	<u>De Magnete</u>	Gilbert
1605		<u>Don Quixote</u> ^{PSF}	Cervantes
1608	Telescope		Lippershey
1609-19	Laws of Planetary Motion		Kepler
1610-11		<u>The Tempest</u> ^{PSF, SFE}	Shakespeare
1614	Logarithms		Napier
1620		<u>Novum Organum</u> ^{PSF}	Bacon
1627		<u>The New Atlantis</u> ^{PSF}	Bacon
1628	Circulation of Blood		Harvey
1634		<u>Somnium</u> ^{PSF}	Kepler
1638		<u>Man in the Moone</u> ^{PSF}	Godwin
		<u>Discourse of a Voyage Thither by Domingo Gonsales</u> ^{PSF}	Gonsales
1642	Mechanical Computer		Ada and Blaise Pascal

TABLE II (Continued)

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
1650		<u>Voyage dans la Lune</u> ^{PSF}	Cyrano de Bergerac
1667		<u>Paradise Lost</u> ^{E, SFE}	Milton
1671		<u>Paradise Regained</u> ^{E, SFE}	Milton
1687		<u>Principia Mathematica</u>	Newton
1703		<u>Voyage to the Moon</u> ^{PSF}	Russen
1731	Sextant		Hadley
1732	Threshing Machine		Menjiies
1733	Weaving Machine		Kay
1735		<u>Gulliver's Travels</u> ^{PSF}	Swift
1740	First English Novel	<u>Pamela</u>	Richardson
c. 1750	Industrial Revolution Begins		
1765	Steam Engine		Watt
1767	Spinning Jenny		Hargreaves
1775	Hypnotism (Mesmerism)		Mesmer
1776	Declaration of Independence		Jefferson and Others
1789	French Revolution		
1791	Electricity Experiments		Luigi Galvani
1793	Cotton Gin		Whitney
1793		<u>A Voyage to the Moon</u> ^{PSF}	Aratus
1798		<u>An Essay on the Principle of Population</u>	Malthus
1798	Mass Production (Milling Machine); Interchangeable Parts		Whitney

TABLE II (Continued)

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
1800	Electric Battery		Volta
1802	Atomic Theory		Dalton
1805 (rpt. 1850)		<u>The Prelude: Or, Growth of a Poet's Mind</u> ^E	Wordsworth
1813		<u>A Flight to the Moon</u> ^{SF}	Fowler
1816	Science Fiction Begins	(1st SF) <u>Frankenstein</u> ^{SF}	Mary Shelley
1816	Bicycle		Van Sauerbronn
1822	Electric Motor		Faraday
1822	Camera		Niepce
1823	Calculating Machine		Babbage
1824	Cement		Aspdin
1826		<u>The Last Man</u> ^{SF}	Mary Shelley
1827	Law of Electrical Conduction		Ohm
1827		<u>A Voyage to the Moon</u> ^{SF}	Atterley
1830		<u>The Moon Hoax</u> ^{SF}	Locke
1833		"Ms. Found in a Bottle" ^{SF}	Poe
1835	Telegraph		Morse
1835		"Hans Pfaall" ^{SF}	Poe
1838		"Arthur Gordon Pym" ^{SF}	Poe
1842	Anesthesia (Ether)		Long
1842		Zanoni	Bulwer-Lytton
1844		"Rappacini's Daughter" ^{SF}	Hawthorne
1844		"The Balloon Hoax" ^{SF}	Poe
1848		<u>Communist Manifesto</u>	Marx, Engels
1849		"Melonta Tauta" ^{SF}	Poe
1849		<u>Kalevala</u> ^E	Lönnrot

TABLE II (Continued)

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
1855		<u>Hiawatha</u> ^{E, SFE}	Longfellow
1855		"The Bell Tower" ^{SF}	Melville
1858		<u>Phantastes</u> ^{SFE, Fantasy}	MacDonald
1859	Evolution Concept	<u>Origin of Species</u>	Darwin
1859	Internal Combustion Engine		Lenoir
1864	Typewriter		Mitteshofer
1864		<u>A Journey to the Center of the Earth</u> ^{SF}	Verne
1865	Laws of Genetics		Mendel
1865		<u>From the Earth to the Moon</u> ^{SF}	Verne
1866		<u>Robur the Conqueror</u> ^{SF}	Verne
1866		<u>Alice in Wonderland</u> ^{SFE}	Carroll
1867		<u>Das Kapital</u>	Marx
1870		<u>Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea</u> ^{SF}	Verne
1872	Motion Pictures		Edison
1872		<u>Erewhon</u> ^{SF}	Butler
1876	Telephone		Bell
1877	Microphone		Edison
1877		<u>Off on a Comet</u> ^{SF}	Verne
1879	Incandescent Light		Edison
1884	Linotype		Mergenthaler
1885		<u>Flatland</u> ^{SF}	Square
1886		<u>She</u> ^{SF}	Haggard
1888	Kodak Camera		Eastman and Walker
1888		<u>Looking Backward</u> ^{SF}	Bellamy
1888		<u>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</u> ^{SF}	Stevenson

TABLE II (Continued)

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
1889	Electromechanical Computer		Hollerich
1889		<u>Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</u> ^{SFE}	Twain
1890		<u>News from Nowhere</u> ^{SF}	Morris
1893	Commercial Adding Machine		Burroughs
1894		"The Stolen Bacillus" ^{SF}	Wells
1895	Radio Telegraph		Marconi
1895	Xray		Roentgen
1895		<u>The Time Machine</u> ^{SF}	Wells
1895		<u>The Wood Beyond the World</u> ^{SF}	Morris
1895		<u>Lillith</u> ^{SFE}	MacDonald
1896	Radioactivity-- in Uranium		Madame Cure, Becquerel
1896	Discovery of Electron		Thomson
1896		<u>The Isle of Dr. Moreau</u> ^{SF}	Wells
1896		<u>The Well at the World's End</u> ^{SFE} , Epic Elements (Founder of Heroic Fantasy)	Morris
1897		<u>The Invisible Man</u> ^{SF}	Wells
1897		<u>The War of the Worlds</u> ^{SF}	Wells
1899		<u>When the Sleeper Wakes</u> ^{SF}	Wells
1901		<u>The First Men in the Moon</u> ^{SF}	Wells
1903	Airplane		Wilber and Orville Wright
1903		<u>The Food of the Gods</u> ^{SF}	Wells

TABLE II (Continued)

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
1904	Radar Invented		Hulsmeyer
1905	Theory of Relativity		Einstein
1905		<u>The Master of the World</u> ^{SF}	Verne
1905		<u>A Modern Utopia</u> ^{SF}	Wells
1905		<u>Ayesha</u> ^{SF}	Haggard
1905		<u>Before Adam</u> ^{SF}	London
1906		<u>In the Days of the Comet</u> ^{SF}	Wells
1908		<u>The War in the Air</u> ^{SF}	Wells
1909	Perry Reaches the North Pole		
1909		"The Machine Stops" ^{SF}	Forster
1911	Amundsen Reaches the South Pole		
1911		<u>Ralph 124C 41+</u> ^{SF}	Gernsback
1912		<u>Under the Moons of Mars</u> ^{SF}	Burroughs
1912		<u>Tarzan of the Apes</u> ^{SF}	Burroughs
1912		<u>The Lost World</u> ^{SF}	Doyle
1914		<u>At the Earth's Core</u> ^{SF}	Burroughs
1914		<u>The World Set Free</u> ^{SF}	Wells
1914-1918	World War I		
1915		<u>The Scarlet Plague</u>	London
1917	Communist Revolution in Russia		
1917		<u>Messiah of the Cylinder</u> ^{SF}	Rousseau
1920	League of Nations		
1920		<u>A Voyage to Arcturus</u> ^{SF}	Lindsay
1921		<u>R.U.R.</u> ^{SF}	Capek

TABLE II (Continued)

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
1922	USSR Establish- ed		
1922	Practical Radar		Taylor and Young
1923	<u>Mein Kampf</u>		Hitler
1923		<u>Men Like Gods</u> ^{SF}	Wells
1924		<u>The Land That Time Forgot</u> ^{SF}	Burroughs
1925	Quantum Theory		Heisenberg
1926		SF Magazine <u>Amazing Stories</u> Founded	Gernsback
1926		<u>Skylark of Space</u> ^{SF}	Smith
1928	TV Image Tube		Farnsworth
1928		John Brown's Body ^E	Benét
1929	Stock Market Crash		
1929	Term "Science Fiction" Coined	SF Magazine <u>Science Wonder Stories</u> Found- ed	Gernsback
1930		SF Magazine <u>Astound- ing Stories</u> Founded	Gernsback
1930	Cyclotron		Lawrence
1930		<u>Last and First Men</u> ^{SF}	Stapledon
1932	Fusion		Lord Rutherford and colleagues at Cambridge
1932	Discovery of Neutron		Chadwick
1932	Discovery of Positron		Anderson
1932		<u>Brave New World</u> ^{SF}	Huxley
1932		<u>When Worlds Collide</u> ^{SF}	Balmer and Wylie
1932		<u>Pirates of Venus</u> ^{SF}	Burroughs
1932		<u>Lost Horizon</u> ^{SFE}	Hilton
1932		<u>Conquistador</u> ^E	MacLeish

TABLE II (Continued)

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
1933	Nazis Take Over Germany		Hitler
1934		<u>The Shape of Things to Come</u> ^{SF}	Wells
1934		<u>The Legion of Space</u> ^{SF}	Williamson
1934		<u>The Mightiest Machine</u> ^{SF}	Campbell
1937		<u>The Hobbit</u> ^{E, SFE}	Tolkein
1938	Nuclear Fission of Uranium		Meitner, Hahn, Strassman
1938		<u>Out of the Silent Planet</u> ^{SF}	Lewis
1938-1942	Boom in SF Magazines		
1939	Commercial TV		
1939	Electron Microscope		Zworykin
1939		"Future History" ^{SF}	Heinlein
1941		"Nightfall" ^{SF}	Asimov
1942	Controlled Fission		Fermi and Others
1943		<u>Perelandra</u> ^{SF, E}	Lewis
1945	Atomic Bomb		Oppenheimer and Others
1946		<u>That Hideous Strength</u> ^{SF}	Lewis
1947	Carbon 14 Geologic Dating		Libby
1947		<u>1984</u> ^{SF}	Orwell
1948	Transistor		Bardeen, Brattain, and Shockley
1949-1953	Boom in SF Magazines		
1950		<u>I, Robot</u> ^{SF}	Asimov

TABLE II (Continued)

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
1950		<u>The Martian Chronicles</u> ^{SF}	Bradbury
1946-1958		<u>Paterson</u> ^E	Williams
1951	Nuclear-Fission Reactor		Atomic Energy Commission
1951	Hydrogen Bomb		Atomic Energy Commission
1952		<u>The Space Merchants</u> ^{SF}	Pohl and Kornbluth
1952		<u>The Demolished Man</u> ^{SF}	Bester
1952		<u>Player Piano</u> ^{SF}	Vonnegut
1952		<u>Star Man's Son</u> <u>2250 A.D.</u> ^{SF}	Norton
1953	DNA		
1953		<u>Childhood's End</u> ^{SF}	Clarke
1954		<u>Fahrenheit 451</u> ^{SF}	Bradbury
1954 ff.		<u>The Lord of the Rings</u> ^{E,SF} (epic fantasy trilogy of <u>The Fellowship of the Rings</u> , 1954; <u>The Return of the King</u> , 1955; <u>The Two Towers</u> , 1966; <u>The Lord of the Rings</u> , 1968)	Tolkein
1957	Sputnik I--USSR		
1958	Explorer I--USA		
1959	Microchip		Teda Hoff and Staff
1959	Far Side of the Moon Photographed--USSR		
1959		<u>Starship Troopers</u> ^{SF}	Heinlein
1960	Laser		Maiman
1960		<u>A Canticle for Leibowitz</u> ^{SF}	Miller

TABLE II (Continued)

Date	Event/Discovery	Work	Person/Author
1961	Man in Orbit-- USSR		Uri Gargarin
1961	Manned Space Flight--USA		Alan Shepard, Jr.
1961		<u>Stranger in a Strange Land</u> ^{SF}	Heinlein
1962	US Manned Orbit		John Glen, Jr.
1962	New Wave in SF		
1962		<u>The Man in the High Castle</u> ^{SF}	Dick
1962		<u>A Wrinkle in Time</u> ^{SF}	L'Engle
1963	Discovery of Quasars		Matthews and Sandage
1963		<u>Way Station</u> ^{SF}	Simak
1965		<u>Dune</u> ^{SF}	Herbert
1966		<u>Flowers for Algernon</u> ^{SF}	Keyes
1967	Human Heart Transplant		Barnard
1968		<u>2001: A Space Odyssey</u> ^{SF}	Clarke (and Kubrick)
1969	First Men on the Moon		Armstrong, Aldrin, Collins
1969		<u>The Left Hand of Darkness</u> ^{SF}	LeGuin
1971	Mariner 9 Orbits Mars		NASA
1973		<u>Rendezvous with Rama</u> ^{SF}	Clarke
1973		<u>A Wind in the Door</u> ^{SF}	L'Engle
1974		<u>The Dispossessed</u> ^{SF}	LeGuin
1978		<u>A Swiftly Tilting Planet</u> ^{SF}	L'Engle
1980		<u>The Beginning Place</u> ^{SF}	LeGuin

pSF = precursor of Science Fiction
E = Epic

SFE = has Science Fiction Elements
SF = Science Fiction

1970's shows an even further heightened literary awareness. Furthermore, science fiction writers of the 1980's "are far more concerned with the use of the ingredients of science fiction as literary metaphor, rather than only as imaginative ideas for imaginative adventures. . . . It is the nature of humanness that increasingly fascinates the science fiction writer. . . ."15 Science fiction may be said to be science fiction in the same way Wordsworth may be called a nature poet, for just as Wordsworth's real interest is in the human response to nature, so science fiction's real interest is in the human response to science. Moreover, within the last twenty years, the science of science fiction has come to be based less on technology or physics or astrophysics, etc., and more on what is called the "soft" sciences--human sciences, psychology, social sciences, and even para-sciences. As can be determined from the chart in Table II, science fiction has changed considerably in the last twenty years, and the change has been beneficial from a literary viewpoint. As David Gerrold has said, "As the field has grown it has matured, and each succeeding generation of writers has become more and more involved with what it is to be human."16 The horizons have been widened, with a less restrictive view of what science fiction is and what it can do. And C. S. Lewis's space trilogy was one of the pioneers in this new emphasis. Lewis, who read what is now called science fiction from the time he could read, notes that, ironically, science fiction "began to be popular when it least deserved popularity, and to excite critical contempt as soon as it ceased to be wholly contemptible."17

It has been noted by many that science fiction stories sometimes present events, technology, or scientific concepts which eventually come to pass. Atomic bombs, trips to the moon, or Verne's submarine are

classic examples. But, as Asimov says, "To suppose that this predictive aspect of science fiction, this foreseeing of details, is the truly impressive thing about science fiction, serves . . . only to trivialize the field."¹⁸ Contrary perhaps to popular opinion, science fiction, as Kingsley Amis notes, "is rather poor as an instrument of scientific prediction, but, he adds, "it is an excellent medium for the exploration of the taste, the feel, the human meaning of scientific discoveries."¹⁹ Moreover, scientific discoveries soon pall. James Blish has said: "The writer or reader who still thinks an exploding star is inherently more wonderful than the mind and heart of the man who wonders at it is going to run out of these peripheral wonders sooner or later."²⁰ "Literature has the tacit aim of improving us through understanding, by creating in our minds what we could not otherwise observe. In serious science fiction, in which the writer questions past values and future alternatives, science and technology exist against the background of a moral tradition."²¹ Brian Aldiss said in a letter that it is impossible to write science fiction without acknowledging the religious and moral considerations. "Religion," he wrote, "is an integral part of the science fiction vision. Directly we look to the future or to mankind in the mass, we have a pararational situation on our hands."²² Madeleine L'Engle supports this concept. "I often seek theological insights in science fiction," she says, "because this is a genre eminently suited to exploration of the Creator and creation . . . because to think about other worlds in other galaxies, other modes of being is a theological enterprise."²³ Certainly religious and spiritual considerations have provided the subject matter for some of the best science fiction ever written.

In truth the species of imaginative metaphor of science fiction now attracts intelligent readers and serious, dedicated writers. "Science fiction . . . is a form of contemporary metaphor, a literary device for examining our world and our lives from another perspective. It is a significant form of the contemporary novel: not a substitute for it, nor a poor relation of it, but an integral part of it."²⁴ Critical discovery of science fiction is, Amis says, "part of a change in our literary sensibility that has led to a renewal of interest in romance forms [and] part of the general rise of interest in uncanonical cultural forms such as popular ethnic literature, [but] critics and authors together have at last begun a sustained exploration of the literary possibilities inherent in the genre."²⁵

For years, the accepted canons of taste rejected romance as childish, preferring realism. Now, however, the romance form of the scientific age, science fiction, has been "discovered." And as Rose notes, "An understanding that science fiction is a romance form is perhaps the necessary prerequisite to serious discussion of the genre."²⁶ As a matter of fact, H. G. Wells always called his tales "scientific romances," and Northrup Frye calls science fiction a form of romance.

Frye maintains that "the history of literature seems to break down into a series of cultural periods . . . each dominated by certain conventions. During these periods . . . the burden of the past increases rapidly in weight and oppressiveness. Writers improve and refine on their predecessors until it seems that no further improvement is possible. Then the conventions wear out, and literature enters a transitional phase where some of the burden of the past is thrown off and popular literature, with romance at its center, comes again into the foreground."²⁷

Furthermore, Frye maintains this is what is happening now after the decline of realistic fiction. Frye uses the term 'primitive' for the literature that shakes off the outworn and exhausted traditions of a period and emerges with romance at its center. Science fiction is the primitive of today.

The history Frye gives of literature as a whole parallels that of the genre of epic with its periodic changes in subject and form. In fact, Frye mentions that Spenser "with his ogres and dragons" was purposely throwing off older, perhaps exhausted traditions and including romance formulas to gain "imaginative support for the Protestant revolution of his time."²⁸ And Spenser set his romance narrative, complete with knights and ladies, ogres and dragons, in a universe of intelligible order, thus revealing a kinship in the order of its universe with the air of plausibility in science fiction.

Romance forms usually employ symbolism and/or allegory, so they can treat philosophical issues, as does C. S. Lewis. Romance also suggests an inward quest, the inner truths, the dream world (shared with fairy tale) where the unconscious and submerged meanings of our lives take monstrous or enchanting shape. "The improbable, desiring, erotic, and violent world of romance," Frye explains, "reminds us that we are not awake when we have abolished the dream world: we are awake only when we have absorbed it again."²⁹ Therefore, romance forms such as science fiction appeal at our most vulnerable levels and elicit our total response. Moreover, through some different point of view or invention or perspective, which Darko Suvin terms estrangement, science fiction allows for breadth and provides the unique ability to explore the nature of humanness from a variety of perspectives--retrospect from the future,

the alien world, the parallel or opposite world, through time, etc. For example, by locating the drama in another world where wholly alien others may be encountered, Lewis reintroduces into the human imagination the long-lost notion of blissful otherness, an integral part of the peopling of the world with centaurs, dragons, unicorns, dryads, satyrs, river gods, and so forth in myth. The description of Ransom's first meeting with a creature from another world in Malacandra, in Out of the Silent Planet, is painfully eloquent: "It was foolish, frightening, ecstatic and unbearable all in one moment. It was more than curiosity. It was like a courtship--like the meeting of the first man and the first woman in the world." It was "the first tingling intercourse of two different, but rational, species."³⁰ Lewis speculates about such a meeting in an essay:

It sets one dreaming--to interchange thoughts with beings whose thinking had an organic background wholly different from ours (other senses, other appetites), to be unenviously humbled by intellects possibly superior to our own yet able for that very reason to descend to our level, to descend lovingly ourselves if we met innocent and childlike creatures who could never be as strong or as clever as we, to exchange with the inhabitants of other worlds that especially keen and rich affection which exists between unlikes; it is a glorious dream.³¹

We might well apply what Bowra said in Heroic Poetry about epic and heroic poetry to science fiction: Science fiction, then, "gives verisimilitude and solidity to even its most improbable themes, partly by making them fit into a visible world, partly by relating them to common experience." Furthermore, science fiction, too, "enables its audiences to see miraculous events and monsters and provokes certain feelings about them."³² Certainly Lewis's Perelandra does all the above.

As Rose notes, science fiction "repeatedly strives for . . . a quasi-religious mood of awe, and perhaps it helps to explain the appeal of science fiction to an age that is fundamentally materialistic in ethos

and yet not without a hunger for religious emotion."³³ As a matter of fact, science fiction has a "general tendency . . . to move toward moments of apocalyptic revelation, either ecstatic or . . . horrific, [toward] striking moments in which the transcendent and the mundane interpenetrate,"³⁴ that is, epiphanies. Rose perceptively notes, "We should not be too surprised to find science fiction employing the same vehicle as religion, for science, too, emphasizes that there is more to the world than meets the eye."³⁵ Einstein too had this view of science. In his Evolution of Physics (1938), he said, "Physical concepts are free creations of the human mind, and are not, however it may seem, uniquely determined by the external world." Perhaps Ursula K. LeGuin summarized it all best in her National Book Award acceptance speech:

I am not only a fantasist but a science fiction writer, and odd thought it may seem, I am proud to be both.

We who hobnob with hobbits and tell tall tales about little green men are quite used to being dismissed as mere entertainers, or sternly disapproved of as escapists. But I think that perhaps the categories are changing, like the times. Sophisticated readers are accepting the fact that an improbable and unmanageable world is going to produce an improbable and hypothetical art. At this point, realism is perhaps the least adequate means of understanding or portraying the incredible realities of our existence. A scientist who creates a monster in his laboratory, a librarian in the library of Babel, a wizard unable to cast a spell, a space ship having trouble in getting to Alpha Centauri: all these may be precise and profound metaphors of the human condition. The fantasist, whether he used the ancient archetypes of myth and legend or the younger ones of science and technology, may be talking as seriously as any sociologist--and a good deal more directly--about human life as it is lived, and as it might be lived, and as it ought to be lived. For, after all, as great scientists have said and as all children know, it is above all by the imagination that we achieve perception, and compassion, and hope.³⁶

As to his choice of science fiction as the genre to carry his truth,

C. S. Lewis writes:

The idea of other planets exercised upon me then a peculiar, heady attraction, which was quite different from any other

of my literary interests. . . . The interest, when the fit was upon me, was ravenous, like a lust. . . . I may perhaps add that my own planetary romances have been not so much the gratification of that fierce curiosity as its exorcism.³⁷

"What immediately spurred me to write," Lewis told an unknown correspondent, "was Olaf Stapledon's Last and First Men and an essay in J. B. S. Haldane's Possible Worlds, both of which seemed to take the idea of such [space] travel seriously and to have the desperately immoral outlook which I try to pillory in *Weston*. I like the whole interplanetary idea as a mythology and simply wished to conquer for my own (Christian) point of view what has always hitherto been used by the opposite side. I think Wells's First Men in the Moon the best of the sort I have read."³⁸ Wells was one of the few who did not have the immoral outlook Lewis deplored. (A mythology may be defined as a pattern of beliefs that express a sense of the inner relationship between the phenomenal and the transcendent.) Lewis himself was extremely influential as a pioneer in combining his Christian outlook with the science fiction and fantasy genre (see Table II). Lewis was also influenced by David Lindsay's Voyage to Arcturus; Lewis says that Lindsay was "the first writer to discover what 'other planets' are really good for in fiction," that is, for raising questions about man's existence since they give an "outside" view.³⁹ Lewis explains the crux of the matter: "No merely physical strangeness or merely spatial distance will realize that idea of otherness which is what we are always trying to grasp in a story about voyaging through space: you must go into another dimension. To construct plausible and moving 'other worlds' you must draw on the only real 'other world' we know, that of the spirit."⁴⁰ In understanding Lewis' choice of science fiction for the carrier of his truth, we may remember he noted that even "the teaching of Our Lord Himself, in which there is no imperfection, is not given

us in that cut-and-dried, fool-proof, systematic fashion we might have expected or desired. . . . He preaches but he does not lecture. He uses paradox, proverb, exaggeration, parable, irony; even (I mean no irreverence) the 'wisecrack.'"⁴¹ As L'Engle has pointed out, "Jesus was not a theologian. He was God who told stories."⁴² St. Matthew says, "And he spake many things to them in parables . . . and without a parable spake he not to them." And so Lewis, perhaps following Jesus' example, chooses for his messages various genres which also show but do not lecture. And he chooses them for the same reasons he believes Jesus did: "It may be indispensable that Our Lord's teaching, by that elusiveness (to our systematising intellect), should demand a response from the whole man, should make it so clear that there is no question of learning a subject but of stepping ourselves in a Personality, acquiring a new outlook and temper, breathing a new atmosphere, suffering Him, in His own way, to rebuild in us the defaced image of himself. . . . For . . . it is our total response that has to be elicited."⁴³ Ransom and the character Lewis had agreed at the end of Out of the Silent Planet to publish Ransom's account of his trip to Mars as fiction in order to elicit "a response from the whole man"; Ransom said, "Anyway . . . what we need for the moment is not so much a body of belief as a body of people familiarized with certain ideas."⁴⁴

What Lewis looks for in science fiction, therefore, is never merely scientific information or technological "gimmicks," not a way to lend realism by so-called "scientific" explanations of fantastic happenings, but something related to the genuinely imaginative of all good literature. Through the science fiction novel, Lewis "enters the spiritual world and probes the outer and other, the inner and deeper, dimensions

of human existence."⁴⁵ The space novel, moreover, is not chosen to tell a story that could be told just as well on earth: it takes us out of this world so we may see things in our world we might never have seen otherwise.

Perhaps, even more importantly, with Perelandra Lewis has chosen to combine science fiction and epic.

Science fiction is a logical inheritor of the epic genre, for it is vast enough in scope of both space and time and allows for the heroic deeds in battle and in inner virtues dealt with in past epics. "In Greek romance," Frye says, and, we may add, in epic, "the characters are Levantine, the setting is the Mediterranean world, and the normal means of transportation is by shipwreck. In science fiction the characters may be earthlings, the setting intergalactic spaces, and what gets wrecked in hostile territory a spaceship, but the tactics of the storyteller generally conform to much the same outlines."⁴⁶ In other words, they are much the same kind of story.

Therefore, Lewis places his modern Biblical prose epic in the heart of his space trilogy. Indeed, the suggested epic question as to what men on earth may do in the great cosmic battle between good and evil is introduced in the first book of the trilogy, Out of the Silent Planet, and the means which Satan, the Bent Eldil, will use as a Trojan Horse to escape Earth and to invade Perelandra are prepared for in the first book with Weston's journey to Malacandra and his embracing of evil. And the cosmic war is brought to Earth in a decisive battle in the last book of the trilogy, That Hideous Strength.

Lewis also puts the mythic possibilities appropriate to science fiction to work in Perelandra, with the Oyarsa of Perelandra and the Oyarsa

of Malacandra, Venus and Mars, and with their eldila aides. (Eldils are something like Aquinas' notion of angels: "the body of an eldil is a movement swift as light.") And these beings are appropriate to epic, also, with its supernatural beings which affect the action.

Urang notes that in his trilogy, Lewis "is using fantasy in order to clear away misconceptions about what may be 'out there'--not out there in space so much as in that transcendental mode of being for which his space is merely an analogue. Space itself Ransom finds to be not the nightmarish 'black, cold vacuity' 'long engendered in the modern mind by the mythology that follows in the wake of science,' but an empyrean ocean of radiance which he feels constrained to rechristen 'the heavens.'"⁴⁷

As Lewis asks in a poem he wrote:

Why should I leave this green-floored cell,
 Roofed with blue air, in which we dwell,
 Unless, outside its guarded gates,
 Long, long desired, the Unearthly waits,
 Strangeness that moves us more than fear,
 Beauty that stabs with tingling spear,
 Or wonder, laying on one's heart
 That finger-tip at which we start
 As if some thought too swift and shy
 For reason's grasp had just gone by?⁴⁸

Science fiction is the logical inheritor of the epic tradition since it is vast in scope, for it may include all space and time throughout the universe and even in other posited universes; and in light of what is "natural" on Earth, beings from other planets may well be supernatural; or, as in Lewis's space trilogy, they may be in a closer context, or at least a differing relationship, with the spiritual elements which, as Lewis notes, are necessary to produce the real "otherness" for a good science fiction or fantasy tale of other worlds. Likewise, fantasy and science fiction may provide the last possible arenas in which it is possible for deeds in battle to be heroic. Furthermore, the fate of a

tribe, nation, planet, or entire universe often depends upon the actions of the hero in science fiction, so this places it well within the epic tradition. Its subject is usually a struggle for something that symbolizes not only a value of a culture but of all humanity--usually concerning what it means to be truly human in the best sense of true goodness--to be hnau, as Ransom learns on Malacandra.

ENDNOTES

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³John Aquino, Science Fiction as Literature (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1976), p. 10.

⁴Aquino, p. 10.

⁵Aquino, p. 12.

⁶Aquino, p. 11.

⁷"Foreword," Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, ed. Robert Holdstock (Baltimore, MD: Octopus Books, Ltd., 1978), p. 6.

⁸Asimov, p. 7.

⁹"Introduction," The Left Hand of Darkness (New York: Ace Books, 1969), p. i.

¹⁰LeGuin, p. ii.

¹¹Amis, p. 15.

¹²Mark Rose, ed., Science Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), pp. 5-6.

¹³Brian Aldiss and Isaac Asimov also agree in classifying Frankenstein as the first true science fiction. For a revealing discussion of science fiction's origins and characteristics, see C. S. Lewis, "On Science Fiction," Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1966), pp. 59-73.

¹⁴"Introduction," Frankenstein.

¹⁵Robert Holdstock, "Locations," Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, ed. Robert Holdstock (Baltimore, MD: Octopus Books, Ltd., 1978), p. 11.

- ¹⁶Holdstock, p. 10.
- ¹⁷C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1966), p. 59.
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- ²¹Pamela Sargent, More Women of Wonder: Science Fiction Novelettes by Women about Women (New York: Vintage, 1976), pp. xi-xii.
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- ²³Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), pp. 134-135.
- ²⁴Malcolm Edwards, "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, ed. Robert Holdstock (Baltimore, MD: Octopus Books, Ltd., 1978), p. 189.
- ²⁵Amis, p. 7.
- ²⁶Rose, p. 2.
- ²⁷The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1974-1975 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 28-29.
- ²⁸Frye, p. 30.
- ²⁹Frye, p. 61.
- ³⁰C. S. Lewis, Out of the Silent Planet (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 56.
- ³¹C. S. Lewis, The World's Last Night and Other Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, c1952; c1960), pp. 88-89.
- ³²C. M. Bowra, Heroic Poetry (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 47.
- ³³Rose, p. 3.
- ³⁴Rose, pp. 3-5.
- ³⁵Rose, p. 4.
- ³⁶The Language of the Night, Ed. and Intro. Susan Wood (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1979), pp. 57-58.

³⁷Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1955), pp. 35-36.

³⁸Roger Lancelyn Green, C. S. Lewis: A Biography by Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, 1st Am. ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1974), p. 26.

³⁹Walter Hooper, ed. Of Other Worlds (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1966), p. 12.

⁴⁰Hooper, p. 12.

⁴¹C. S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1958), pp. 112-113.

⁴²L'Engle, p. 54.

⁴³Lewis, Reflections, pp. 113-114.

⁴⁴C. S. Lewis, Out of the Silent Planet (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 154.

⁴⁵Richard B. Cunningham, C. S. Lewis: Defender of the Faith (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 145.

⁴⁶Frye, p. 5.

⁴⁷Gunnar Urang, Shadows of Heaven: Religion and Fantasy in the Writings of C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1971), p. 13.

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CHAPTER IV

PERELANDRA AS EPIC

C. S. Lewis's Perelandra uses epic to take us on a voyage to Venus which also transports us back into the opening chapters of Genesis in the Garden of Eden. John Reumann describes it as "Buck Rogers (long before our current astronauts) but with theology!"¹

Perelandra may be seen as an epic in the classical tradition, for it employs many of the classic epic conventions as illustrated in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey and as specified in Aristotle and Horace, and it includes echoes and shadows of, and references and parallels to, other epics. It is a modern Biblical epic, for it inherits and follows and adapts epic traditions and conventions to the prose novel format, while Biblical motifs provide the basis for the plot, place its universal significance and its creation-wide scope, and set the epic theme of the battle of good versus evil from the Biblical, Christian point of view.

An epic is a long narrative poem on a great and serious subject, related in an elevated style. Perelandra is a long narrative, but in prose rather than poetry, as are many modern inheritors of the epic tradition (see Table I). Whereas earlier epics display a struggle for what is in the last analysis a temporal or worldly end, such as the conquest of Troy and the recapture of Helen, the return home from the war and the restoration of Odysseus' rule in Ithaca, the founding of Rome, or even the capture of Jerusalem, Dante and Spenser and Milton display struggles between

good and evil as Biblically defined and discovery of ultimate spiritual goodness. For them, heroism is goodness, and Lewis' Perelandra is in this tradition, for Lewis thought courage to be requisite to all Christian virtues, so this is certainly a serious subject. Though since Italian epic it has perhaps not been necessary for epic to be written in an elevated style, nonetheless, Lewis employs a hierarchical kind of decorum, for the King and Queen speak in an elevated style, as do the Oyarsu. The epic as a whole is not written in an elevated style. Its style more closely resembles the diction of Homer or the more flexible, easy, and normal style of Paradise Regained appropriate to the stress upon the human side of Jesus in his temptations. But when recording the experiences on the holy mountain at the story's end, Lewis shifts to a ritualistic, elevated style. What Lewis said of Milton's Paradise Lost applies here:

"The grandeur which the poet assumes . . . makes his epic a rite so that we may share it; the more ritual it becomes, the more we are elevated to the rank of participants. . . . We are summoned not to hear what one particular man thought and felt . . . , but to take part, under his leadership, in a great mimetic dance of all Christendom, ourselves soaring . . . Heaven, ourselves enacting . . . Paradise."² Such epic poetry produces in the reader, Lewis says, "joy or exhilaration . . . an overplus of robust and tranquil well-being in a total experience which contains both rapturous and painful elements."³

The epic hero is a figure of great national or even cosmic importance. In the Gilgamesh, he is a great king; in the Iliad, Achilles, the son of a goddess, Thetis, and the greatest of the Greek warriors; in the Odyssey, Odysseus, a great Greek warrior, King of Ithaca, and "a man who was never at a loss"; in Virgil's Aeneid, Aeneas, the legendary founder

of the Roman race, son of the goddess Venus. In Paradise Lost, Milton's epic heroes Adam and Eve represent the entire human race, and in Paradise Regained the hero, Jesus, is both God and Man. Blake's primal hero is the "universal man" Albion, who, before his fall, incorporates man and god and the cosmos itself. In contrast, in Perelandra, the hero is Elwin Ransom, a university professor, a philologist, of no particular importance as far as the world can see, but this is exactly Lewis' point: in Christian philosophy, each individual is a person of immense worth, of a high position just because he is a child of God, and his life is thus a great and serious subject. In Christianity, each individual is of a high position, godlike in stature, first, in Creation wherein all are created by God in His own image and thus of extreme importance, and second, in the Incarnation wherein God became human and thus raised the stature of humanity, and third, in the Atonement which allows man to become a son of God if he will only accept Christ's gift--to become no longer just a created creature of God, but, as Lewis puts it, by contagion, a son and heir. Moreover, the ordinary Christian hero is of a high position in another way: he is eternal. Lewis explains: "Christianity asserts that every individual human being is going to live for ever. . . . If individuals live only seventy years, then a state, or a nation, or a civilization, which may last for a thousand years, is more important than an individual. But if Christianity is true, then the individual is not only more important but incomparably more important, for he is everlasting and the life of a state or a civilisation, compared with his, is only a moment."⁴

Prior epic heroes were frequently both human and divine--as, for example, Achilles or Aeneas or Jesus in Paradise Regained. However, since Jesus closed the gap between God and man through the Incarnation, and

since the Holy Spirit dwells within each, the "ordinary" Christian hero can now exist. As Ransom says, "Don't imagine I've been selected to go to Perelandra because I'm anyone in particular."⁵ And he tells Lewis that the Bible makes it clear that "quite ordinary people" might be chosen to fight for God at any time. This ordinariness emphasizes the importance of each individual Christian.

However, Perelandra's hero does embody the ideals of a particular culture--the European, and even, in the overview, those of the planet Earth, but more importantly, he embodies the ideals of Christianity. And as Maleldil's representative he is a hero of cosmic importance, representing the entire human race, upon whose actions depend the fates of the Green Lady, the planet Perelandra, perhaps even that of the inhabitants of Earth. Lewis, the character in the novel, says that Ransom was "getting more and more involved in what I can only describe as inter-planetary politics" (p. 10), for Ransom is involved in the cosmic war between the ultimate forces of good and evil. Ransom may well be thought of as one in a higher position for another reason also: he has been on another planet. As Lewis says, "Who could imagine that a little farther on in that quiet landscape I should meet and shake by the hand a man who had lived and eaten and drunk in a world forty million miles distant from London, who had seen this Earth from where it looks like a mere point of green fire, and who had spoken face to face with a creature whose life began before our own planet was inhabitable?" (p. 9). Although Ransom has a special "order" from Maleldil delivered by the Oyarsa of Malacandra eldil (parallel to an archangel), this constitutes no higher position, because Ransom emphasizes the point that anyone, i.e., any Christian, might at any time be called upon to do battle with the forces of evil; indeed,

he supposes that we are regularly so called, and he doubts if his call to serve is any "odder than what all of us have to do every day" (p. 24). Ransom had no sooner decided "that he would certainly try to kill the Un-man to-morrow than the doing of it appeared to him a smaller matter than he had supposed. He could hardly remember why he had accused himself of megalomania when the idea first occurred to him. It was true that if he left it undone, Maleldil Himself would do some greater thing instead. In that sense, he stood for Maleldil: but no more than Eve would have stood for Him by simply not eating the apple, or than any man stands for Him in doing any good action" (p. 150). So we see that C. S. Lewis differs from epic expectations for his hero for the purpose of emphasizing the Christian "high position" of each individual.

In attempting to classify mankind, some early Greek philosophers gave a special place of honor to those who live for action and for the honor which comes from it, those whom they believed to be moved by a self-assertive principle in the human soul, an element distinguished from the appetites and from reason, which realizes itself in brave doings. They believed the life of action superior to the pursuit of profit or the gratification of the senses, and that one who seeks honor is honorable.⁶ Lewis's hero lacks the emphasis on seeking glory which is not now considered a noble goal, but, moved by the obedience to Maleldil, lives a life of action rather than one of pursuit of profit or sensory gratification, and his soul realizes itself in brave doings--but with a twist, due to the Christian perception. Just as there is more than one kind of human excellence, so there is more than one kind of hero. Homer's heroes performed great deeds because of an ideal of manhood; in his short span of life, Achilles had to do all he could to win honor so that he would be

remembered, but in the Aeneid Virgil presented a new ideal of heroism--a man motivated by pietas, shown less in battle than in the defeat of his own weaknesses. Perhaps Ransom may be said to be a new kind of epic hero, incorporating Homer's ideal of manhood and great actions, Virgil's virtus of conquering inner weaknesses, and going beyond both ideals to Tasso's Christian belief that what counts most is the end for which heroic actions are undertaken, and that the good will be rewarded after death even if they may not be rewarded with earthly victory. As he prepares for battle, Ransom muses on his death and reward after death: "Altogether he thought better of himself as a human animal than he had done before. He felt pretty certain that he would never again wield an unmaimed body until a greater morning came for the whole universe, and . . . 'When I wake up after Thy image, I shall be satisfied,' he said" (p. 151). Like Milton's Christ of Paradise Lost, Ransom may be a new kind of hero with cosmic importance even though he begins as an ordinary person in a cottage near a village no bigger than Bethlehem.

The heroic is an ideal which its adherents must be prepared to make any sacrifice for. What counts in the highest estimate of a hero in all the epics is not so much the power to destroy, to win battles, as readiness to sacrifice for the ideal, even to die for it. A prime example of this is the old king Beowulf as he fights the dragon, and, of course, does die for insisting upon doing the honorable thing. Even in the Iliad, many brave warriors on both sides were remarkable in their fighting power, but it is because Achilles is ready to yield to the prophesied early death which would be the price of his glory that he is so highly honored above the others. As a matter of fact, in Homer man's mortality increases his grandeur. (Bowra notes that the Greeks thought Achilles a greater

hero than Odysseus, because he dies young in battle, while Odysseus, after all his adventures will die among a contented people from a gentle death which comes from the sea.)⁷ Ransom is ready to make any sacrifice for his ideal; as he sees what must be done, it is even worse: "On the physical plane it was . . . both unarmed save for fists and teeth and nails. At the thought of these details, terror and disgust overcame him. To kill the thing with such weapons . . . would be a nightmare; to be killed--who knew how slowly?--was more than he could face" (p. 146). Yet he knows that he will do this. Though he puts it as "He was faced with the impossible. This he must do: this he could not do" (p. 146), he knew that he would do what he must: "The thing was going to be done. There was going to arrive, in the course of time, a moment at which he would have done it. The future act stood there, fixed and unaltered as if he had already performed it" (p. 149). But not only is Ransom ready to die in battle, he is certain he will do so: "That he would be killed he felt certain" (p. 146). And at this moment, a flash of humor shows through the horror and serves to intensify for the reader the extremity of the sacrifice Ransom is prepared to make: "'When,' he asked, 'did I ever win a fight in all my life?'" (p. 146). This oddity--that real things do depend upon frail individuals and that each must use the talents and do the tasks he has been given--is repeatedly emphasized in epic. Furthermore, every hero and heroine in the Bible does more than it would have seemed possible to do. In Lewis's Narnia Chronicles, Aslan, who could have decimated the place with his roar, calls on the giant to free himself and the animals, that is, to use his particular talents: "Giant Rumblebuffin, just let us out of this, will you?"⁸ And he has each animal use the particular talents it has--those with good noses must do the tracking, those with

speed must run, etc. And in the battle in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Peter and Edmund fight in the great battle as though the entire outcome depends upon them, for at that point it does. And after the battle Lucy must use the phial of cordial she has been given to heal the wounded: it must be Lucy, and she must be quick about it. Just so, it must be Ransom who fights Satan in Weston's body, and the outcome does depend upon it. As L'Engle has noted, "In a very real sense not one of us is qualified, but it seems that God continually chooses the most unqualified to do his work, to bear his glory. If we are qualified, we tend to think that we have done the job ourselves. If we are forced to accept our evident lack of qualification, then there's no danger that we will confuse God's work with our own, or God's glory with our own."⁹

Ransom's flash of humor concerning his ineptness as a fighter serves to illustrate another aspect of the epic hero. Though much of the interest in the hero lies in what happens to him in his adventures, there is also interest in his character and personality, i.e., in what he is as well as in what he does. The fate of Gilgamesh or Achilles or Odysseus or Beowulf or Roland or Adam is not just the fate of an abstract Everyman, though, of course, they do represent each of us, but also the fate of an individual who is both admired for his prowess (both physical and spiritual) and for himself. And this is a major point in the unique Christian emphasis upon individual worth in Perelandra.

Some Greek philosophers believed that Greek history contained a heroic age when the dominant type of man was the epic hero--"superior beings who sought and deserved honor."¹⁰ They looked to Hesiod for proof, for in his analysis of the ages of humanity, Hesiod places an age of heroes who fought at Thebes and at Troy between the bronze and iron ages:

Again on the bountiful earth by heaven was sent
 A worthier race; on righteous deeds they were bent,
 Divine, heroic--as demigods they are known,
 And the boundless earth had their race before our own.¹¹

Surely Lewis is thinking of the Christian fulfillment of this concept with each Christian becoming a son of God bent on righteous deeds.

Another aspect of the epic hero is that the unprecedented deeds, battles, explorations, etc. which the hero undertakes are necessarily lonely courses; the deed is the hero's task because of who he is: he must do it if he is to be heroic and if he is to be true to his own nature, but even when others are with him, he alone must do the necessary heroic task. As Kathleen Williams has noted, "Even for the strongest and best of them the quest is not easy . . . ; it is a matter of doing what seems to be (but frequently is not) best, fighting unknown enemies and following unknown paths which as often as not [may] end in the dark in a forest full of . . . lurking beasts" or in death.¹²

Another important thing from the beginning of the epic, as Elizabeth Sewall has noted, is that the hero is identified with his people: "He is his people in some sense. What are Gilgamesh or Beowulf or Dante or Adam doing if they are not carrying us forward with them, exploring and struggling and suffering, out in advance of us but one with us still."¹³ The same is true of other epic heroes. It is true of Aeneas who represents not only his immediate followers, but also all the future persons of his race. Anthropologist G. R. Levy, writing on epic, illustrates the way the hero represents his people and, indeed, all people: "Thither he drove the spear, and Hector fell in the dust. Then you and I and all of us fell down. . . . In this climax, unlike the earlier duels, the two heroes have drawn into themselves the whole fate of camp and city."¹⁴ Williams

says, "Guyon or Arthur or Britomart, trying to make sense of the persons and situations they encounter (for in this their quests consist) are our representatives, for they are not in themselves [only] virtues but specialized versions of ourselves, acting out through their stories that aspect of human nature with which their own area of the poem is concerned."¹⁵ These things are certainly true in Perelandra's hero, Ransom. He is even sent to another planet to fulfill his heroic task, sent alone and unarmed. And he represents all the inhabitants of Earth as well as all Christians.

As a somewhat subversive form, the epic calls into question the values of past epic communities and cultures, until with Paradise Regained the purpose of Jesus's struggle is to avoid the things early epic heroes committed their lives to, such as Achilles having to fight the Trojan War, Aeneas having to struggle to found the Roman Empire, and to fulfill the spiritual quests of Christian epic heroes such as Dante or Arthur in Faerie Queene. Whereas each of the epic heroes chronologically "later" than the fall is responsible for one all-important task, Jesus's task is to demonstrate the possibility of "repairing the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright." (In reality, that has always been the overriding purpose of epic, to be achieved through the education of the hero and the reader.) Now the regaining of Paradise becomes the explicit goal, not to achieve a Paradise per se, but to restore a right relationship with God which will, of course, be Paradise within, and the heroic task is to be a subversive effort undertaken against the worldly kingdom of Satan in the fallen world. As Lewis further shows in Perelandra, this restoration of a right relationship with God has become the epic task of each individual. Also, as Lewis shows in Perelandra, no

Christian individual can sit back and assume that all the battles either have already been fought by Jesus or will be fought by Him, so that the individual has only to wait blissfully assured that all will be well. Ransom realizes that if he does not provide the ransom, another will, but it is his epic task to do so. Heroism and heroic tasks are still required! Ransom told Lewis that "any of us might have to fight either" physically or spiritually, for Ransom sees this as a new phase in the war: "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 cosmic 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" (p. 24). While Ransom shows that one must trust God in faith for the outcome, in Mere Christianity, Lewis says that "handing everything over to Christ does not, of course, mean that you stop trying. To trust Him means, of course, trying to do all that He says. . . . Thus if you have really handed yourself over to Him, it must follow that you are trying to obey Him. But trying in a new way, a less worried way. Not doing these things in order to be saved, but because He has begun to save you already. Not hoping to get to Heaven as a reward for your actions, but inevitably wanting to act in a certain way because a first faint gleam of Heaven is already inside you."¹⁶ Lewis summarized the issue of obedience and freewill: "I may repeat 'Do as you would be done by' till I am black in the face, but I cannot really carry it out till I love my neighbor as myself: and I cannot learn to love my

neighbor as myself till I learn to love God: and I cannot learn to love God except by learning to obey Him."¹⁷

This surrender which brings freedom has to do with love. So does following Christ. So does the Bible. As the psalmist sings, "God loves every man. . . . He calls all the stars by name." And He loves us because we are, not because we are heroes. Just as I love my children not because they are good or loving or lovable (sometimes they are not), but because they are my children, God loves us because we are His children.

And another Christian paradox is that we can be humble only when we know that we are God's children, of infinite value, and eternally loved. The root word of humble and human is the same: humus, earth. We are dust. We are created. It is God who made us and not we ourselves. The paradox that it is only when we surrender our wills to God that we can be free is closely related to that other paradox that this joining with God is what makes us truly individuals. Lewis explains this in the same terms St. Paul used--that is, we are all members of the same body: "Christianity thinks of human individuals not as mere members of a group or items in a list, but as organs in a body--different from one another and each contributing what no other could."¹⁸ (See I Corinthians 10:17.)

Moreover, the more abundant life which Jesus offers promises no bed of roses, no fringe benefits or early retirement plans; it does not promise the absence of pain or trouble, or love which is not vulnerable and open to hurt. As the King says, "He gave me no assurance. No fixed land. Always one must throw oneself into the wave" (p. 210). The Christian hero is one who dares to open himself to that truth which would make us free. Free to listen to angels. Free to walk across the water when Jesus calls. Free to answer God's call to our heroic task no matter what

the result. Epic heroism is still required. More than ever, consideration of the epic hero verifies what Bowra has said of epic: "It gives a special pleasure because its events and persons enhance our belief in the worth of human achievement and in the dignity and nobility of man."¹⁹

The setting of an epic should be vast in scope, and may even be worldwide or even larger. Gilgamesh traveled past the "known" world to the wild forest of the giant, Humbaba, and to the land of the dead across the sea. Odysseus wandered over the entire known world (the Mediterranean basin) and in Book XI, he descends into the underworld. Aeneas traveled the Mediterranean area from Troy to what became Rome. The scope of Paradise Lost is cosmic, for it includes heaven, earth, and hell. Following Paradise Lost, the setting of Perelandra is vast in scope, including earth, heaven or space, and Perelandra or Venus. It is vast in time also with the beatific vision of the entire cosmic dance of eternity at the end. This is also a following of Paradise Lost which took us from the dawn of creation through the end of time in its prophecies.

Epic action involves heroic deeds in battle, such as the Trojan War, or a long and arduous journey intrepidly accomplished, such as the wanderings of Odysseus on the way to his homeland after the Trojan War or the journey of Aeneas to found a new Troy. Paradise Lost includes the war in Heaven, Satan's journey to find the newly created world, and his audacious attempt to foil, or at least to inconvenience and irritate, God by corrupting mankind. Gilgamesh, the oldest epic extant, includes fighting the evil giant, Humbaba, and Enkidu defeating the Bull of Heaven, as well as Gilgamesh's trip to the land of the dead. Beowulf, of course, kills the monster Grendel and Grendel's mother, as well as a dragon in his own homeland when he is old. The Divine Comedy is based on the journey Dante

takes through Hell, the Inferno, Purgatory, and Paradise. The Faerie Queene is filled with many intrepid journeys in the form of quests and many superhuman deeds in battle. In Perelandra, Ransom journeys to and from the planet Venus (Perelandra) as well as doing battle with the Bent Eldil's own representative in the Un-man.

In epic, the gods and other supernatural beings take an active part in the great actions, sometimes aiding the hero, as Athena does Odysseus, and sometimes hindering him, as Poseidon does Odysseus. In Perelandra, the eldila are supernatural beings who take part in the actions--both the good eldils such as the Oyarsa of Malacandra (Mars) who inspires and assists Ransom and the bent ones of Earth who nearly dissuade Lewis from going to assist Ransom. The eldila are described at length, both in Perelandra and in Out of the Silent Planet, but a briefline or two will clearly establish them as supernatural beings, at least to earth: "The eldila are very different from any planetary creatures. . . . They do not eat, breed, breathe, or suffer natural death. . . . They themselves regard space (or 'Deep Heaven') as their true habitat" (p. 9). The eldila take Ransom (by an obviously supernatural method) to Venus. Furthermore, as Lewis is being inwardly tormented and arguing with himself, the hostile eldila are using and working through him as in the Iliad and the Odyssey the gods and goddesses used and worked through the characters.

Though it sometimes seems that the gods and goddesses are deceptive, Homer's gods and goddesses make their heroes more truly themselves and therefore more heroic. Bowra notes that "Homer's gods . . . are powers of the spirit, influences and impulses which a modern psychology might ascribe to a man's nature but which the Greeks not unwisely saw as external and independent influences coming from another order of being. As such

they may complete a man's natural and human gifts."²⁰ This may be compared to C. S. Lewis's concept that the more we yield ourselves totally to God's will, the more we become truly individual. And, of course, in his *eldila* and in the guidance from Maleldil, he shows his characters as being influenced by "another order of being."

When Athene appears to Achilles alone and persuades him not to use his sword in his argument over Briseus with Agamemnon, she is really only strengthening what good sense already lay in his nature. Or when Achilles' goddess mother, Thetis, urged him to allow Priam to ransom Hector's body, she does no more than strengthen his real goodness and greatness. Conversely, when the gods or goddesses decree a destiny for man, this is the pathos of the epic. For example, when Helen yielded to Paris, it was not of her own choice, but because she is the victim of a goddess who has mercilessly chosen her as a bribe for Paris if he would choose her in the beauty contest. And when Athene tricks Hector into rushing into battle thinking his brother Deiphobus is beside him, then returns Achilles' spear when Hector and Achilles meet, Hector realizes that his doom is sealed. But nonetheless, there is something in the nature of Helen which makes her the victim of Aphrodite--her fear of the loss of Aphrodite's favor, or her essentially passive kind of femininity, perhaps, just as there is something in Hector which makes him rush into battle, and he makes no attempt to escape his fate at this point, but stays to die, albeit heroically.²¹ Certainly Lewis makes it clear that evil cannot, in Christian belief, take over anyone unless the person allows it; the story makes it clear that Weston has allowed himself to be taken over by evil. As Ransom is realizing that he must physically fight the Un-man, he realizes that the Enemy had to have a body in which to work; it had entered Weston's

body which provided its only foothold on Perelandra "at Weston's own invitation, and without such invitation could enter no other. Ransom remembered that the unclean spirits, in the Bible, had a horror of being cast out into the 'deep.'" (This is a reference to Luke 8:26-33, and especially verse 31: "And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.")

Epic may either appear in the early stages of nationalism or cultural cohesiveness and consciousness or at the end of an era in an attempt to revive values, beliefs, and virtues of past times. The latter view seems internally obvious in Beowulf with its strong emphasis upon loyalty as the major virtue--loyalty to one's leaders by the people and especially by the heroes, and loyalty and generosity to one's people by the king. This virtue is shown as being eroded in Beowulf's last battle, with the dragon, for his men (except for Wiglaf) will not come to his aid and loyally help him slay the beast, so Beowulf dies in killing the dragon. The people have to pay the price for their lack of loyalty, for they will know hardship and fear and raids by neighboring kingdoms now that their king is dead. In the Aeneid, Virgil seems to be writing at a time when he is harking back to earlier attitudes concerning the gods in order to revive those attitudes and solidify national feeling. Such an attitude of attempting to revive old virtues and attitudes at the end of an era is even more obvious in more recent epics such as Wordsworth's The Prelude. Nonetheless, such is the case for Perelandra in at least one way. Lewis is writing from a universally Christian point of view at a time when universal acceptance of Christian tenets, and even universal agreement upon those basic tenets among Christians, is in the process of being lost. Lewis was very much aware of the skeptical nature of his readership.

However, from another viewpoint, Perelandra did appear in the early stages of a cultural consciousness--that even overriding mere nationalistic viewpoints--i.e., the consciousness of the Earth as man's home. Written during World War II while German buzz bombs initiated the technology of rocketry later to lead man into the space age, Perelandra thus appears in the early stages of a planetary consciousness.

Besides meeting the above definitive characteristics, Western epic also employs accepted conventions modeled after the works of Homer, and then later those of Virgil. Lewis, like Milton before him, uses the traditional devices of epic, and his use of the conventions makes Perelandra a Biblical prose epic rather than "just" a space-epic science fiction tale.

The epic narrator customarily begins by stating his argument or theme. Rather than proclaiming "to the world the deeds of Gilgamesh," as in Gilgamesh; or "the wrath of Achilles" or "the story of a man, one who was never at a loss," as did Homer; rather than singing "of arms and the man" as Virgil in the Aeneid, Lewis sings of obedience and the Christian, represented by Elwin Ransom. As Lewis (the character) is being assaulted by the Tellurian eldila to prevent him from getting to Ransom's cottage, part of the theme of Perelandra is revealed: the interplanetary battle that is already in progress with Earth's eldila "at war both with us [man] and with the eldils of 'Deep Heaven' or 'space'" (p. 12), that is, there is a battle of good versus evil being waged. Perelandra is also following Paradise Lost, for which Milton states that his theme is "to justify the ways of God to man." Though Lewis does not clearly state his argument, but eases into the theme and the conflict between freewill and obedience in the characters of Lewis, Ransom, and the Green Lady, and

in the battle between Ransom and the Un-man, he deals with Homer's, Virgil's and Milton's themes--the wrath of the Bent Eldil and of the Un-man in Weston, "arms and the man" of Ransom, and justifying the ways of God to man in the retelling of the temptation of the Garden of Eden.

C. S. Lewis's Perelandra does not have an invocation to the muse as such, but we may paraphrase of him what he said of Spenser: "The invocation of the Muse hardly seems to be a [necessary] convention. . . . We feel that his poetry has really tapped sources not easily accessible to discursive thought. He makes imaginable inner realities so vast and simple that they ordinarily escape us as the largely printed names of continents escape us on the map--too big for our notice, too visible for sight."²² We may further paraphrase: "His work is one, like a growing thing, a tree; like the world-ash-tree itself, with branches reaching to heaven and roots to hell . . . and between these two extremes comes all the multiplicity of human life,"²³ transmuted but not falsified by the genre of a science fiction prose epic. Rather than a muse to inspire him in his great undertaking, the narrator--given as a character named Lewis--has Ransom and Ransom's telling of his story as inspiration. Moreover, as Ransom is wondering at the appearance of the Oyarsu of Malacandra and Perelandra as the mythical figures of Mars and Venus, they tell him, "There is an environment of minds as well as of space," and that "The universe is one," which is why he (and Earth) knows of Mars and Venus. Furthermore, because of this, "The Muse is a real thing. A faint breath, as Virgil says, reaches even the late generations" (p. 201). Thus near the end of the epic we have a kind of transposition of the invocation of the Muse, strengthened by reference to Virgil.

After stating his argument or theme and invoking the muse, an epic narrator usually addresses to the muse his epic question, the answer to which starts the narrative proper. The epic question is implied from book one of the space trilogy and from Perelandra: why is earth in the throes of war and troubles, and what is man's responsibility in this cosmic struggle between good and evil? Perhaps in the recognition that it is Satan, the Bent Eldil, who started the war, we have echoes of the epic question asked in Homer's Iliad and Virgil's Aeneid and even in Homer's Odyssey as to which god or goddess has caused the problem. In answer, the Iliad, for example, states "It was Apollo" who made Achilles and Agamemnon quarrel, and the Aeneid says it was "the brooding anger of Juno" which caused her to harry Aeneas, "a man Renowned for piety, through much toils, such a cycle of calamity."²⁴ The Odyssey has Zeus explain that the reason Odysseus is having so many troubles and cannot return to Ithaca is that "Poseidon Earthholder bears him unrelenting hatred."²⁵ In Lewis's space trilogy it was the Bent Eldil, Satan, who caused the cosmic war in Heaven and who caused the Earth to be shut away from the rest of the planets as a sort of containment area for Satan and his followers who are in power on Earth, thus causing Earth to be the "silent" planet.

Perelandra follows epic convention by beginning with in medias res with the Earth held by eldila "hostile to man." Ransom explained to Lewis that Earth is "in a state of siege, . . . in fact, an enemy-occupied territory, held down by eldils who were at war both with us and with the eldils of 'Deep Heaven,' or 'space'" (p. 12). And this universe-wide battle of the supernaturals has been going on for an unspecified time, even longer than the Trojan War, and is now taking a new turn--as was the battle of the Danes against Grendel with the appearance of Beowulf, and as

was the Trojan War with the quarrel between King Agamemnon and Achilles. Now for the first time "eldila of a better kind [the heavenly eldila] had at last broken the frontier . . . at the Moon's orbit" and begun to visit Earth (p. 12). Also, when Ransom explains to Lewis that he is being sent to Perelandra, he adds: "If you remember, before I left Malacandra the Oyarsa hinted to me that my going there at all might be the beginning of a whole new phase in the life of the Solar System--the Field of Arbol. It might mean, he said, that the isolation of our world, the siege, was beginning to draw to an end" (pp. 22-23), as was the siege of Troy in the Iliad, though not, we hope, with similar results for Earth. Thus, Perelandra starts in medias res with the battle at a turning point and with Ransom already preparing to go on his mission to Perelandra.

Just as Paradise Lost opens with the fallen angels cast into hell, gathering their forces and determining upon revenge, Perelandra starts at a turning point in the battle with the bent eldils attempting to corrupt the new race beginning on Perelandra. And just as it is not until Books V through VII that the angel Raphael relates to Adam the events in Heaven which led to the fall of Satan and his followers, so in Perelandra it is not until Chapter 11 that Ransom discovers why he is being sent to Perelandra.

Lewis's epic is not divided into books and cantos but into chapters, so here he is following the conventions of science fiction rather than those of epic.

Once again arising because epic patterns itself after Homer, there are customarily catalogs: long lists of principal characters, warriors, ships, weapons, etc., often introduced in formal detail, as in Milton's list of the procession of fallen angels in Book I of Paradise Lost,

Virgil's listing of the Italians, or Vida's listing of the tribes of Israel. Homer is very thorough in this listing; from the Iliad, for example, though he says he "could not name or even count" the "rank and file that came to Ilium," he does name the captains and chieftains of the Danaans: "Here then are the captains of the fleet, and here are the ships from first to last. First the Boeotians . . .," and seven pages of this listing follow.²⁶ And when he finishes that catalog, he starts on one of "all the men and horses that crossed with the Atreidae," including pedigrees and descriptions for men and horses: "Of the horses, the best by far were those of Admetus, which his son Eumelus drove. Swift as birds, they were alike in coat and age, and were matched to a plumb-line all along their backs. Both were mares and had been reared in Peraea by Apollo of the Silver Bow to carry panic through the ranks. Of the men, Telemonian Aias was by far the best. . . ."²⁷ Perhaps this description of so many was one way of Homer increasing his audience's appreciation since his aristocratic hearers might trace their ancestry back to one of the heroes thus named. Perhaps also it added to the sense of human dignity to have so many heroes. In contrast to this, C. S. Lewis has one lone man to do battle for the forces of Maleldil. Furthermore, this lone man's lack of ancestry is significant. Another way in which Lewis's epic rejects values of previous epics is that the new hero need be "aristocratic" only in that he is a child of God; human ancestry is unimportant. But Lewis does include two catalogs; the catalog of the animals, Oyarsu, and beings on the holy mountain is much in the epic traditional manner: a rather ritualistic listing and description of the beings, but a more light-hearted description of the animals as they arrive: "They came mostly in their pairs, male and female together, fawning upon one another's

bellies, perching upon one another's backs. Flaming plumage, gilded beaks, glossy flanks, liquid eyes, great red caverns of whinneying or of bleating mouths, and thickets of switching tails, surrounded him on every side" (p. 203). The other catalog in Lewis's epic is the list of Weston's things as he disembarks in his shirt and shorts and pith helmet; and perhaps as Lewis continues the catalog of Weston's paraphernalia, all needless on Perelandra, he is employing the mock epic technique of using an epic convention when speaking of a trivial matter in order to emphasize its ridiculous nature in the manner of The Rape of the Lock.

Similar to the catalogs of epic are the descriptions of weapons or armor, especially of such aspects as their physical appearance, magical powers, history, etc., usually emphasizing their fitness for use in the heroic task, such as Telemachos's spear in the Odyssey which is referred to as "the good spear that fitted his grip so well." Or perhaps Achilles' "ashen spear" or the "long-shadowed javelin" mentioned in the Iliad which is also referred to as "wind-fed" even when resting in a warrior's hand, so that, as E. V. Rieu has so appropriately noted, "it looks back to the time when its shaft was part of an ash-tree on the windswept mountain-side, or else forward to the moment when it is going to hurtle through the air."²⁸ The epic shield, especially, is a work of art which tells an important message of its own--often information about the heroic task or the character of the owner. In Paradise Lost, for example, Satan's shield

Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose Orb
Through Optic Glass the Tuscan artist views
At Ev'ning from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new Lands
Rivers or mountains in her spotty Globe.
(PL 1.287-91)

Satan's shield thus shows his greatness in that it is like the moon, and diminishes him in that it is acted upon as though being viewed through

Galileo's telescope and in that it is described by analogy as "spotty." There may also be a suggestion of the instability of the moon and its phases. A description of the new set of armor Hephaestus made for Achilles combines a description of the universe and the purveying of knowledge with armor and weapon description, for the shield contains images of the "Earth, Sky and Sea, the indefatigable Sun, the Moon at the full, and all the constellations with which the heavens are crowned, the Pleiads, the Hyads, the great Orion, and the Bear, nicknamed the Wain, the only constellation which never bathes in Ocean Stream, but always wheels round in the same place and looks at Orion the Hunter with a wary eye." Then the shield has "two beautiful cities full of people," and it shows all the major facets of Greek life, all aspects of war and peace, the rich and the poor, and completes it with "Finally, round the very rim of the wonderful shield he put the mighty Stream of Ocean" (*Iliad*, XVIII.480-608). The descriptions may also emphasize the invincibility and the glorious appearance of the weapon or armor, both of which were necessary for early epic heroes to remain heroes. For example, as Beowulf and his men first land and march to Hrothgar, "As they marched, The boar-head glared from their helmets, the iron ring Rang on their mailcoats."²⁹ Thus clad, the men appear powerful, heroic. And when Beowulf prepares to battle the monster's mother,

Then they clad him in armour: first, his mailcoat,
Hand-wrought with iron links hundred on hundred,
Strong to guard his body from the monster grip;
Next his helmet with boar's head glaring,
Plated with bands no blade could bite, sparkling
With jewels to light his watery way. . . .³⁰

Lewis's transposition of this epic convention is one of his most effective: Ransom's weapons are described, but they are fists and feet, nails and teeth! The contrast with the expected weapons of an epic hero

emphasizes even more the fearful horror of the battle. Ransom "believed he could face the Un-man with firearms: even that he could stand up unarmed and face certain death if the creature had retained Weston's revolver. But to come to grips with it, to go voluntarily into those dead yet living arms, to grapple with it, naked chest to naked chest..." (p. 147). Furthermore, Ransom has no armor: he is naked. And if there is no invincibility for Ransom, there is no glorious appearance either: "On the physical plane it was one middle-aged, sedentary body against another" (p. 146). Thus Lewis's use of this convention focuses on the unique nature of his hero's task.

Descriptions of the epic characters dressing serve much the same purpose as those of weapons and armor. This can be illustrated from the Iliad as warriors from both the Greek and Trojan camps prepare to spy on each other. In the Greek camp, they have decided to send two spies.

They said no more, but slung on their formidable arms. The veteran Thrasymedes gave Tydeides a two-edged sword, as his own had been left behind beside his ship, together with a shield. On his head he put an oxhide casque without peak or plume, of the sort called 'skull-cap,' which young gallants wear to protect their heads. Meriones gave Odysseus a bow, a quiver and a sword, and set a leather helmet on his head. Inside it there was a strong lining of interwoven straps, under which a felt cap had been sewn in. The outer rim was cunningly adorned on either side by a row of white and flashing boars' tusks. This helmet originally came from Eleon, where Autolycus stole it from Amyntor son of Ormenus by breaking into his well-built house. Autolycus gave it to Amphidamas of Cythera to take to Scandaea; and Amphidamas gave it to Molus in return for hospitality. Molus, in his turn, gave it to his son Meriones to wear, and now it was Odysseus' head that it served to protect.

Armed in this formidable manner the pair set out....
(Iliad X.257-72)

All this gear seems to suggest boldness and might.

The Trojans meanwhile were also sending out a spy, and his dressing is described: "Dolon... at once slung his curved bow on his shoulders, threw the pelt of a grey wolf over it, put a ferret-skin cap on his head,

and picking up a sharp javelin set out from the camp in the direction of the ships" (Iliad, X.333-37). This gear seems to be especially appropriate to the slinking nature of spying. Whereas Odysseus and Diomedes have volunteered to help their comrades and for the adventure, Dolon has been promised a reward, "the horses and inlaid chariot that the peerless Achilles drives," for his spying. The account of Dolon's dressing is especially important because of the sympathy and the awareness of man's mortality roused as Diomedes, having killed Dolon, "took the ferret-skin cap from his head, and stripped him also of the wolf's pelt, and his in-curved bow and long spear" (Iliad X.457-59). The dress itself has foreshadowed the probable outcome of a clash between these representatives of the two forces.

As to descriptions of the hero or characters dressing in Perelandra, the description of Weston's appearance as he arrives on Perelandra, and especially his pith helmet which is symbolic of the English white man's domination over the native populations of the world, is undoubtedly intended to be satiric. The other description of characters dressing in Perelandra is one of the temptations the Un-man tries upon the Green Lady; he fashions robes of feathers and chaplets of silver leaves and he and the Lady don them. He is attempting to teach her self consciousness and from that self worship. He even furnishes her with a mirror, and as she "looked into it in silence for the better part of a minute" (p. 137), we are reminded of Milton's Eve looking at herself in the pool of water. In both cases, Satan desires the alienation from the true self. So even in seemingly minor conventions of epic, Lewis furthers his theme.

Since there is only one lone hero in the battle in Perelandra, the customary epic address to the host to inspire them to heroism in battle

becomes merely Ransom's thoughts to himself: "He had all along, despite what reason told him, expected that the strength of its body would be superhuman, diabolical. He had reckoned on arms that could no more be caught and stopped than the blades of an aeroplane's propeller. But now he knew, by actual experience, that its bodily strength was merely that of Weston. . . . His former certainty of death now seemed to him ridiculous. It was a very fair match. There was no reason why he should not win--and live" (pp. 154-55). This may not seem like much of a stirring speech, but it "had altered Ransom's state of mind completely" (p. 154). Once again the suggestion of the epic device altered to fit the story serves to emphasize the unique nature of this epic battle where there "were no rules, no umpire, no spectators" (p. 155).

The Un-man is the only one who employs the epic grandiose speech. Epic warriors often shouted defiances, boastings, challenges, and especially pedigrees across the battle lines. The exchange of pedigree assured that they would have a worthy opponent in battle, for there is more glory if the foe is of high lineage, and the boastings presumably not only built up their own ego and impressed the opponent, but also assured that they would be remembered and renowned.

Glaucus son of Hippolochus and Diomedes son of Tydeus now approached one another in the space between the two armies and offered battle. When they had come within range, Diomedes of the loud war-cry challenged the other. "Whom have we here?" he asked. "Give me your name, my good sir, if indeed you are a man. For I have never seen you till this moment in the field of honour. Yet in facing the long-shadowed spear in my hand you have shown far greater daring than any of your friends--the fathers of men who meet me in my fury are liable to weep. But if you are one of the immortals come down from the sky, I am not the man to fight against the gods of Heaven. . . . But if you are one of us mortals who plough the earth for food, come on, and you will meet your doom sooner."

"My gallant lord, Tydeides," the noble son of Hippolochus replied, "what does my lineage matter to you? Men in their

generations are like the leaves of the trees. The wind blows and one year's leaves are scattered on the ground; but the trees burst into bud and put on fresh ones when the spring comes round. In the same way one generation flourishes and another nears its end. But if you wish to hear about my family, I will tell you the tale--most people know it already. . . ." (Iliad VI.119-53)

Therewith Glaucus starts back four generations and recounts stories of his famous father and grandfathers. He ends, "Such is my pedigree; that is the blood I claim as mine" (VI.210). "Glaucus' tale delighted Diomedes of the loud war-cry. He stuck his spear in the fruitful earth, and now addressed the Lycian prince in cordial terms. 'Surely,' he said, 'your family and mine are linked by old-established ties'" (VI.211-14). He recounts how their grandfathers had been guests and friends of each other, then proposes friendship and the exchange of gifts: "But I have said enough to show that in me you will now have a good friend in the heart of Argos, and I shall have you in Lycia, if ever I visit that country. So let us avoid each other's spears, even in the mêlée, since there are plenty of the Trojans and their famous allies for me to kill, if I have the luck and speed to catch them, and plenty of Achaeans for you to slaughter, if you can. And let us exchange our armour, so that everyone may know that our grandfathers' friendship has made friends of us" (VI. 223-31). Thus this exchange of pedigrees had an unusual happy ending.

A more usual exchange is the calling of insults across battle lines in Book XIV of the Iliad:

Polydamas uttered a great yell of triumph. . . . "That," he cried, 'was another spear from the strong arm of Panthous' proud son that did not go astray, but found its home in an Argive's flesh. He can use it as a staff as he goes down to Hades' Hall."

The Argives heard his jubilation with disgust, and none resented it more than the other Aias, the doughty son of Telamon, who . . . made a swift cast with a glittering spear. . . . It was Antenor's son, Archelochus, who received the spear.

... It was Aias' turn to raise a shout... [After Aias' boasts,] Acamas bestrode Archelochus, who was his brother; and when a Boeotian called Promachus tried to drag off the body from between his legs, he brought him down with his spear. Then in insolent triumph over his victim he shouted aloud: "You Argives, who are so brave with your bows and free with your threats; don't think that troubles and disasters are reserved for us alone. We have had our losses: yours are coming. Look at your man Promachus, put to sleep by my spear, in prompt repayment for my brother's death. That is what a wise man prays for--a kinsman to survive him and avenge his fall."

The Argives were revolted by this boastful talk. The doughty Peneleos, in particular, was stung by it into action ... and it was Ilioneus who fell to King Peneleos... The heavy spear was still stuck in the eye as Peneleos raised it aloft, like a poppy-head, for the Trojans to see, and exulted over his enemy. "Trojans," he cried, "be so good as to instruct the father and mother of my lord Ilioneus to start lamenting him at home..." This made the knees of all the Trojans quake, and each man peered around to find some sanctuary from sudden death.

(Iliad XIV.452-506)

This is the kind of boasting the Un-man attempts to employ. Thus when Ransom begins the battle, the Enemy falls back and says, "But this is very foolish... Do you not know who I am?" (p. 153). "'I know what you are,' said Ransom. 'Which of them doesn't matter.'" To which the Un-man delivers his speech: "'And you think, little one,' it answered, 'that you can fight with me? You think He will help you, perhaps? Many thought that. I've known Him longer than you, little one. They all think He's going to help them--till they come to their senses screaming recantations too late in the middle of the fire, mouldering in concentration camps, writhing under saws, jibbering in mad-houses, or nailed on to crosses. Could he help Himself?'" (p. 153). Ransom has no grandiose speech to deliver in reply, for his task is to fight the Un-man, not to out-argue him.

Style is one of the major distinctions of the epic genre: an epic should be related in an elevated style, a sweeping, ritualistic or incantatory style, as Lewis himself says. The Secondary epic (anything following Virgil) aims at an even higher subject and even greater solemnity

than the Primary epic. Since Virgil introduced his emphasis on vocation, on duty, since, as Lewis says, "In making his one legend symbolical of the destiny of Rome, he has, willy-nilly, symbolized the destiny of Man," the subject for any future epic has been dictated as "explicitly religious."³¹ But in order to achieve the ritualistic style without the robes, altars, garlands, or feasts in a hall, the "sheer writing of the poem . . . must now do, of itself, what the whole occasion helped to do for Homer."³² The epic style must overcome the informality of "the privacy and informality of silent reading in a man's own study."³³

Though of course Perelandra is not related throughout in a grand and elevated style, Lewis does emulate epic style in selected portions of the novel: the account of his first encounters with the Green Lady, the temptations, both of the Green Lady and himself, and the entire passage from his exit from the underground through his climb to the holy mountain, and Lewis's style is at its most incantatory during the entire stay on the holy mountain--the passing of dominion over the planet to the King and Queen, the prophecies, the Heavenly Dance. And though the story has already informed us that Ransom makes a return trip to Earth and performs such mundane matters as taking a shower and eating porridge, the novel ends with the account of the transcendent experience on the holy mountain, so that the style also ends as true epic style.

Lewis achieves that overcoming of the reader alone--"only a private person reading a book in an armchair"--that compensation for the "informality of silent reading" which he notes that Milton overcomes with his "grandeur" or "elevation of the style" by the inclusion of epic echoes which "encourage a sweep of the reader's eye over the richness and variety" of man's and heaven's story,³⁴ and by the intense concreteness of

his description, which is more like that of Homer than perhaps any epic since. For example, he creates the sense of Eden's virgin beauty and breathless possibilities in his descriptions of Perelandra--its rainbow-filled golden sky; the floating islands that undulate with the waves; its totally black nights that cradle rather than frighten one; the differences in a Perelandran thunderstorm; the astonishing pleasures of breathing, eating, drinking; the flora, such as the delightful bubble trees; the joyful animals--the whole realization of another world.

Therefore, Perelandra does illustrate the genre in its definite adaptation of the epic style.

One of the major elements of epic style is the simile. An epic simile differs from an ordinary simile in being more involved, more ornate, and extended beyond specific parallels. Often the secondary object or vehicle is developed into an independent aesthetic object, as with the mythic references in the Faerie Queene. They serve to enhance the ceremonial quality of the epic style, to establish mood, to widen and universalize the issue, and to provide ironic juxtaposition between everyday events and objects and those of the battlefield.

For example, when Agamemnon, angry with his Greek warriors, told them to just go on home, and the troops took him at his word, Homer describes the resulting rout thus: "the whole Assembly was stirred like the waters of the Icarian Sea when a southeaster falls on them from a lowering sky and sets the great waves on the move, or like deep corn in a tumbled field bowing its ears to the onslaught of the wild West Wind" (Iliad II.145-49).

Homer also uses similes to foreshadow upcoming action, as in the humorous instance when the goddess Athene aided Menelaus: she

"strengthened his shoulders and his knees and implanted in his breast the daring of a fly, which is so fond of human blood that it returns to the attack however often a man may brush it from his face" (Iliad XVII.564-568).

Whereas Homer usually compared men to things in nature, and usually set up the comparison first, Virgil usually reverses the comparison of nature and men, and he usually waits till the last to reveal the comparison. For example, in describing how Neptune stilled the tempest, the comparison is that of a mob: "Just as so often it happens when a crowd collects, and violence Brews up, and the mass mind boils nastily over, and the next thing Firebrands and brickbats are flying (hysteria soon finds a missile), That then, if they see some man whose goodness of heart and conduct Have won their respect, they fall silent and stand still, ready to hear him; And he can change their temper and calm their thoughts with a speech: So now the crash of the seas died down, when Neptune gazed forth Over their face, and the sky cleared. . ." (Aeneid I.148-55).

Milton's similes, consciously intended to surpass any which had gone before, often incorporate Homeric or Virgilian, mythical and Biblical echoes all in one with numerous points of reference:

His Legions, Angel Forms, who lay intrans't
 Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks
 In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades
 High overarch't imbow'r; or scatter'd sedge
 Afloat, when with fierce Winds Orion arm'd
 Hath vext the Red-Sea Coast, whose waves o'erthrew
 Busiris and his Memphian Chivalry,
 While with perfidious hatred they pursu'd
 The Sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
 From the safe shore their floating Carcasses
 And broken Chariot Wheels; so thick bestrown
 Abject and lost lay these, covering the Flood.

(PL I.301-12)

In this, Milton includes three similes: first, Satan's host is likened

to the autumnal leaves strewing the brooks in Vallombrosa ("shady valley"); This also echoes Dante's spirits numberless as autumn leaves (Inferno III. 112-14); second, to scattered sedge on the Red-Sea Coast; and third, to the Egyptian (Memphian) Pharaoh's scattered regiments when they were covered over by the Red Sea while pursuing the fleeing children of Israel. Milton's piling up of comparisons here serves to emphasize the utter helplessness of the fallen angels. They are like the leaves and the sedge in terms of their incalculable numbers and of their being scattered helplessly about, and like the soldiers and charioteers caught by the waves closing upon them in their recent warlike intent, in their total defeat, in their corpse-like state floating "intrans't," in their confusion under the hand of God, and, perhaps most importantly of all, in their "lost" condition, having chosen to defy God. The Red Sea may correspond to the fiery lake upon which the fallen legions lie, and Orion arm'd to the loyal angels who have fought on God's side. The faithful and victorious angels of Heaven are also analogous to the "Sojourners of Goshen" who observe the rout of the enemy.³⁵ Thus Milton elevates the scene by echoes of Biblical history and suggestions of Virgil. Lewis points out that the logical connections which Milton puts on the surface of his similes in Paradise Lost are not as important as "the emotional connexions whereby he really manipulates our imaginations"; in fact, he says, "The likeness between the two things compared is often trivial, and is, indeed, required only to save the face of the logical censor," but the comparisons turn out to be closely bound up with the whole with "the power of action at a distance."³⁶ Lewis furnishes an example: "Paradise is compared to the field of Enna--one beautiful landscape to another (IV.268). But, of course, the deeper value of the simile lies in the resemblance which is

not explicitly noted as a resemblance at all, the fact that in both these places the young and the beautiful while gathering flowers was ravished by a dark power risen up from the underworld."³⁷

In Paradise Regained the combination of similes works to increase their force and significance:

Or as a swarm of flies in vintage time
About the wine-press where sweet must is poured,
Beat off, returns as oft with humming sound;
Or surging waves against a solid rock,
Though all to shivers dashed, the assault renew,
Vain battery, and in froth or bubbles end;
So Satan. . . .

(PR IV.15-25)

Satan is first diminished by likening him to a "swarm of flies" which annoy Jesus, who may be likened to a "wine press." Then Satan is likened to "surging waves" beating against the imperturbable "solid rock" of Jesus. Logically, the suggestion of the flies is that evil is irritation, perhaps momentary, but also persistent. (One remembers also Homer's persistent fly which "returns to the attack however often a man may brush it" away.) The waves suggest persistence also and immense, continuing power. Jesus being likened to the wine-press suggests richness being poured out, vitality, and also power, but of a kind impervious to the fly swarm. The goodness is issuing from the wine-press and the flies, unable to create their own goodness, swarm to partake of it. Jesus as the rock of course has many scriptural bases (see I Corinthians 10:4, Matthew 16:18, for example); it suggests immutability contrasting to the smashing apart of the waves.

Lewis's similes employ both Biblical and mythological references, following Milton, to widen and universalize the work, and to achieve emotional connections, but they are nearer in style to Homer's more direct comparisons and sometimes employ the combining technique of Paradise

Regained. For example, when Ransom first sees the Green Lady, he first sees just "a human form," and fears it is "an optical illusion--some chance figuration of foliage which his intense desire had assimilated to the shape of a man" (p. 52). Thus the Green Lady is likened to foliage, something of nature. His next clear view is presented with another nature simile, a rather strange one to emphasize the strangeness of the alien being: he knew the figure was not merely man-like, but a green man, but he saw it as "green like the beautifully colored green beetle in an English garden" (p. 53). Here the only logical comparison is that of the color, but likening the man to a beetle which would be normal in an English garden here only points up the alienness. The next simile employs a social referent: "Then the seas lifted his own land and the green man became a foreshortened figure far below him, like an actor seen from a gallery at Covent Garden" (p. 53); the figure is likened to an actor seen from above. The references to a familiar English garden and Covent Garden serve to emphasize the great difference in this garden and the almost unbearable strangeness of the experience. When at last Ransom is near enough to discern that the figure is a woman, the simile at once suggests Biblical referents, a Garden of Eden scene with the beasts thronging around an Eve figure, then the possibility that this was not Eden, but a mythological Circe or Alcina--both of whom changed men (especially their lovers), Circe changing them into animals, Alcina into stones and trees. "He had been expecting wonders, had been prepared for wonders, but not prepared for a goddess carved apparently out of green stone, yet alive. And then it flashed across his mind--he had not noticed it while the scene was before him--that she had been strangely accompanied. She had stood up amidst a throng of beasts and birds as a tall sapling stands among

bushes--big pigeon-coloured birds and flame-coloured birds, and dragons, and beaver-like creatures about the size of rats, and heraldic-looking fish in the sea at her feet. . . . Or another myth coming out into the world of fact--perhaps a more terrible myth, of Circe or Alcina?" (p. 54). The "flame-coloured birds, and dragons," and "heraldic-looking fish" ring suggestions of romance, of knights in faerie land; at the same time the "pigeon-coloured birds" and "beaver-like creatures" act as foils with their suggestions of terrestrial creatures pointing up the strangeness. The "green stone, yet alive" suggests old legends of living gems. She is again likened to something which is part of nature, a tall sapling standing among bushes.

Lewis continues such similes throughout, with far too many instances to enumerate, but always, as in Homer or Spenser or Milton, the simile serves to further the richness and the mood and the universality of the concept. They are, however, not always so long or so elaborate; for example, when the Green Lady laughed at him, he glanced down at himself and realized that he did present an odd sight, for one leg was white and the other "was brownish-red (like the flanks of a Titian satyr)" (p. 55). Even this brief simile puts him into the mythological setting. Other similes follow Homer in their reference to domestic or natural images of comparison: "night covered him like a blanket" (p. 44); "Sleep came like a fruit which falls into the hand almost before you have touched the stem" (p. 55). And the similes further have the effect of likening things on Perelandra to things on earth which emphasizes that this is not earth.

Ransom himself created most of the similes rather than them being put forth by the epic narrator as his own. The simile of the garden of the Hesperides finally leads Ransom to conclude that the myths of the

human race may well be facts in other worlds: "At Ransom's waking . . . he saw reality, and thought it a dream. He opened his eyes and saw a strange heraldically coloured tree loaded with yellow fruits and silver leaves. Round the base of the indigo stem was coiled a small dragon covered with scales of red gold. He recognized the garden of the Hesperides at once" (p. 45). This simile followed Virgil's practice of waiting until the end to show the comparison. In contrast, when the giant ant-like insect follows Ransom up the hole of the inner world in the mountain, Ransom describes him in terms of a train, which would be an equivalent to a commonplace, everyday comparison in Ransom's time period.

Stock epithets are another epic convention almost always employed. "Epithet" is from the Greek "epitheton" meaning "something added," and Homeric epithets are adjectival phrases, often a compound of two words, which define a special quality of a person or thing, as "fleet-footed Achilles," "bolt-hurling Zeus," "ox-eyed Hera," "white-armed Helen," "Odysseus, sacker of cities," "the rosy-fingered dawn," "the wine-dark sea," and similar terms. Lewis uses terms that may be seen as stock epithets: "the Green Lady," "the fixed lands," "the heraldically coloured fish," "the heraldically coloured tree," "the singing beast," even, perhaps, "the Un-man."

As to epic style, however, neither Milton's Paradise Lost nor Lewis's Perelandra employs the oral techniques of repetitions and stylized diction of poetry meant to be recited orally.

Another epic convention is that of the descent into the underworld where the hero learns something he could find out in no other way. This descent is often a journey to the land of the dead, but even when it is not, it may symbolize facing the fact of death. In the Gilgamesh, the

Odyssey, the Aeneid and the Divine Comedy, the trip is to the land of the dead, but in Spenser's Faerie Queene the trip symbolizes death itself for the heroes who undertake it; that is, they act out their own death and rebirth in the process of their trip. The same is true of Ransom's descent into the underworld. After having succeeded in his epic task, having cast the Un-man into the "sea of fire," reminiscent of Milton's Paradise Lost and even more of the Biblical references such as Matthew 13:41-42, which refers to the damned being cast into "a furnace of fire," or Matthew 18:8-9 or Mark 9:43-48 which refer to being cast "into hell fire," or Revelations 20:10, 14-15 with references to being cast "into the lake of fire," Ransom begins his struggle to escape from this hell-like underground. During his subterranean journey, the hell imagery increases with references to a "fire-pit," "a terrible place where clouds of steam went up for ever and ever," "torrents that roared . . . into the depth of the fire," and such like (p. 183 ff.). Then the images such as "great halls still dimly illuminated and full of unknown mineral wealth that sparkled and danced in the light and mocked his eyes" suggest the Cave of Mammon in the Faerie Queene (p. 183). The "drumming," the "pitch darkness," the "black labyrinth" suggest Theseus's journey through the labyrinth with the Cretan Minotaur, the bull/man monster of Minos (p. 184). Till finally his rebirth experience starts with a baptism which also recalls the Biblical account of man's origin from clay: "there came a moment when his feet slid without warning on clay--a wild gasp--a spasm of terror--and he was sputtering and struggling in deep, swift-flowing water" (p. 184). He is eventually "rushed out into broad daylight and air and warmth . . . and deposited, dazzled and breathless, in the shallows of a great pool" (p. 184). And if we fail to recognize this rebirth

experience, Lewis says, "Indeed, it was a second infancy in which he was breast-fed by the planet Venus herself: unweaned till he moved from that place" (p. 185) after he recovers from his ordeals and all wounds, except the heel wound.

The use of these commonly expected conventions and devices clearly reveals C. S. Lewis's Perelandra as an epic. Other devices are less uniformly employed, but still conventions of the epic genre. For example, prophecy is common to epic. Even the oldest epic, Gilgamesh, contains prophecy: "Enlil of the mountain, the father of the gods, had decreed the destiny of Gilgamesh. . . . 'Kingship, such is your destiny, everlasting life is not your destiny.'" In the Iliad Zeus prophecies and sometimes decrees the fates of men. Achilles' death has been prophesied; as Achilles tells his comrades, "My divine mother, Thetis of the Silver Feet, says that Destiny has left two courses open to me on my journey to the grave. If I stay here and play my part in the siege of Troy, there is no home-coming for me, though I shall win undying fame. But if I go home to my own country, my good name will be lost, though I shall have long life, and shall be spared an early death" (Iliad IX.409-15). Also, various seers prophesy: when the Achaeans were sacrificing at Aulis and the snake ate the eight young birds and their mother, "Calchas interpreted the omen. . . . 'Nine, then, is the number of years that we shall have to fight at Troy, and in the tenth its broad streets will be ours.'" Also, Aeneas must be rescued because he is prophesied to found Rome. In the Odyssey, Circe prophecies what will happen to Odysseus and his men on the island of Thrinacia where the herds of the Sun-god are tended: "If you leave these unharmed and attend to the business of getting home, you may reach Ithaca, although not without suffering; but if you do any damage, then I foretell destruction for ship and men. You may save your own life,

but if you do, you will reach your home late and miserable, and all your companions will be lost."³⁸ Furthermore, Telemachos's guest, the prophet Theoclymenos tells Penelopeia, "Odysseus is verily now in his native land, resting or walking, and inquiring of all these evil transactions; indeed he is, and he is planning the doom of these men."³⁹ In Book I of the Aeneid Jupiter gives a very important prophecy--that Ascanius, Aeneas's son, will be forebear to Romulus who "happily wearing the tawny skin of the wolf that nursed him, shall carry on the Roman race and build walls sacred to Mars, and call this people the Romans from his name." Virgil goes on to tie Roman lineage to the ancient Trojan line with this supposedly future prophecy. Similarly, in Dante's Divine Comedy the damned know the future, though they do not know the present. In Spenser's Faerie Queene Arthur and Guyon read both history and prophecy in the House of Alma (II.ix. 59 and 60, and Canto X). In Milton's Paradise Lost the angel Michael prophesies the future of Adam's and Eve's descendants. As in all epics from the very first, Gilgamesh, through Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost, the present action is written in such a way that it is inclusive of the shadows of both past and future, so, too, Perelandra illustrates this method. The shadows of the past are evoked through its mythic and Biblical references and its epic echoes, and the shadows of the future through its prophecies. The prophecy in Perelandra thus follows epic convention, but it also echoes the Olivet discourse of Christ.⁴⁰ The King, now called Tor, prophesies that the siege of Earth by the Bent Oyarsa, the Dark Lord of Thulcandra, will be lifted. The events leading up to this fulfillment echo Revelations--the moon shall fall into the earth, plagues and horrors cover the land, etc., "but in the end all shall be cleansed, and even the memory of your Black Oyarsa blotted out, and

your world shall be fair and sweet and reunited to the field of Arbol" (p. 212).

The provision of transport is often another epic notation. Fabulous ships, chariots, horses, and so forth are frequently described in epic. For example, the ship of the Phaeacians which King Alcinoös gave to Odysseus to take him back to Ithaca (Book XIII) is an apt precedent for Ransom's means of transport, a coffin-like box which his friends have to help him get sealed into, for which the Oyarsa of Malacandra provides clearly supernatural motive force.

Epics frequently contain the device of messages from the gods, and in this, also, Perelandra follows epic expectations, for the Oyarsa of Malacandra brings Ransom's order to go to Perelandra, and Maleldil communicates with the Green Lady and with Ransom on Perelandra.

The epitaph Ransom carved for Weston may be a kind of transposition and conflation of the funeral games common to epic, such as those at Patroclus's funeral in the Iliad. At least, there is no other funeral "celebration" in Perelandra. The epitaph for Weston emphasizes again the free will of man, for it says in part that Weston "gave up his will and reason to the Bent Eldil" (p. 188).

Various other devices and patterns are not unique to the epic genre, but are common to it, nonetheless. For example, the battle descriptions are an epic pattern rooted in Homer's graphic descriptions of blood and brains and intestines gushing from spear, javelin, or sword injuries. As a matter of fact, all epics contain battle descriptions: Gilgamesh, Iliad, Odyssey, Aeneid, Faerie Queene, Paradise Lost, etc. For example, "now this only son of hers was struck by Peneleos under the eyebrow in the socket of the eye. The spear dislodged his eyeball, pierced the socket

and came out at the nape of his neck. He sank down and stretched out both his hands. But Peneleos, drawing his sharp sword, hit him full on the neck and brought head and helmet tumbling to the ground. The heavy spear was still stuck in the eye as Peneleos raised it aloft, like a poppy-head, for the Trojans to see, and exulted over his enemy" (Iliad XIV.492-500). This exulting over the defeated enemy is another common device in epic. Hector gloats, for example, over Patroclus as he lies dying: "Patroclus, . . . you thought you would sack my town, make Trojan women slaves, and ship them off to your own country. You were a fool. In their defence, Hector's fast horses were hasting into battle; and so was Hector himself, I, Hector, finest spearman of the war-loving Trojans, who stand between them and the day of slavery. So now the vultures here are going to eat you up. Poor wretch; even the strong arm of Achilles did not save you. I can imagine all he told you when he sent you out-- and stayed behind . . .; and like a lunatic you took him at his word" (Iliad XVI.831-44). Battle descriptions are very graphic in Perelandra also: "He could hear through its open mouth the great gusts of breath that he was knocking out of it. Then its hands came up again, fingers arched like claws. It was not trying to box. It wanted to grapple. He knocked its right arm aside with a horrible shock of bone against bone and caught it a jab on the fleshy part of the chin: at the same moment its nails tore his right" (p. 154). Here there is no exulting over the enemy, however. Even when Ransom finally thinks he has killed the Un-man, "Long after the creature's struggles had ceased he did not dare to relax his grip. Even when he was quite sure that it breathed no longer he retained his seat on its chest and kept his tired hands, though now loosely, on its throat. He was nearly fainting himself, but he counted a thousand

before he would shift his posture. Even then he continued to sit on its body" (p. 172).

It is common for epics to contain monsters such as Scylla and Charybdis in the Odyssey or the Blatant Beast in the Faerie Queene. Perhaps the first one that comes to mind is the Cyclops, Polyphemus, who reverses the rules of hospitality that state one must feed guests even when they are strangers by eating Odysseus's comrades (in the Odyssey). Not even Polyphemus' fellow Cyclopians seem to like him, and he is especially loathsome when he gets so drunk he falls into a drunken stupor. But even his most horrible qualities seem to have an element of something human in them. Homer even makes us almost sympathize with Polyphemus when his eye has been put out and he affectionately asks his ram why it no longer leaves the cave first but lags behind the other sheep. This same combination of the disgusting and bestial, yet at times almost pathetic, is given in Weston as he is more and more completely possessed, till he becomes what Ransom calls the "Un-man." He is shown "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" (pp. 109-10). Yet when Weston seems to emerge for a while, his fear and horror at his experience of hell and his possession by demons are so pathetic that we almost sympathize with him. Indeed, it is this elicitation of sympathy which has caused the devil possessing Weston to release him momentarily, for it also works on Ransom, and causes him to allow the Un-man to escape again.

There may be a working out of the Blatant Beast of the Faerie Queene in Weston's assumptions as to Ransom's morality when he first sees Ransom on Perelandra. Ransom's bite on the heel also may hint of the bite of

the Blatant Beast, for the Beast's bites were also very difficult to heal, though, of course, the heel wound largely works to further establish Ransom as a parallel to Christ, as well as to remind of the Lord God's decree and prophecy to the serpent in Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Ransom's crushing the Un-man's head furthers this reference, and may also be a symbolic suggestion of Christ who is referred to as a rock. Perhaps the Un-man's "one arm hanging useless" even rings a faint echo of Grendel in Beowulf.

Certainly the Un-man is as hideous a monster as ever imagined in epic or elsewhere. When Weston ends his lecture to Ransom attempting to show that good and evil arise from the same spiritual force, he voices the same prideful boast as Milton's Satan, i.e., claiming to be equal to God: "I am the Universe. I, Weston, am your God and your Devil," and then he calls and allows the force of evil in: "I call that Force into me completely. . ." (p. 96). He is then possessed of a devil: "A spasm like that preceding a deadly vomit twisted Weston's face out of recognition. As it passed, for one second something like the old Weston reappeared--the old Weston, staring with eyes of horror and howling, 'Ransom, Ransom! For Christ's sake don't let them --' and instantly his whole body spun round as if he had been hit by a revolver-bullet, and he fell to the earth, and was there rolling at Ransom's feet, slavering and chattering and tearing up the moss by handfuls" (p. 96). Thoroughly possessed, Weston "looked very like a dead" man (p. 110), so Ransom calls him the Un-man. Moreover, he is shown in reptilian imagery, which reminds us of Satan in the serpent in Eden both in the Genesis account and in

Milton's Paradise Lost. The Un-man is reptilian in that he has claws, he croaks, he has an unwinking stare, and he bites Ransom on the heel.

Epic requires scope, grandeur, and variety to encompass the world of its day and a large portion of the learning of its day. Therefore, an epic was usually expected to say something about the structure of the universe. Bowra says, "The place of man in the universe was hardly intelligible if the poet did not say what the universe was."⁴¹ So Virgil gives a sketch of a cosmology, Camöens' Venus shows Vasco de Gama a model of the universe (the Ptolemaic system, as might be expected in 1572), and Milton combines Ptolemaic and more recent concepts of Copernicus and Galileo for artistic purposes. Lewis's science fiction epic includes both a picture of the planets as modern science knows them and an artistic account of the planets as inhabited by sentient beings and of space as alive with angelic beings (rather than cold and dark as in the popular conception of science).

Lewis's idea of creation is that "Christianity . . . thinks God made the world--that space and time, heat and cold, and all the colours and tastes, and all the animals and vegetables, are things that God 'made up out of his head' as a man makes up a story. But it also thinks that a great many things have gone wrong with the world that God made. . . ."⁴²

As Lewis's analogy of a man making a story suggests, epic poets, and particularly Renaissance poets, understood their task of creation rather literally. As Williams so appropriately states concerning Milton, "Milton's vast universe rises at his word out of the chaos over which his mind sits brooding, the darkness is illuminated, and all the huge fields of space and time are related with absolute precision to the point of their centre, the garden in Eden."⁴³ What Lewis's Perelandra adds is an

emphasis upon the fact that the center is God. "Where Maleldil is, there is the centre. He is in every place. Not some of Him in one place and some in another, but in each place the whole Maleldil, even in the smallness beyond thought. There is no way out of the centre save into the Bent will which casts itself into the Nowhere. . . . Each thing was made for Him. He is the centre. Because we are with Him, each of us is at the centre" (p. 216). Lewis follows Milton in many of the Christian beliefs portrayed in Perelandra. Lewis also follows Milton's theory that matter itself derived from God and therefore was essentially good. In Paradise Lost the Almighty tells Christ the Son as he goes out on his creative mission into Chaos:

Boundless the Deep, because I am who fill
 Infinitude, nor vacuous the space.
 Though I uncircumscribed myself retire,
 And put not forth my goodness, which is free
 To act or not.

(PL VII.168-72)

This may be compared to the eldila's explanation in Perelandra, "He dwells within the seed of the smallest flower and is not cramped: Deep Heaven is inside Him who is inside the seed and does not distend Him. Blessed be He!" (p. 215). In another passage, Raphael declares that all things "proceed" from God and return to Him (PL V.469-71), and Milton says the same thing in De Doctrina Christiana (l. vii; C. E. XV. 22-24). As Hughes says, "Milton's reason for thinking so was simply his understanding of the meaning of the Hebrew word that is translated 'make' in the verse, 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth.'" ⁴² In Lewis's account, Perelandra is part of that heaven.

The Perelandran picture of creation is introduced by the responsive chant of the eldila: "Never did He make two things the same; never did He utter one word twice. After earths, not better earths but beasts;

after beasts, not better beasts, but spirits. After a falling, not a recovery but a new creation. Out of the new creation, not a third but the mode of change itself is changed forever. Blessed be He! (p. 214). Thus is added to the scheme the "new creation" of the new race of the King and Queen, and the "change itself . . . changed forever" is the movement from a physical to a transcendent state of being both physical and spiritual achieved as a result of their obedience by the King and Queen, so that they can, for instance, observe the Heavenly Dance without noting the passage of time.

Sewell notes, "Epic has a preoccupation with the structure of the universe and the place and course of man's life and death within it, its essential activity, its attachment to mythology. This is supremely the point where poetry espouses time, in the form of narrative, on the grand scale." Time in the world of Earth is a horizontal line, and God's timeless presence is a vertical line crossing it at right angles, the crossing point being the Incarnation. But time in the world of Perelandra is imaged in the Heavenly Dance which the eldila say "has begun from before always. There was no time when we did not rejoice before His face as now" (p. 214). Furthermore, "In the plan of the Great Dance plans without number interlock, and each movement becomes in its season the breaking into flower of the whole design to which all else had been directed. Thus each is equally at the centre" (p. 217). "There seems no plan because it is all plan: there seems no centre because it is all centre" (p. 218). And when the vision has ended, Ransom learns that it has taken a year of his reckoning, and he asks the King if he knew so much time was passing. "'I did not feel it pass,' said Tor. 'I believe the waves of time will often change for us henceforward. We are coming to have it in

our own choice whether we shall be above them and see many waves together or whether we shall reach them one by one as we used to'" (p. 220).

Lewis's universe in his epic is similar to that of Dante, for God is the center. In Dante, orders of angels circled God as the center of light, with seven concentric circles revolving around a point and earth only brought into the dance at the poem's end. Lewis's spatial universe also pictures God as the center. At the end of Perelandra, the Oyarsu chant that Maleldil is the center. And as in medieval theory, Lewis pictures space as bright, bathed in perpetual sunshine, and alive with heavenly beings who dwell there.

The medieval model for the universe was also the circle, because of its association with perfection and wholeness; therefore, the circle had also been used for centuries as a symbol of God. Sammons notes, "The definition of God as a sphere 'whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere' provides an excellent symbol for both eternity and immensity and probably began as early as the twelfth century."⁴⁶

In Out of the Silent Planet, Ransom had noted that the tutelary deity pictured by the pfifltriggi on the monoliths at Meldilorn for Venus was female. "'And what an extraordinary coincidence,' thought Ransom, 'that their mythology, like ours, associates some idea of the female with Venus.'" But this is Lewis's way of emphasizing that it is not at all extraordinary if the universe is a unity; if there is a Venus, then she will look the same in all worlds--a point Lewis carries to completion in Perelandra with Ransom's realization of it as he encounters Mars and Venus. In clarifying his picture of the universe, Lewis has Ransom decide at the end of Out of the Silent Planet to tell his adventures as fiction, since "what we need for the moment is not so much a body of belief

as a body of people familiarized with certain ideas." Here is Lewis's whole fictional concern and picture of the universe; the "certain ideas" mentioned by Ransom are focused as a single major concern; "If we could even effect in one percent of our readers a change-over from the conception of Space to the conception of Heaven, we should have made a beginning." Howard articulates the significance of this best: "That mild hope of course points to a Himalayan watershed running across human imagination. Is the universe to be imagined under an imagery of distance and mechanics, or of dance and solemnity and joy?"⁴⁷

In Lewis's vision, Hell is the ultimately unstructured, the place of final fragmentation and inanity. In contrast, Howard notes that Lewis and St. Augustine and St. John the Divine and others thought of the City of God as "a city foursquare, with adamant foundations and high walls, whose denizens have learned to experience as bliss the steps of the Dance. . . . Lewis's works of imagination adumbrate their vision, for if there is one word that rings like the peal of a thousand bells from Lewis's country, it is the word joy."⁴⁸ Moreover, "there is at work in Lewis's worlds a moral order, fixed, serene, absolute, and blissful. . . . But in Lewis's world (indeed in all worlds and moral schemes until our own), we find that the fixed order that presides so serenely and absolutely over the lives and acts of the creatures in that world, not only does not cramp the freedom and selfhood of those creatures, it is synonymous with it. All the creatures find their true identity and liberty in a hierarchical scale in which they have responsibilities of service running in both directions, up and down."⁴⁹ Just as in Beowulf, the people owed loyalty, fealty, respect, perhaps even awe to the king and to their heroes, and the king owed magnanimity to his people, so the creatures in Lewis's

world owe to those "above" and "below" them the proper service offered in courtesy. On Malacandra, Ransom had found that the sorns were astonished at his account of human wars and slavery, and they concluded that humans either have no Oyarsa or that they cause all this trouble because each wants to be a little oyarsa himself. And in Malacandra each order is ruled by the next: the beasts by hnau (intelligent beings), hnau by el-dila, el-dila by the Oyarsa of Malacandra, and the Oyarsa by Maleldil, the lord of all. The inhabitants of Malacandra believe creatures cannot rule themselves: they see that as like trying to lift oneself by one's own hair. In Perelandra, the Green Lady's tone changes when she realizes Ransom is not her equal on Earth. "'Greet your Lady and Mother well from me when you return to your own world,' said the Green Woman. And now for the first time there was a note of deliberate courtesy, even of ceremony, in her speech. . . . She was a queen sending a message to a queen through a commoner, and her manner to him was henceforward more gracious" (p. 67). When Ransom sees the Oyarsu, Perelandra and Malacandra, on the holy mountain, he rightly assumes that esteem is due these great beings. But the Oyeresu do obeisance to the King and Queen of Perelandra, who receive the obeisance, as Howard notes, "because it is their appointed burden and glory to do so. As a matter of fact, "Lewis has shown us a world in which a hierarchical order is seen in terms of courtesy, magnanimity, and obedience, and is the guarantor of everyone's liberty."⁵⁰ Lewis's world in which obedience and liberty are synonymous presents a paradox which all who understand that freedom requires discipline will understand. And "any Christian is familiar with this paradox and affirms it, since he worships a God whose service is perfect freedom."⁵¹ As Lewis says in That Hideous Strength, "You do not fail in obedience through lack of love, but

have lost love because you never attempted obedience," and, again, "Obedience and rule are more like a dance than a drill."⁵²

When the gods or God are enthroned in Heaven, in an assumed hierarchical order, the ages produce epic heroes and heroines. When humanity has no fixed order, the age produces Willie Lomans or J. Alfred Prufrocks. Achilles, Hector, Odysseus, Aeneas, Beowulf, Siegfried, Arthur are such magnificent heroes--to say nothing of Penelope, Beatrice, and Britomart--partly because they had the gods watching them. As Howard says, "This notion of moral fixity seems repressive to moderns. What we need, we say, for our authentic freedom, is spontaneity, functionalism, and self-determination. But Lewis would have pointed us to the picture of things that all poets, prophets, sages, and saints have lauded, namely that, paradoxically, we grow into our real selfhood and liberty by learning the steps in the Dance,"⁵³ as imaged in the Heavenly Dance in Perelandra.

A particularly important characteristic of epic is that it is a comprehensive or encyclopedic form. Indeed, Frye says, "The epic differs from the narrative in the encyclopaedic range of its theme, from heaven to the underworld, and over an enormous mass of traditional knowledge." All significant epics must, therefore, include other genres as well as other epic echoes. According to Frye, an encyclopedic form encompasses the mythology of an entire culture, probes the boundaries of Heaven and Hell, and comprehensively covers space and time and philosophy of thought.⁵⁴ "Homer's poems," Webber says, "were supposed to be sources of romance, satire, hymns, orations, epigrams, and histories, and subsequent poets consciously adopted inclusiveness as a technique."⁵⁵ Therefore, "epics are full of episodes containing art within art, in which the contained art reflects or interprets the larger meaning. Beginning with

Achilles, the characters sing their own exploits [and] find their deeds recorded in many kinds of art. . . ."⁵⁶ Odysseus tells tales of his exploits and his adventures in Scheria to Nausicaä's parents, and he makes up tales to tell his swineherd when he has come to Ithaca in disguise. Aeneas sees the story of Troy displayed in murals on the walls of Juno's shrine in Carthage; there are pictures on shields (as the new shield Hephaestus fashions for Achilles); Helen weaves the story of Troy in a tapestry; funeral games (such as that of Patroclus in the Iliad, or that of Anchises in the Aeneid) are a kind of art form. Rinaldo is made to confront his own image in an adamantine shield. Banners on da Gama's flagship portray the history of Portugal in the Lusiads. The penitents in Dante's Purgatorio are constantly reminded of their condition by quotations, pictures, dream-visions, and songs to incite them to better lives. Guyon and Arthur read their own histories in The Faerie Queene; Colin Clout creates music, and the beautiful naked maidens dance. In Perelandra, Ransom recites epics as well as recalling Earth's spiritual history.

Ransom's reciting of epics and heroic poems emphasizes the parallelism with other epics--"He recited all that he could remember of the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Aeneid, the Chanson de Roland, Paradise Lost, the Kalevala, the Hunting of the Snark" (p. 173)--and to these he added his own epic: "He beguiled himself by recapitulating the whole story of his adventure in Perelandra" (p. 173).

Another universal characteristic of epic, closely related to epic encyclopedic comprehensiveness, is the inclusion of the mythology of the culture as well as myths of earlier periods. These references to classical mythology widen out and universalize what is said.

Mythology may be defined as a pattern of beliefs that express a sense of the inner relationship between the phenomenal and the transcendent. Milton, like most of his contemporaries, saw imperfect representations of Christian Biblical truths and a survival of sacred history in the pagan myths. Hughes suggests that "for Milton the legends about the Titans' war with the gods of light on Olympus were proof of a core of some kind of historical truth in the revolt of the angels."⁵⁸ Of course, in Paradise Lost, Milton offers another possible explanation for the Greek and Roman gods by having the fallen angels assume their names and pervert mankind into falsely worshipping them. Nonetheless, it is common for Christian writers of epic to assume that pagan wisdom and mythology are carriers of truth, sometimes remnants of sacred history, sometimes a divine invasion into this fallen world. As Lewis says, God "sent the human race what I call good dreams; I mean those queer stories scattered all through the heathen religions about a god who dies and comes to life again and, by his death, has somehow given new life to men."⁵⁹ He further clarifies, "In reality, Christianity is primarily the fulfilment of the Jewish religion, but also the fulfilment of what was vaguely hinted in all the religions at their best. What was vaguely seen in them all comes into focus in Christianity--just as God Himself comes into focus by becoming a Man."⁶⁰

Though Frye says "truth is not the central basis for distinguishing the mythical,"⁶¹ myth is always true: not necessarily a carrier of historical or scientific truth, but of all those other, more important truths of the human being. Thomas Bullfinch has said, "'myth' does not mean 'something that is not real or true,' but . . . it means a kind of truth and a kind of reality not communicable by any means other than the symbolic story."⁶² Gilbert Highet has added: ". . . the myths are permanent.

They deal with the greatest of all problems, the problems which do not change, because men and women do not change. They deal with love; with war; with sin; with tyranny; with courage; with fate; and all in some way or other deal with the relation of man to those divine powers which are sometimes felt to be irrational, sometimes to be cruel, . . . sometimes, alas, to be just,"⁶³ and, in the Christian beliefs, to be loving.

Lewis's writings all express a belief in the higher truths of mythology. In general he believed that Christianity is a kind of typological fulfillment of myth. In a letter to Arthur Greeves he clarified his view:

In Pagan stories I was prepared to feel the myth as profound and suggestive of meanings beyond my grasp even tho' I could not say in cold prose "what it meant." Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that it really happened: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering that it is God's myth where the others are men's myths: i.e. the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as he found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call "real things." Therefore it is true, not in the sense of being a "description" of God (that no finite mind would take in) but in the sense of being the way in which God chooses to (or can) appear to our faculties. The "doctrines" we get out of the true myth are of course less true: they are translations into our concepts and ideas of that which God has already expressed in a language more adequate, namely, the actual incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.⁶⁴

For Lewis, myth offers a glimpse of the reality behind the appearance of nature and of man, and captures the lasting allegiance of the imagination; he says that the best myth "gets under our skin, hits us at a level deeper than our thoughts or even our passions, troubles oldest certainties till all questions are reopened, and in general shocks us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives."⁶⁵ Moreover, he says "the mythopoeic is . . . a mode of imagination which does something to us at a deep level. If some seem to go to it in almost compulsive need, others seem to be in terror of what they may meet there."⁶⁶

And Webber notes, "Epic is a form that uses myth to free men of history . . . by forcing mortality on people's awareness, by teaching them their own story in the form of myth that is more encompassing than history [to enable] . . . them to achieve transcendent vision."⁶⁷

In Perelandra, Lewis presents myth and the natural metaphors within the myths as cosmic facts. In Out of the Silent Planet Ransom is made to state Lewis's own understanding of so-called "pagan" myth: "It had dawned on him that the recurrent human tradition of bright, elusive people might after all have another explanation than the anthropologists had yet given" (pp. 101-02); it had even occurred to him "that the distinction between history and mythology might be itself meaningless outside the Earth" (p. 157), for the myths of Earth might be the reality of some other world.

Lewis, like Milton and Dante and Spenser and others, universalizes the Paradise experience by importing mythical materials from other traditions.

In his Christian epic upon the virtues, Spenser in The Faerie Queene includes the Cave of Morpheus, the Garden of Adonis, the Garden of Venus, the temple of Cupid, and other such mythical references. Dante refers to various epic characters, including Virgil and Odysseus. And in Perelandra Ransom immediately recognizes the Garden of the Hesperides. "When Ransom woke to his first morning in Perelandra he saw reality, and thought it was a dream. He opened his eyes and saw a strange heraldically coloured tree loaded with yellow fruits and silver leaves. Round the base of the indigo stem was coiled a small dragon covered with scales of red gold. He recognized the garden of the Hesperides at once" (p. 41). When he sees the Green Lady, she seems to him like Eve and the Madonna, but also like Artemis. He even fears she may be a Circe or Alcina. These mythological

references to Artemis and Circe and Alcina universalize the story, suggest Ransom's uncertainty about meanings in this new world; and, more to our purpose, the references to Circe suggest comparisons with the Odyssey. Both Ransom and Ulysses found an island to land upon in order to save themselves from drowning. And neither knew the true meaning of Circe or the Circe-like figure at first. Again Ransom ponders the relationship of myth to reality. "'Were all the things which appeared as mythology on earth scattered through other worlds as realities?'" (p. 41). "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" (p.149). Later Ransom sees strange creatures swimming about: "There--and there again--it was unmistakable; now a shoulder, now a profile, and then for one second a full face: veritable mermen or mermaids. . . . He remembered his old suspicion that what was myth in one world might be fact in some other" (pp. 103-04). Later in the novel, Ransom is told by an inner voice to kill Weston, the Un-man, and on rebelling from the command is told "'It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom.' All in a moment of time he perceived that what was, to human philologists, a merely accidental resemblance of two sounds, was in truth no accident. The whole distinction between things accidental and things designed, like the distinction between fact and myth, was purely terrestrial. . . ." (pp. 153-54). In a later scene in the novel the Oyeresu of Malacandra and Perelandra appear before him and assume shapes so that he

might see them as Venus and Mars: "The two white creatures were sexless. But he of Malacandra was masculine (not male); she of Perelandra was feminine (not female). Malacandra seemed to him to have the look of one standing armed, at the ramparts of his own remote archaic world, in ceaseless vigilance, his eyes ever roaming the earthward horizon whence his danger came long ago. . . . But the eyes of Perelandra opened, as it were, inward, as if they were the curtained gateway to a world of waves and murmurings and wandering airs. . . . With deep wonder he thought to himself, 'My eyes have seen Mars and Venus. I have seen Ares and Aphrodite'" (pp. 214-15).

The Oyarsu (and perhaps the epic narrator, for the speaker is not entirely clear) tell Ransom, "There is an environment of minds as well as of space. The universe is one. . . . The Muse is a real thing. A faint breath, as Virgil says, reaches even the late generations. Our mythology is based on a solider reality than we dream: but it is also at an almost infinite distance from that base. And when they told him this, Ransom at last understood why mythology was what it was--gleams of celestial strength and beauty falling on a jungle of filth and imbecility" (p. 201).

Lewis's Perelandra thus follows epic tradition in its inclusion of myth. It also causes the reader to feel as Ransom did on Perelandra, "the sensation not of following an adventure but of enacting a myth" (p. 44).

Lewis employs mythical allusions, and allusions to and parallels with other epics, for what he says of mythical poetry is true here as well: "Mythical poetry ought not to attempt novelty in respect of its ingredients. What it does with the ingredients may be as novel as you

please. But giants, dragons, paradises, gods, and the like are themselves the expression of certain basic elements in man's spiritual experience. In that sense they are more like words--the words of a language which speaks the else unspeakable--than they are like the people and places in a novel. To give them radically new characters is not so much original as ungrammatical."⁶⁸ Lewis believed in creative borrowing, as in Aslan's death and resurrection in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the Cupid and Psyche story in Till We Have Faces and the Eden setting and account of the temptation of Eve from Genesis as well as from Milton's account of it in Paradise Lost. Since the epic poet's task is, as Giambatti has said, "to sum up a vision of the society or history or condition of man at his largest and best, . . . to refer within your epic to other epics is to create and sustain a shorthand by which you refer to all that came before."⁶⁹ Therefore, Lewis uses this "shorthand" in his Biblical and mythic and, especially, epic echoes.

This concept of using and echoing other epics might, indeed, be said to be one of the main conventions of the genre. Epic poets since Homer have been immensely concerned with looking back to their predecessors' poems. Of course, Virgil is the model, for the Renaissance clearly recognized that the first six books of the Aeneid are an Odyssey, and the second six an Iliad. Boiardo made clear that he intended to unify and thus supersede all the chansons de geste about Charlemagne and all the Arthurian romances; Ariosto hoped to outdo Boiardo whose unfinished poem he took up; Spenser wished to emulate and to "overgo" Ariosto and Tasso; Dante proclaimed his desire to outdo all that had gone before; and Milton surpasses them all, as he announced it was his aim to do. Milton announces the aim of his "adventurous Song" is to pursue "Things unattempted

yet in Prose or Rhyme" (PL 1.16). Ariosto began the Orlando Furioso with precisely the same words (1,ii); Boiardo began the Orlando Innamorato substantially the same way (1,i,1); Spenser in the Faerie Queene, VI, proem, 2, and Dante in his Divine Comedy, Paradise, 11,6 declared the same intentions. Furthermore, as Giamatti notes, "Epic poems, ever since Antiquity the noblest form of poetry, . . . must contain and include all that went before . . . as inheritors and containers of previous epic literature."⁷⁰

Spenser's Faerie Queene illustrates the way each epic also builds upon but changes the epic conventions of the past. As Lewis notes in Allegory of Love, "Spenser, while borrowing the form of the Italian epic, deliberately modified it by turning it into a 'continued allegory or dark conceit.'"⁷¹

In the process of containing and overgoing all that has gone before, each epic seems to exhibit a rejection of the values of prior epics as partial and incomplete, but each builds upon all those which have gone before. Therefore, Perelandra's echoes and parallels of and departures from other epics also establish it in the genre.

As each epic builds upon those which have gone before, so Perelandra includes echoes of other epics in order to widen the scope and ennoble its matter while creating its own unity. Table III illustrates some of these echoes and parallels and tentatively suggests the extent of their inclusion. The most obvious parallel is to Paradise Lost, since both are based upon the Biblical account from Genesis of the temptation and fall of man. Both include a cosmic scope of action, and both present the Christian point of view. Perelandra echoes the Iliad in its inclusion of heroic battles, for Ransom had to fight many times before the Un-man was totally destroyed; and it echoes the Iliad in its praise of heroism,

TABLE III
PERELANDRA'S PARALLELS WITH OTHER EPICS

Epic	Parallel	Chapter/s
Iliad	Battles, visit to underground	1, 12-14
Odyssey	Sea journey, Circe figure	1-4
Beowulf	Underwater pursuit, underground battles, underground journey	12-14
Aeneid	Trojan Horse <u>Iliad</u> and <u>Odyssey</u> scheme of books, hero sent, <u>pius</u> , visit underground to land of dead	1, 12-14 12-14
Divine Comedy	Beatific vision of Cosmic Dance, underground journey	17
Faerie Queene	Inner virtues important, underground journey	5-6
Paradise Lost	Genesis account, Adam and Eve figures, Satan's temptations, prophecy for all mankind, visit to hell	Throughout, especially 7-11
Paradise Regained	Account of Incarnation, sacrifice offered, ransom paid	11-14

though Lewis here introduces an echo of Spenser's Faerie Queene, which adds the inner heroic qualities as part of the plot and as important to a definition of heroism.

As Table III shows, Perelandra echoes the Odyssey in the journeying over the sea (here on fishback) while Ransom is in pursuit of the Un-man, but an even stronger echo may be found when Ransom is first deposited into the seas of Perelandra and must swim to safety. Like Odysseus, he swims to an island; he even sees a figure that he thinks might be a Circe-like woman. It also echoes Virgil's emphasis on Aeneas's being sent by the gods upon his quest to found a new Troy, for Ransom is sent upon his quest to Perelandra by Maleldil, a parallel for Christ. Both Aeneas and Ransom are characters of responsibility, pius. The Aeneid is echoed in the structure in that the first of the book is an odyssey with the journeys to and from Perelandra and Ransom's swim to the island, as are the first six books of Virgil's epic. The last six books of the Aeneid are an Iliad with heroic battles. As Table III shows, Perelandra parallels Milton's Paradise Lost with the descriptions of the Eden-like planet with its two humanoid inhabitants at the genesis of its history, and especially with the arrival of Satan in the form of Weston in Chapter 6, and the temptations of the Eve figure in Chapters 7 through 11. Ransom's pursuit of the Un-man in the caves underground and underwater is strongly suggestive of Beowulf's pursuit of Grendel's mother to the underlake lair where he fought to the death of the monster (Grendel's mother in Beowulf and the Un-man in Perelandra). The underwater lair, and actually the lake surface itself, in Beowulf has fire, as does this one. And the "dark fire" here is also reminiscent of the dark fire in Milton's Hell in Paradise Lost. Paradise Regained is echoed in that the plan for salvation is

carried out, the ransom paid. Dante's Divine Comedy is echoed in the climb Ransom makes after he escapes the underground, a climb which seems to be to and through Paradise, culminating in the beatific vision of the Cosmic Heavenly Dance.

Ransom's underground journey is the archetypal underground journey or journey to the land of the dead, as in the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Aeneid, the Faerie Queene, or the journey to hell as in Dante's Divine Comedy or Milton's Paradise Lost (see Table III). Ransom's coming out of the underground is the archetypal rebirth, suggested also when Gilgamesh, Achilles, Odysseus, and Aeneas return from their visits to the land of the dead, or when Guyon re-emerges in the Faerie Queene, and especially suggestive of Dante's climb from hell to paradise.

Perhaps Ransom's fish-back chase of the Un-man rings a faint echo of the sea adventures of Odysseus. And as Ransom views the peaceful existence of the sea people, there is a suggestion of Aeneas viewing other peoples going about their lives while he is still seeking his new homeland. Perhaps the sea people even suggest Gilgamesh's journey over the Ocean Sea to the home of the blessed.

The character Lewis in the story speculates, "How if my friend were the unwitting bridge, the Trojan Horse, whereby some possible invader were effecting its landing on Tellus?" (p. 12). This reference brings images of battles and of treachery, and clearly invites comparison with other epics. And the Trojan Horse reference is repeated later: "Weston in his spaceship is but the vehicle, the Trojan Horse, by means of which the Devil, the Bent Eldil, has penetrated the defences of Perelandra as he once made his way into Eden in the form of a serpent" (p. 30). In the same way, for the other side, "now that Ransom has once passed out of the

shadow of the Silent Planet, the spiritual messengers can visit him even when he has returned" (p. 29).

As Lewis is attempting to reach Ransom's cottage, the hostile eldila of Earth are working on his emotions; he says, "What enabled me to go on was the knowledge (deep down inside me) that I was getting nearer to the one friend: but I felt that I was getting nearer to the one enemy. . ." (p. 13). Thus he cannot trust his emotions. This presentation of the emotions as false--as a source of leading one astray--invokes Milton's similar use of emotions in the temptation scene of Eve in Paradise Lost and again in the temptation scene of Adam, thus broadening the story with the suggestion of other epics. And this is also an instance of Biblical allusion, for this is faith in action--stubbornly holding on to one's knowledge of the friend and having faith in him as an act of will in spite of negative feelings and misgivings. The Bible defines faith as follows: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1, King James Version).

It is a mark of the genius of Lewis's schemata that he combines within the framework of a science fiction novel the epic tradition, Greek mythology, and Biblical references. The mythical and Biblical elements are united in even such seemingly trivial items as the words of Lewis and Ransom when they first meet. Lewis says, "Oh, Ransom. Thank God you've come [*italics mine*]," and Ransom responds, "By Jove, I'm glad to see you [*italics mine*]" (p. 21).

Although the names are changed, C. S. Lewis is clearly presenting God and man analogous to Christian belief. Maleldil is Christ; the eldils are angels; the Oyarsa an archangel; the Old One, God the Father. The Oyarsa of Malacandra tells Ransom that, although they are in many

ways unlike, they are both "copies of Maleldil" (p. 70); that is, all rational beings are children of God, created in His image.

Ransom, Lewis's science fiction epic hero, travels beyond this world to Mars (Malacandra) in the first book of the trilogy, and there learns of Maleldil whom he finds to be our Redeemer. Out of the Silent Planet can be seen as a mythical exposition of the created order and the possibility of its perversion by evil, as in Genesis 1 and 2 or Paradise Lost. This world, however, is one which has known no fall.

In Perelandra Ransom is again in an unfallen world, but here the Bent Eldil, Satan, is making an attempt to subvert the creatures of Maleldil--an attempt paralleling that successful attempt he made on Earth in the Garden of Eden.

Perelandra is the story of Paradise retained, the story of a second Eve in another Paradise. Milton's Paradise Lost is the closest analogue, and Lewis's own Preface to Paradise Lost provides the best commentary.

This story of a temptation and a fall that does not take place is made the occasion for a justification of the ways of God, a revelation of the meaning of free will and obedience, a critique of the notion of the fortunate fall, and a celebration of the unspeakable greatness of the redemption of our fallen world. The Christian significance of the story is rendered in the archetypal action and in allusions. Maleldil is specifically spoken of as having become incarnate on Earth, as having become man, as having ransomed Earth.

The account of the temptation follows in many respects Milton's version of the Genesis story. Adam, here the King of Perelandra, is largely left out of Lewis's version. The Green Lady is unfallen, Edenic mankind.

She seems both goddess and madonna. She lives in fellowship with the beasts and in communion with, and obedience to, Maleldil. She knows no evil. Satan's goal, of course, is to teach her evil. Her overcoming of the temptations shows that one not only need not partake of evil, but also need not know evil in order to overcome it. An innocence which is not merely a passive lack of knowledge but which is an active pursuit of the will of God is shown as dynamic and positive. It is a working out of what Lewis said in The Weight of Glory: "When human souls have become as perfect in voluntary obedience as the inanimate creation is in its lifeless obedience, then they will put on its glory, or rather that greater glory of which Nature is only the first sketch."⁷²

Perelandra's plot is a working out of Ephesians 6:12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ransom says to Lewis: "You are feeling the absurdity of it. Dr. Elwin Ransom setting out single-handed to combat powers and principalities. You may even be wondering if I've got megalomania." And he adds, "At any rate that is what I've been feeling myself ever since that thing was sprung on me. But when you come to think of it, is it odder than what all of us have to do every day? When the Bible used that very expression about fighting with principalities and powers and depraved hypersomatic beings at great heights (our translation is very misleading at that point, by the way) it meant that quite ordinary people were to do the fighting" (p. 23). Lewis protests that the Bible was referring to a "moral conflict," but Ransom avers that "any of us might have to fight either way. . . . 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 cosmic 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" (pp. 23-4). ("Our translation" here would mean the King James Version or, as Lewis referred to it, the Authorized Version; "in high places" should more accurately be translated "at great heights.") Much of Perelandra is based upon this scripture.

The other Biblical passage upon which the plot is based may well be Esther 4:14b: ". . . and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Ransom's comment to Lewis echoes Esther: "Don't imagine I've been selected to go to Perelandra because I'm anyone in particular. One never can see, or not till long afterwards, who any one was selected for any job. And when one does, it is usually some reason that leaves no room for vanity" (p. 24). Esther's reply to the Biblical question was: "So will I go . . . and if I perish, I perish." This is clearly Ransom's viewpoint in his epic task.

More complex than it appears on the surface is Lewis's ability to keep us ever aware of the ordinary mortals performing such extraordinary feats. Homer also penetrated to the ordinary mortal. Rieu calls it giving us "reality and super-reality" at the same time.⁷³ Achilles is revealed in a sordidly realistic light in Book one. Homer shows his hero arguing with his king, threatening to take his ships and go home if he does not get his way, and doing other petty, childish things. Achilles says to Agamemnon:

the truth is that we joined the expedition to please you; yes, you unconscionable cur, to get satisfaction from the Trojans for Menelaus and yourself--a fact which you utterly ignore. And now comes this threat from you of all people to rob me of my prize, my hard-earned prize, which was a tribute from the ranks. It is not as though I am ever given as much as you when the Achaeans sack some thriving city of the Trojans. The heat and burden of the fighting fall on me, but when it comes to dealing out the loot, it is you that take the lion's share, leaving me to return exhausted from the field with something of my own, however small. So now I shall go back to Phithia. That is the best thing I can do--to sail home in my beaked ships. I see no point in staying here to be insulted while I pile up wealth and luxuries for you.

(Iliad 1.158-71)

We follow Achilles from this temper tantrum through all the pettiness and degradation which the exasperating conditions of a long-drawn-out war can lead one for whom pride is both his strength and his weakness. We see him withdrawing from the battle in a pout, and even praying that his fellow Greeks may be defeated to the point where they must beg him to help. He gets so bad that even his most staunch friend and supporter, Patroclus, remonstrates with him for "warping a noble nature to ignoble ends" (Iliad XVI.31-32). Homer, not given to moralizing, even labels Achilles's dragging Hector's body as "evil." In spite of all his faults, however, the gods are honoring Achilles, and Homer makes us feel that he really is a great hero; though it is not till he gives Hector's corpse to his grief-stricken, aged father, Priam, that we are allowed to see the real greatness of Achilles.⁷⁴ When Homer calls a warrior brave or great-hearted just when he is behaving like an errant coward or a spoiled child, he is not only being ironic and humorous: "he is seeing that warrior as he was, or will be, or indeed as he, in essence, is."⁷⁵ This is Lewis's message about predestination and freedom which he has Ransom deliver as he determines to fight the Un-man: "The thing was going to be done. There was going to arrive, in the course of time, a moment at which he would have done it. The

future act stood there, fixed and unaltered as if he had already performed it. It was a mere irrelevant detail that it happened to occupy the position we call future instead of that which we call past" (p. 149).

Since Ransom is determined to do this, even though he has not yet performed any external act which shows his heroic nature, he is heroic because of the kind of man he is. Even when he groans, "Mercy," and asks, "Lord, why me?" (p. 149), and behaves peevishly, he is, in essence, heroic, just as Achilles was.

In the same way, when Homer describes a beautiful and well-built chariot or a magnificent suit of armor, he is not laboring under the delusion that all the workmanship of the day was perfect. He is doing the same thing he does with people. Homer is a realist, but, as Rieu says, "the reality that he sees has for his eye a certain transparence, through which he sees and records the ideal or higher reality. . . . I do not mean . . . that Homer . . . is indulging himself in illusion or wishful thinking, but that he is seeing reality at two levels. To which I might add that he sees good as more real than evil."⁷⁶ This is exactly what Lewis is doing, seeing reality at two levels, that of time and of eternity:

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. . . . There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization--these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit--immortal horrors or everlasting splendours.⁷⁷

Lewis sees reality with a transparence through which he sees and records an eternal ideal, and he sees that ideal as beginning here and now.

Moreover, Lewis also sees good as more real than evil: he believes evil to be a parasite, incapable of creating on its own.

Lewis's paradox, then, is that the ordinary mortal is not ordinary because he is of infinite worth in the sight of God, so that each "ordinary" person may be an epic hero. Quite "ordinary" men and women are drawn into the struggle; having, with free will, chosen their allegiance, they become agents of cosmic force as we see Ransom doing as our representative in Perelandra.

The battle of good versus evil reduces to the visible individual struggle in Perelandra. Indeed, the battle of good versus evil is ultimately always fought in the individual battle: it was so with Eve in Eden, with Christ on the cross; it was so with Gilgamesh and the evil giant, Humbaba; with Beowulf and Grendel, Beowulf and Grendel's dam, and with Beowulf and the dragon; it is so here with the Green Lady of Perelandra fighting temptation, with Ransom fighting the Un-man. (It is so even, on a smaller scale, with the "ordinary" individual, Lewis, fighting his fears at the beginning of the book to assist Ransom, for Lewis's victory makes possible the telling of the tale of Perelandra according to the story.) Every individual battle is important.

And for these ordinary men and women, faith is not something which merely replaces effort when one has exhausted one's own possibilities. Instead, faith takes this ordinary man or woman who is not really ordinary into the Love, the Light and Life of Christ. It comes not merely to "comfort" in sufferings, not to "help" (the Un-man taunts Ransom that his God will not help him fight), but it comes to make of this extraordinary "ordinary" person a martyr in the original Greek sense of the word as "witness"; i.e., a witness to Christ (Maleldil) in his very sufferings. A

martyr is not one for whom God is another--and last--chance: a martyr is one for whom God is his very life, and thus everything in his life comes to God, and ascends to the fullness of Love, as Lewis shows on the holy mountain in Perelandra.

In Perelandra Lewis is not just re-telling the Christian myth or Milton's Paradise Lost, but rather he is showing what might have happened if. In a letter, Lewis revealed that Perelandra was to work out a supposition: "What if there were an unspoiled paradise undergoing some temptation? What if angels were like unto the Pagan gods? What if? Well, then we would have Perelandra."⁷⁸

Lewis has made it clear that the central action is a second, and even graver and further-reaching attempt of the Enemy against a state of innocence. It is a shattering picture Lewis draws in the Un-man's attempt to re-enact the fall of Man in a new garden of Eden, since it shows each of us what temptation is to us. It shows the consciousness of what man rejects, the rewards he might have if only he would stretch out his hand for them--the heart of Lewis's Sehnsucht, the intense longing for other-worldly experience, for spiritual experience, this powerful feeling compounded of yearning, melancholy, wonder, joy, and an awareness of the numinous.

Ransom is sent, as Moses was sent and as Jesus sent out his twelve disciples, without provisions for the journey. Jesus said to them, "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses. Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat" (Matt. 10:9-10). Ransom is sent out totally naked. This should be contrasted with the usual descriptions in epic of the hero's dress and weaponry. In this case, Ransom's armor is to be

that spoken of in scripture: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:10-13). Ransom himself has quoted part of this scripture, and the novel is a showing, a fleshing-out of, the entire concept. Rather than depending upon his armor and weapons as did epic heroes of old, Ransom is to depend upon his faith and upon "the whole armor of God."

Ransom tells Lewis he is being sent and that he has "no idea at all what I'm to do. There are jobs, you know, where it is essential that one should not know too much beforehand. . . . things one might have to say which one couldn't say effectively if one had prepared them" (pp. 25-6).

This suggests Matthew 10:16, 19-20:

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. . . . But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

Ransom in Perelandra may be seen in one way as a newly created Adam in Eden with all his senses alert and experiencing and learning. He enacts a new genesis of man: moving from his womb-like coffin in which he traveled from Earth to Perelandra, then from the sea to the land; having to learn to walk on the floating islands as a baby might, having sensory

experiences which caused him to feel a "strange sense of excessive pleasure which seemed somehow to be communicated to him through all his senses at once, . . . an exuberance or prodigality of sweetness about the mere act of living which our [fallen] race finds it difficult not to associate with forbidden and extravagant actions" (p. 37). Note here again Lewis's intense concreteness of description as he tells of Ransom's experiences: for example, as to taste: "As he rushed smoothly up the great convex hillside of the next wave he got a mouthful of the water . . . ; it was drinkable. . . . Though he had not been aware of thirst till now, his drink gave him a quite astonishing pleasure. It was almost like meeting Pleasure itself for the first time" (p. 35). Ransom is somewhat like an infant perceiving its environment, but like the full-grown Adam pictured by Milton in interpreting it. "His first impression was of nothing more definite than of something slanted--as though he were looking at a photograph which had been taken when the camera was not held level" (p. 34). Then he saw "something that looked like clouds--or could it be ships?--far away on his left" (p. 35). Next the sense of kinesthesia is added to that of sight: "And now he realized that . . . he had for some time been performing unconsciously the actions of a swimmer. . . . Up again to the crest . . . then down, down, down" (p. 35). Touch, sight and smell are added as he learns to walk on the floating island: "and then for the next hour or two he was teaching himself to walk; . . . this was like learning to walk on water itself. . . . Perhaps he would have learned more quickly if his falls had not been so soft, if it had not been so pleasant, having fallen, to lie still and gaze at the golden roof and hear the endless soothing noise of the water and breathe in the curiously delightful smell of the herbage" (pp. 40-1). In this paradise, Ransom finds the

creation of a kind of Sehnsucht. "The smells in the forest were beyond all that he had ever conceived . . . ; almost, they created a new kind of hunger and thirst, a longing that seemed to flow over from the body into the soul and which was a heaven to feel" (p. 41). The first taste of the Perelandran fruit "was like the discovery of a totally new genus of pleasures. . ." (p. 42).

This contrast with what man might have retained in Eden and the creation of the Edenic Paradise itself both parallels that of Milton in Paradise Lost and Homer's intensely concrete descriptions.

Like Adam, Ransom was at first alone on the earth. "The sense of his solitude became intense without becoming at all painful--only adding, as it were, a last touch of wildness to the unearthly pleasures that surrounded him" (p. 42).

Like a fully mature Adam, Ransom is one in whom the intellect is working properly, for he includes wisdom with his intellect. As example, he refrained from eating another of the delicious fruits on Perelandra since "he was now neither hungry nor thirsty," and Ransom found that "it appeared to him better not to taste again. Perhaps the experience had been so complete that repetition would be a vulgarity. . ." (p. 43). Furthermore, Ransom wondered "how often in his life on earth he had reiterated pleasures not through desire, but in the teeth of desire and in obedience to a spurious rationalism. . ." (p. 43). This is one of the main points of the novel, for it is just such spurious rationalism that the Enemy wishes to teach the Green Lady. But Lewis is showing that one must trust Meleldil rather than repeat the pleasures for fear they will not come again, and rather than hoard material goods for fear one will not be able to decide one's own fate without them at hand--another thing

the Enemy wishes to teach the Green Lady. Another instance of Ransom's intellect working properly is revealed through his bravery; as the dragon approached Ransom, he "set his teeth and stood," even though his "false reason" said, "It's madness to wait for it" (p. 46).

George MacDonald (see Table II)--of whom Lewis says, "I never wrote anything that was not influenced by him"--has one character say to another, "Trust in the living God," to which the reply is "I do trust Him in spiritual matters." To this the response is "Everything is an affair of the spirit."⁷⁹ This is what Lewis is showing with his Biblically based epic: everything is a spiritual matter, and therefore the physical and the spiritual are really a union in which one might at times have to do physical battle with spiritual powers (or vice versa).

"What had happened on Earth, when Maleldil was born a man at Bethlehem, had altered the universe for ever" (p. 144). This clarifies beyond doubt that we are being presented Maleldil as Christ, and then goes on to explain the application that anyone might be called to fight evil: "The new world of Perelandra was not a mere repetition of the old world Tellus. Maledil never repeated Himself. . . . When Eve fell, God was not Man. He had not yet made men members of His body: since then He had, and through them henceforward He would save and suffer. One of the purposes for which He had done all this was to save Perelandra not through Himself but through Himself in Ransom. If Ransom refused, the plan, so far, miscarried" (pp. 144-45). Since now God has made men members of His body, men may be called to represent Him in any way, to be martyrs (witnesses) for Him, to let Him work in and through us (as Homer showed the gods and goddesses working in and through his men and women), to be His epic heroes.

Ransom's name clearly establishes him as a Christ figure. Maleldil tells him, "It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom" (p. 147). Here Ransom discovers what is to him a new meaning to his name--one who pays the price. Here he is consciously a substitute for Christ, repeating in a small way (though he does not know that it will not cost him his life and a great deal of suffering) the substitution of Christ on the cross for mankind. Furthermore, Elwin means "friend of angels," or "friend of God," as a kind of combination of the term goldwine gumena as applied in Beowulf to Hrothgar, King of the Danes, for the term meant "gold friend of men"--wine equals "friend," and of the elohim from the Old Testament, translated as lord and meaning "friend of God." The Oyarsa of Malacandra says Ransom's "very name in his own tongue is Elwin, the friend of the eldila" (p. 195).

When Maleldil's Voice tells Ransom, "My name also is Ransom" (p. 148), Ransom realizes, "So that was the real issue. If he now failed, this world also would hereafter be redeemed. If he were not the ransom, Another would be. . . . If Venus fell, her evil would be [like] a cube--her Redemption beyond conceiving" (p. 148). And this knowledge shows the "frightful freedom that was being put into his hands" (p. 148), for he must choose.

Just as Milton's justification of "the ways of God to men" hinges on (1) the affirmation of man's freedom and responsibility, and (2) the scheme of salvation through Christ's sacrifice for man which is set forth in the poem as a whole, in Perelandra Lewis's justification of the ways of God to men hinges on (1) the affirmation of man's freedom and responsibility, and (2) the scheme of salvation (ransom) through Ransom's

offering of himself for what he believes will be the sacrifice of his life for the Green Lady and King.

We have a conflation of John 21:15-22, wherein Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves Him, and when Peter answers that he does, Jesus tells him to "Feed my sheep," for Ransom also must care for Maleldil's creatures, and of John 18:28 and 19:16, wherein Jesus is led before Pilate to be tried. Ransom "had pictured himself, till now, standing before the Lord, like Peter [himself being on trial before the Lord]. But it was worse. He sat before Him like Pilate. It lay with him to save or to spill" (p. 148). This choice to be freely made is based on the free will that is the keystone to Lewis's and Milton's justification of the ways of God.

"And he bowed his head and groaned and repined against his fate" (p. 148). This brings us back to the verse where Esther asks why she has been chosen; indeed, to the repeated actions of the Israelites throughout much of the Old Testament. It reminds also of Adam and Eve repining against their fate, but with the difference that theirs is a fate they have brought upon themselves. And as Ransom groans "Mercy," or "Lord, why me?" (p. 149), he echoes Moses's cry upon being chosen to lead the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. Like Moses, Ransom questions his ability to perform his task: "What was the use of sending him --a mere scholar-- to cope with a situation of this sort? Any ordinary pugilist, or, better still, any man who could make good use of a Tommy-gun, would have been more to the purpose" (p. 84).

Ransom is like Thomas in doubting the outcome (but not doubting the divinity of Maleldil). Doubting the outcome, both nonetheless remain true. Thomas doubted, but he did not leave Jesus for something surer.

When Lazarus died, and Jesus wanted to go to Jerusalem in spite of the fact that the Jews were seeking to find Him and stone Him, Thomas had no hope. But he said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11: 16). Ransom is sure he will die, but this does not alter his decision, because, like Thomas, he did not bind his fate to Maleldil (Christ) because he hoped to be rich, comfortable, happy, or perhaps to have a cabinet post in the messianic kingdom. Thomas did not give himself to Jesus (nor Ransom to Maleldil) in order to obtain something else. Thomas held to Jesus because he loved Him. Ransom's final word, too, was "All right, then. I'll just die with Him." Thomas said, "Was Jesus wrong? Okay, then I will be wrong too." Thomas's doubt, and Ransom's, was a special kind. It is not uninvolved. Thomas throws himself and all he is and has into the balance; he is prepared to die in spite of his doubt. So is Ransom.

With his entire plotline, Lewis is making it clear that uninvolvedness is impossible. Those who are not for Maleldil are against Him, and those who are not against the evil of the Bent Eldil are for Him. There is no neutral ground, no prudent middle way. Anyone may be called to fight evil in any way.

The very fact that the Green Lady resists the temptation is, of course, a modification of the Genesis account and of Milton's account. The fact that Ransom wins his fight with the representative of the Devil in the Un-man points to Lewis's most significant thematic modification, however. He has taken his stand against the hint of the fortunate fall concept in Milton's Paradise Lost. Countering Weston's use of the fortunate fall argument, Ransom tells the Green Lady: "The first King and first Mother of our world did the forbidden thing; and He brought good

out of it in the end. But what they did was not good; and what they lost we have not seen" (p. 125). Perelandra further differs from Paradise Lost in having the King face the same decision Adam faced, and the King overcomes the temptation:

And then I saw what had happened in your [Ransom's] world, and how your Mother fell and how your Father went with her, doing her no good thereby and bringing the darkness upon all their children. And then it was before me like a thing coming towards my hand . . . what I should do in like case Though a man were to be torn in two halves . . . though half of him turned into earth, . . . the living half must still follow Maleldil. For if it also lay down and became earth, what hope would there be for the whole? But while one half lived, through it He might send life back into the other He gave me no assurance. No fixed land. Always one must throw oneself into the wave (p. 210).

Lewis has Ransom enact the epic pattern of the visit to the underworld wherein the hero comes out alive, thus having "conquered" death or at least faced it. Christianity does not deny death; it transforms it; it permutes death into life. As Ransom is "reborn" on the mountain top in Perelandra, the message of the dying and reviving gods of mythology is acted out for and through him so that the message of Colossians 1:13 now applies: God has "rescued us from the domain of darkness," or the "power of darkness" as in the King James Version. After Ransom is reborn into Perelandra, the land too seems reborn. In contrast to the barren "waste places" of the underworld, he finds the blossoming and rejoicing land and the singing beasts, echoing Isaiah 35:1-2: "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing."

The covenants of the Old and New Testaments are also suggested. The eldila "who ought to be obeyed" and who guided the old worlds are no longer the guides; as the Green Lady says, "That is all the old order, Piebald, the far side of the wave that has rolled past us and will not come

again. That very ancient world to which you journeyed was put under the eldila. In your own world also they ruled once: but not since our Beloved became a Man. . . . But in our world, which is the first of worlds to wake after the great change, they have no power. There is nothing now between us and Him" (p. 82). Thus the Earth's history is drawn into and dependent upon this tale of a far-away planet.

Perelandra follows Paradise Lost in its inclusion of an account of creation, given by Raphael in Paradise Lost and here quickly recounted by the Oyarsa of Perelandra, which roughly parallels that given in Genesis. The first day God created light; the second day, the firmament above and below the waters, and heaven. Perelandra, who has been God's agent of creation, says, "I rounded this ball when it first arose from Arbol. I spun the air about it and wove the roof. I built the Fixed Island and this, the holy mountain, as Maleldil taught me" (p. 196). In Genesis, the third day God created Land, the Earth and Seas, the plants--grass, herbs, trees; the fourth day lights in the firmament, i.e., the sun, moon and stars; the fifth day water animals, fishes, fowls of the air; the sixth day, living creatures--cattle, creeping things, beasts of the earth; and this day of creation was climaxed with the creation of man--male and female. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Perelandra concludes the account of that world's creation: "The beasts that sing and the beasts that fly and all that swims on my breast and all that creeps and tunnels within me down to the centre. . ." (p. 196). Table IV shows the comparison of these two orders of creation. And on the seventh day, God

TABLE IV
ORDER OF CREATION

Earth	Perelandra
1. Light	Light (Arbol, the sun, already existed)
2. Firmament (Heaven)	The air about this ball
3. Land--earth and seas, plants--grass, herbs, trees	The roof of the planet
4. Sun, moon, stars	The Fixed Island and Holy Mountain
5. Water animals, fishes, fowls of the air	The beasts that sing and the beasts that fly and all that swims
6. Living creatures--cattle, creeping things, beasts of the earth	All that creeps and tunnels
Man	

rested, and he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it on Earth. The story of Perelandra starts here.

The King and Queen of Perelandra seem to have been given dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air and all the animals of their world, for the Green Lady says it is their duty to "make them [the animals] older every day," by which she means to increase their knowledge and wisdom (p. 65). But they receive dominion over all their planet as the story comes to its end; the Oyarsa of Perelandra has kept the planet for them until this moment when they have become the gods and goddesses they were (and Adam and Eve were) created to be. They are, as Lewis puts it in Reflections on the Psalms, "taken up into a new life without relinquishing the old," so that, reversing the Incarnation, "human life becomes the vehicle of Divine life," as they live in an unbroken relationship with Maleldil.⁸⁰ In the Preface to Paradise Lost Lewis reminds of Milton's and Saint Augustine's theory that if there had been no Fall, the human race would have been raised to angelic status;⁸¹ this is what he shows with the Green Lady and her King.

In their stepping up to "what they were meant to be," the King and Queen are described as "Paradise itself in its two Persons, Paradise walking hand in hand, its two bodies shining in the light like emeralds yet not themselves too bright to look at" (p. 204). Contrast this with Adam and Eve leaving Eden after the Fall:

The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow
Through Eden took their solitarie way.

(PL XII.646-49)

The fortunate fall concept is hinted at in that though "Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon" (PL XII.645), they are going out

with the world all before them. The only reference to Paradise here is the advice Michael gives Adam:

add Faith,
 Add Vertue, Patience, Temperance, add Love,
 By name to come call'd Charitie, the soul
 Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath
 To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
 A Paradise within thee, happier farr.
 (PL XII.582-87)

Whereas Milton's epic ends with Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden, albeit heroically prepared to work towards the redemption prophesied, Lewis's ends with the Adam and Eve of Perelandra, as the Oyarsa tells Ransom, stepping "up that step at which your parents fell" to "sit in the throne of what they were meant to be" (p. 197). And whereas the delights of earth are diminished, those of Perelandra are increased. The change in nature corresponds to the change in man and rises from the same cause--on Earth, the loss of the old harmony between God and man, and on Perelandra, the gain of an even closer harmony.

The Green Lady and the King of Perelandra parallel Milton's Adam and Eve in that they are not naif, barbarian, or underdeveloped. They begin as mature, intelligent, and thoroughly developed, majestic beings instead. The Green Lady is described as a perfect being: "Up till now her face had been grave. At this point she clapped her hands and a smile such as Ransom had never seen changed her. One does not see that smile here except in children, but there was nothing of the child about it there" (p. 61). This, of course, reminds us of Jesus's injunction that we should become as little children.

Later, on the third day after first seeing her, Ransom sees the Green Lady "standing a few yards away, motionless but not apparently disengaged --doing something with her mind, perhaps even with her muscles, that he

did not understand. . . . Opposites met in her and were fused in a fashion for which we have no images. . . . Beautiful, naked, shameless, young--she was obviously a goddess; but then the face, the face . . . made her a Madonna. The alert, inner silence which looked out from those eyes overawed him; yet at any moment she might laugh like a child, or run like Artemis or dance like a Maenad" (pp. 64-65).

She delivers a speech which parallels Mary's magnificat in Luke 1:46-55: "Only my spirit praises Maleldil who comes down from Deep Heaven into this lowness and will make me to be blessed by all the times that are rolling towards us. It is He who is strong and makes me strong and fills empty worlds with good creatures" (p. 66).

Lewis has one discordant note in his description of the Green Lady as an Eve figure--that of her with the animals: "The beasts raced forward to greet her. . . . She turned as they approached her and welcomed them, and once again the picture was half like many earthly scenes but in its total effect unlike them all. It was not really like a woman making much of a horse, nor yet a child playing with a puppy. There was in her face an authority, in her caresses a condescension, which by taking seriously the inferiority of her adorers made them somehow less inferior--raised them from the status of pets to that of Slaves" (pp. 64-5). Clearly, Lewis has no concept here of the status of a pet, for that would not be a raising, but a definite lowering of status! Pets are not things to be used and manipulated and changed--and not slaves; they are beings in their own right with their own natures, personalities, desires and lives: more like the hnau animals of Malacandra than anything else.

In spite of this, we may say of Lewis's Green Lady as Bowra has of Milton's Adam, "Within his limited experience Adam is well informed, and

there is no point which he does not take and understand at its proper worth. He is not natural man, as Rousseau was later to imagine him; still less is he the primitive savage of anthropology. He is man in the original splendor of innocence, man as he might have been if sin had not come into the world."⁸² Lewis's Green Lady is like Milton's Adam in many ways. Both are created entirely free from sin, are to be the ancestor of all mankind on their respective planets, therefore also are almost without human experience. As chosen companions of God, they possess a closeness to God and knowledge denied to Adam's descendants but not to be denied to the Green Lady's. Both are fully mature, powerful, and beautiful beings. Milton describes, "Adam the goodliest man of men since born His sons" (PL IV.323-24). They are indeed lords of their worlds; they have named the animals which sport for their entertainment; their dwellings are rich with all the beauty that nature can give. Also, for both, their very lack of external splendor only enhances their natural dignity, as when Adam is going to meet Raphael:

without more train
 Accompani'd then with his own compleat
 Perfections, in himself was all his state,
 More solemn then the tedious pomp that waits
 On Princes, when thir rich Retinue long
 Of Horses led, and Grooms besmeared with Gold.
 (PL V. 350-56)

As Adam and Eve lived in communion with God in Eden (both in Genesis and in Milton's account), the Green Lady in Perelandra experiences the presence of Maleldil constantly, perhaps also suggestive of the epic convention of messages from the gods. At one time, "'How do you know that?'" asked Ransom in amazement.

'Maleldil is telling me,' answered the woman. And as she spoke the landscape had become different, though with a difference none of the

senses would identify. The light was dim, the air gentle, and all Ransom's body was bathed in bliss, but the garden world where he stood seemed to be packed quite full, and as if an unendurable pressure had been laid upon his shoulders" (p. 61). When Ransom asks the Green Lady if she lives alone, she asks, "What is alone?" For she is not alone. She exists in harmony with nature and the animals and in the continual presence of and in continual communication with Maleldil. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you," and George MacDonald has commented, "Of all teachings that which presents a far distant God is the nearest to absurdity. Either there is none, or He is nearer to every one of us than our nearest consciousness of self."⁸³ Lewis said in Miracles, "The supernatural is not remote and abstruse: it is a matter of daily and hourly experience, as intimate as breathing."⁸⁴ This is what is being shown in Perelandra.

As Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden have been given the one injunction--"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"--so the Green Lady (and presumably also the King) has been given the injunction not to stay on the fixed lands overnight nor dwell there. The meaning of the injunction is later explained: to trust in and follow Maleldil's will rather than to insist on one's own will; that is, rather than to set oneself up as a god.

"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25). Just so, the Green Lady is naked and unashamed, but Ransom, from fallen mankind of Earth, is somewhat ashamed of his body when he sees the great beauty of the Green Lady: "Embarrassment and desire were both a thousand miles away from his experience: and if he was

a little ashamed of his own body, that . . . turned only on the fact that he knew his body to be a little ugly and a little ridiculous" (p. 59).

The Satan figure, the Bent Eldil, as Lewis presents him seems chillingly realistic. "And if--God forbid--any of us ever meets a devil, will he not be exactly as C. S. Lewis portrays him?"⁸⁵ "It looked at Ransom in silence. . . . It did not defy goodness, it ignored it to the point of annihilation" (p. 8). Weston and Satan both desired to be equals with God. Milton's Satan denied being a created being. Weston believed himself to be the manifestation of God. At first, Weston tried to describe his concept of good and evil being part of the same force, but he is really interested only in himself, much as was Milton's Satan who could only think of himself and talk of himself.

When fully demon-possessed, Weston becomes the "Un-man," the mouth-piece and bridge for Satan. As such, he becomes totally uninterested in those things he had claimed as his goals in life; he has no further interest in scientism, matter, or spirit. This compares with the concept of devils consuming man which Lewis presents humorously though grimly in both his Screwtape Letters and That Hideous Strength.

David Shelley Berkeley says much of *Perelandra* has been written as a reaction to a distaste for Satan as Milton presented him in Paradise Lost. Lewis did not like attaching energy and vitality and even heroic qualities to a diabolic Satan.⁸⁶ Lewis thought of evil as "an ape of God," a parasitic thing which was unable to create on its own but existed by perverting the good which God created.⁸⁷

When Ransom explains, "The black archon--our own bent Oyarsa--is meditating some sort of attack on *Perelandra*" (p. 23), there are echoes of Milton's Lucifer meditating some attack on Earth and its newly created

creatures. Ransom adds, "He can't get there in his own person, in his own photosome or whatever we should call it. . . . He must be attempting Perelandra in some different way" (p. 23). This echoes the way Milton's Lucifer "got there" in the Garden of Eden in the form, first, of a cormorant, then a mist, and finally in the body of the serpent. Just so, Satan uses Weston's spaceship as his Trojan Horse to get him there and Weston's body through which to act. "Weston's body travelling in a spaceship had been the bridge. . ." (p. 111). Bridge describes Weston as the misericord bridge-builder.⁸⁸ The term "bridge-builder" has long been associated with Christianity: i.e., the Pontifex Maximus (the greatest bridge-builder) was the title for the Roman bridge-builder, and this term was adopted for the title of the Catholic Pope--one who built the supreme bridge for man; i.e., the bridge to their God. Here Weston is the opposite to the bridge-builder of ancient Roman religions and the Catholic Pope.

Bent as the term for evil suggests Augustine's (and Luther's) use of the word curvatus with reference to the sin that moves a man to turn from God, concupiscently, toward the world or toward himself. The entire "silent planet" myth, of course, is based on mythical, apocalyptic echoes from the Bible. This embodiment of evil is dealt with in a way particularly suited to the epic: Ransom literally and physically engages him in battle.

The glee of the fallen angels over the pain of the angels hit during the battle in Heaven in Paradise Lost may be compared to the pleasure of the Un-man in the destruction of the fragile frog-like creatures, and it may be an echo from further back of the Olympian gods and goddesses laughing at Hephaestus as he limped among them serving nectar or as they took

delight in the rout of the Trojans or the Greeks when whichever side they favored was winning.

The issue of the temptations is that man has free will, and this is also the issue for Ransom's decision to sacrifice himself. As George MacDonald has said, "... man is lord of his will, his action.... If a man lay himself out to do the immediate duty of the moment, wonderfully little forethought, I suspect, will be found needful. That forethought only is right which has to determine duty, and pass into action. To the foundation of yesterday's work well done, the work of the morrow will be sure to fit."⁸⁹ And still on free will, he later said, "It is because we are not near enough to Thee to partake of thy liberty that we want a liberty of our own different from thine"; and again, "By obeying one learns how to obey."⁹⁰ The Green Lady was able to overcome temptation because she partook of the liberty of Maleldil, and the more she obeyed, the more she learned how to obey, and found the true joy in what is paradoxically true freedom. When she came to understand that she had free will, she perceived its significance also: "... it is I, I myself, who turn from the good expected to the given good. Out of my own heart I do it.... I thought ... that I was carried in the will of Him I love, but now I see that I walk with it.... It is a delight with terror in it. ... The world is so much bigger than I thought. I thought we went along paths--but it seems there are no paths. The going itself is the path" (pp. 69-70). Ransom at this point realized that, like Eve, the Green Lady could fall since she had free will: "There was no reason why she should step out of her happiness into the psychology of our own race; but neither was there any wall between to prevent her doing so" (p. 68). The Un-man here is even more subtle in his temptations of the Green Lady than

Milton's Lucifer of Eve as part of Lewis's revolt against the heroic, dynamic, highly energetic devil of Paradise Lost (see Table V for a listing of the Green Lady's temptations). The main theme of Perelandra is that of temptation, but, of course, temptation also implies questions as to the nature of a universe and a world wherein temptation is allowed to occur, and this universe and this world and their creatures turn out to have free will to make their own choices for good or evil. Free will is the overriding principle upon which everything is based. The next question that temptation implies is closely related: how will evil make the attempt? In such a paradise, what can evil offer as an attractive alternative? We find that the Un-man employs the alchemy of evil upon virtues admirable in themselves under the proper circumstances--liberation, progress, sacrifice for others--to hide the dissatisfaction he is trying to arouse. He attempts to make the Green Lady's obedience and contentment seem confining and boring, and even, with his urging her to sacrifice herself for the King and their future children, demeaning. The paradox is, of course, that true freedom requires discipline. Lewis appropriately uses the image of the Heavenly Dance to illustrate the paradox, for if one wants to have the freedom to dance, one must first submit to the discipline of learning how it is done. As Howard notes, "In the world of Malacandra and Perelandra (and Narnia), it appears that acceptance of the given, and submission to it, is the key to contentment. Paradoxically, of course, contrary to the accusations of all Nietzschean . . . romantics like Uncle Andrew and Jadis and Weston that this is all an opiate, this submission is synonymous with freedom and maturity"; furthermore, the same bright alchemy that transforms rules and obedience into freedom and joy here can also be seen at work in all gymnasts and ballet dancers and

TABLE V
THE GREEN LADY'S TEMPTATIONS

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1. Disobedience. To stay overnight on the fixed lands.
 2. Vanity. To cause self-awareness.
 3. To become a martyr, a "tragedy queen."
 4. To disobey in order to be "really separate." Self-awareness. Self-determination.
 5. Pride.
 6. Noble revolt concept.
 7. False images in the imagination to cause errors in reasoning.
 8. To own things. To control one's own destiny.
 9. Self-consciousness to cause an external, dramatic conception of the self.
 10. All the temptations working together to cause alienation from one's true self.
-

poets and athletes. They have all learned how it is done."⁹¹ When one has mastered how it is done, one may dance with freedom or even be free to innovate in the dance. And when one has made a choice with one's free will, this is the truest freedom. As Ransom thinks upon having accepted his task to kill the Un-man, "you might say that he had [been] delivered from the rhetoric of his passions and had emerged into unassailable freedom" (p. 149).

In temptations, one has no way of knowing at any point just how much is at stake. Usually, as with the story's first temptation--that of the narrator Lewis--the temptation seems just a small deflection and perhaps even extremely sensible and plausible. The thing which saves Lewis in his temptation barrage is sheer decency--as he puts it, "some rag of sanity and some reluctance to let Ransom down" (p. 16), and "reason or conscience awoke and set me once more plodding forwards" (p. 11). This is another major way in which Lewis's epic varies from those of his predecessors: heroism itself is often a matter of the common decencies or "un-heroic" persistence--a no-nonsense approach to ordeals and testings and epic tasks. The heroism of Lewis's epic heroes is often, as Howard perceives of the narrator Lewis's overcoming of his temptation, "a far cry from the waving banner of some more obviously heroic charge into the ranks of temptation [or into the ranks of battle in epics such as Beowulf, the Iliad, the Odyssey, Jerusalem Delivered, or the Faerie Queene], but this is what it comes down to here: merely the old, plodding schoolboy convention of keeping your commitments and one thing and another. We find this again and again in the narrative--this way in which the business of resisting temptation must be got through as often as not without any dramatic help."⁹² And once having decided what should be done, one finds

Ransom's explanation to Lewis as to how to deal with the bent eldila the best course: "the best plan is to take no notice and keep straight on" (p. 21). As Howard puts it, "The danger to be avoided, as seen here and elsewhere in Lewis's narratives . . . , is wasting time discussing something that you know, or at least have known, to be true, as though there were some question about it. If it is clear today that you are supposed to leave Ur of the Chaldees, for example, then no concatenation of bad weather, truculent camels, surly drivers, and harrying marauders ought to make you raise the question again. . . . At least this would be the case given the serenely fixed moral structure of the world Lewis evokes in his fiction--and, we might add, in all possible worlds: if something is true, then that's that."⁹³ This is the same attitude Lewis maintained during his temptation barrage concerning Ransom: "The rational part of my mind, even at that moment, knew perfectly well that even if the whole universe were crazy and hostile, Ransom was sane and wholesome and honest. And this part of my mind in the end sent me forward. . ." (p. 13). Ransom's decision to fight the Un-man, indeed, once having been made, seemed such a certainty that he decided "predestination and freedom were apparently identical" (p. 149). The thing has not become easier. "His fear, his shame, his love, all his arguments, were not altered in the least. The thing was neither more nor less dreadful than it had been before. The only difference was that he knew--almost as a historical proposition--that it was going to be done. . . . There was going to arrive, in the course of time, a moment at which he would have done it. The future act stood there, fixed and unaltered as if he had already performed it. It was a mere irrelevant detail that it happened to occupy the position we call future instead of that which we call past" (p. 149).

Milton, following the thought of his period in regarding woman as the less rational creature and thus as inferior to man, has Eve leave when Adam and Michael converse, thus strongly suggesting that he does not consider her intellectually capable of understanding, though she says she desires to hear these matters from Adam. Also, while Raphael is telling Adam the future history of mankind, Milton does not seem to consider Eve rational or intellectual enough to be included in the conversation, so he has her sleep all through Books XI and XII.

Milton had Lucifer tempt Eve because she was the less rational of the two newly created creatures and because he was following the Genesis account. At least Lewis does not specify such a reason for Satan-in-Weston tempting the Lady rather than the King. Indeed, Weston seems only to choose her because he found her. Of course, at the novel's end when the King explains that Maleldil has taken him away for lessons of his own, we learn that this finding of the Lady alone may have been by Maleldil's plan. Nonetheless, Lewis's character Ransom does display some rather chauvinistic attitudes. Ransom is astonished that the first human figure he finally spots is a woman. Then he keeps trying to get her to lead him to those he obviously considers the important members of her planet--the men. When he finally discovers that there are only two of them, he is determined to see the King and never once seems to entertain the thought that this Queen Mother of the future race might be an equally important figure. When he spots Weston's spaceship, he once again frets, "If only they could find this King whom the Green Woman kept on talking about. . . ." (p. 84).

But when we have watched the Green Lady overcome the temptations, we have seen the fulfillment of what man was created to be. "The way of

life which Adam and Eve take up as the poem ends is that of the Christian pilgrimage through this world. . . . Expelled from Eden, our first 'grand parents' pick up the burdens of humanity as we know them, sustained by a faith which we also know, and go forth to seek a blessing which we do not know yet."⁹⁴ As Matthew Arnold has said, "But of Christianity the future is as yet almost unknown. For that the world cannot get on without righteousness we have the clear experience, and a grand and admirable experience it is. But what the world will become by the thorough use of that which is really righteousness, the methods and the secret and the sweet reasonableness of Jesus, we have as yet hardly any experience at all."⁹⁵ In Perelandra the King and Queen take up that blessing and that glory which we do not yet know--they take the next step toward becoming, as Lewis puts it, the gods and goddesses we were created to be. As in Paradise Lost Milton presents the spiritual and physical effects of the fall, so Lewis presents the spiritual and physical effects of Tor's and Tindrill's choice to obey.

The imagery in Paradise Lost, Book V, 469-503, presents the heart of Milton's thinking about the nature of man as he was created to be in Eden, and as by God's grace he may yet be again. This is the image Lewis is fleshing out for us in the King and Queen of Perelandra as they step up to the glory man was intended for. Milton's Raphael explains man's potential divinity:

Your bodies may at last turn all to Spirit,
 Improv'd by tract of time, and wing'd ascend
 Ethereal as wee, or may at choice
 Here or in Heav'nly Paradises dwell;
 If ye be found obedient, and retain
 Unalterably firm his love entire
 Whose progeny you are.

As Hughes notes, "the thought is not inharmonious with Aristotle's

conception of nature as growth, nor with St. Paul's belief that 'the human body is sown a natural body,' but 'raised a spiritual body.'⁹⁶ As Lewis explains in Weight of Glory, "When human souls have become as perfect in voluntary obedience as the inanimate creation is in its lifeless obedience, then they will put on its glory, or rather that greater glory of which Nature is only the first sketch. . . . And in there, beyond Nature, we shall eat of the tree of life. At present, if we are reborn in Christ, the spirit in us lives directly on God: but the mind, and still more the body, receives life from Him at a thousand removes--through our ancestors, through our food, through the elements. . . . What would it be to taste at the fountain-head. . . . Yet that, I believe, is what lies before us. The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy. As St. Augustine said, the rapture of the saved soul will 'flow over' into the glorified body."⁹⁷

As the King and Queen of Perelandra come hand in hand up the holy mountain, they are shown in a Biblical glory of light:

A light "resting on" or "overshadowing" a holy thing. . . . [As] the light reached its perfection and settled itself, as it were, like a lord upon his throne or like wine in a bowl, and filled the whole flowery cup of the mountain top, every cranny, with its purity, the holy thing, Paradise itself in its two Persons, Paradise walking hand in hand, its two bodies shining in light like emeralds yet not themselves too bright to look at, came in sight in the cleft between two peaks, and stood a moment with its male right hand lifted in regal and pontifical benediction. . . . And the gods kneeled and bowed their huge bodies before the small forms of that young King and Queen (p. 204).

Although Biblically couched, this image also suggests epic echoes. For example, Achilles is also shown in a kind of glory of light in the Iliad:

. . . Achilles favourite of Zeus leapt up. Athene cast her tasselled aegis round his sturdy shoulders; and the great goddess also shed a golden mist around his head and caused his body to emit a blaze of light. Thus, from some far-away beleaguered

island, where all day long the men have fought a desperate battle from their city walls, the smoke goes up to heaven; but no sooner has the sun gone down than the light from the line of beacons blazes up and shoots into the sky to warn the neighboring islanders and bring them to the rescue in their ships. Such was the blaze that made its way to heaven from Achilles' head. . . . Achilles' cry was as piercing as the trumpet call that rings out when a city is beset by murderous enemies; and their hearts all turned to water when they heard that brazen voice. Even the long-maned horses felt something evil in the wind and began to pull their chariots round. And their charioteers were dumbfounded as they saw the fire, fed by Athene of the Bright Eyes, blaze with a fierce and steady glare from the head of the lion-hearted son of Peleus.

(Iliad XVIII.101-24)

This destructive power of the glory of Achilles is in harsh contrast to the Christianized concept of glory of the King and Queen. Even the response of the animals illustrates it; the horses fear Achilles, but the animals on the mountain joyfully line up to honor the King and Queen.

Aeneas is also shown in glory surrounded by light when Dido first sees him:

Aeneas was standing there in an aura of brilliant light,
 Godlike of face and figure: for Venus herself had breathed
 Beauty upon his head and the roseate sheen of youth on
 His manhood and a gallant light into his eyes;
 As an artist's hand adds grace to the ivory he works on,
 As silver or marble when they're plated with yellow gold.

(Aeneid I.588-93)

The glory of Achilles and Aeneas has in both cases been added by a goddess like a kind of plating as Virgil says in the Aeneid, but the glory of the King and Queen arises from within, as the Paradise which they now enjoy is within--is part of their very being.

Lewis points out that glory is imaged in the Bible as "brightness, splendour, luminosity." "We are," he says, "to shine as the sun, we are to . . . be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. . . . That is why the poets . . . talk as if the west wind could really sweep into a human

soul; but it can't. They tell us that 'beauty born of murmuring sound' will pass into a human face; but it won't. Or not yet. For if we take the imagery of Scripture seriously, . . . then we may surmise that both the ancient myths and the modern poetry, so false as history, may be very near the truth as prophecy."⁹⁸

The King and Queen of Perelandra have "put on the new man." To "learn Christ" (Ephesians 4:20), to learn the truth as it is in Jesus "him that is true" (1 John 5:20), is to "be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and [to] put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:23-24).

The use of light imagery is related to the strict and formal meanings of the word God and its kindred Aryan words, Theos, Deus, and Deva, as "shining" or "brilliant." Lewis's speculations in Mere Christianity are what is being acted out in Perelandra: "The son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God. We do not know . . . how things would have worked if the human race had never rebelled against God and joined the enemy. Perhaps every man would have been 'in Christ,' would have shared the life of the Son of God, from the moment he was born. Perhaps the Bios or natural life would have been drawn up into the Zoe, the uncreated life, at once and as a matter of course."⁹⁹ Perhaps, as Lewis speculates, "The process of being turned from a creature into a son would not have been difficult or painful if the human race had not turned away from God. . . ." And it is important to note that "They were able to do this because He gave them free will: He gave them free will because a world of mere automata could never find love and therefore never know infinite happiness."¹⁰⁰ (This automata aspect is represented at its worst in the Un-man's takeover of Weston's body.)

In the transcendent stage, the King and Queen of Perelandra, because they have let God have His way, because they have obeyed, have "come to share in the life of Christ." As Lewis explains, in our first state, "We are not begotten by God, we are only made by Him: in our natural state we are not sons of God, only (so to speak) statues. We have not got Zoe or spiritual life: only Bios or biological life which is presently going to run down and die."¹⁰¹ But we were created to have both. And since they did not fall, the King and Queen of Perelandra do have both. As Lewis says, this is the whole purpose and offer of Christianity--that we should come to share in the life of Christ: "He came to this world and became a man in order to spread to other men the kind of life He has--by what I call 'good infection.' Every Christian is to become a little Christ."¹⁰² Lewis says that from the Christian viewpoint, the next step in evolution has already occurred: "In Christ a new kind of man appeared: and the new kind of life which began in Him is to be put into us."¹⁰³ As the Oyeresu say, "Out of the new creation . . . the mode of change itself is changed for ever. Blessed is he!" (p. 214). Therefore, the benediction the King and Queen proclaim upon Ransom is for every ordinary person, for all of us: "The splendour, the love, and the strength be upon you" (p. 222).

It has become a commonplace of modern literary criticism to state that the epic tradition ended with Milton. It is supposed to have been the form of a simpler age when man and his environment, and man and his society, were unified. But such assumption denies the central character of epic as recorder and perhaps former of changes in human values and consciousness. Homer's persistent ridiculing of Ares, the war god, in a poem much concerned with war and with heroism displayed in battle,

suggests that even the Iliad, the first of all Western epics, is partially rejecting the prior value system based upon the glorification of battle and revealing its tragic futility. From Homer to Milton's explanation that all heroic endeavor seemed necessary because man has fallen, epic has rejected and redefined values.

From its genesis epic has been concerned with the relation of human consciousness and outer, physical reality. "With the Renaissance," as Webber notes, "problems of the existence, meaning, and interrelationships of inner and outer lives become both more artificial and more critical than ever before, as the center of human meaning shifts both in metaphor and in fact to the individual human being."¹⁰⁴ Milton's Paradise Lost explains the necessity for the epic hero's endeavors in the fallen world since Adam and Eve lost the perfect union of inner and outer reality, and Paradise Regained makes the epic quest one for self-knowledge, an interior quest, as Jesus descends into himself. This prepares the way for The Prelude and for any subjective hero to make an interior journey.

In Paradise Regained, Satan represents the extremes of the outer view of reality with his desire to make the world into a technological desert of external things, as Weston wishes to do in Out of the Silent Planet and before his complete absorption into the Un-man in Perelandra. But Jesus integrates reason and intuition and inner and outer existence and submits fully to the wholeness of His relationship to God so that He becomes a totally self-integrated one, a new man. As Jesus and as Ransom, Tor, and Tinidril in Perelandra illustrate, the "fairer Paradise . . . founded now/ For Adam and his chosen Sons. . ." (PR IV.613-14) is within, a restoration of man's relationship with God.

There may, however, be the danger of attempts to sever the bonds of inner and outer being. Perelandra, following the epic tradition, reinterprets epic in order to forestall the solipsism and despair attendant upon such severings, with a consciousness which looks beyond itself into the creative and spacious majesty of Deep Heaven. Perelandra is a new kind of epic in a new heroic language for our age--Perelandra, Paradise Retained.

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CHAPTER V

SIGNIFICANCES

The epic, mythic and Biblical elements combine in the epic genre, and the epic and science fiction genres combine to create the total meaning and inherent power in C. S. Lewis's Perelandra. Lewis has what Charles Moorman has called "the sort of sacramental mentality" which makes him "more than a teller of tales; he was a maker of myths, a scholar and a teacher."¹ He believed that a good book was one which facilitates self-transcendence: he says, "In reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. . . . Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself, and am never more myself than when I do."² Therefore, in part we must judge the worth of Lewis's work by those standards. As Glover has said, we may look at Lewis's creation, unlike the evaluative critics, "according to the yardstick of how much it compels our participation, how far it enlarges our being, and what sort of window on the world it opens and invites us to look through."³

Our attitude toward Lewis's Perelandra may be that which Lewis states when discussing Milton's ritualistic style in Paradise Lost: "When our participation in a rite becomes perfect we think no more of ritual, but are engrossed by that about which the rite is performed."⁴ "Joy or exhilaration was what it produced--an overplus of robust and tranquil well-being in a total experience which contains both rapturous and painful

elements," so that the effect is that "new strength and width and brightness and zest have transformed" our world.⁵

The judicious poet holds all things from the heaven to the abyss within his hands, but his feet are firmly planted on common earth so that the emphasis is on what his material means to man. As Kathleen Williams has said of Spenser, "The poet is there in the world he has made, wondering or delighted or sad, and in all this representing us. The result has a wonderful verisimilitude, of a certain kind . . . of the kind of meaning we feel in life by living it."⁶ Lewis said of the Faerie Queene that it is "like life itself, not like the products of life. . . . The things we read about in it are not like life, but the experience of reading it is like living."⁷ The same may be said of Lewis's space trilogy, and especially of Perelandra.

As Lewis said of Spenser, we may say of Lewis, "To read him is to grow in mental health."⁸

Lewis's epic devices and his other worlds of science fiction speak to us of what we are in potentia, as created in the image of God; of temptation and how real the moral struggle is; of the joy of obedience to God; of the growth moral victory can bring.

C. S. Lewis's Perelandra may be read as an exciting science fiction adventure, or it may be viewed as a special space vehicle taking one on a spiritual journey to Truth. However, it stands at a high level of literature apart from its covert statements of Christianity. The life story, experiences, character, and opinions of C. S. Lewis have been dealt with by many authors, but, perhaps because Lewis is so successful as a Christian writer, the literary aspects of his work have been rather neglected. I seem to be the first to call attention to the epic nature of Perelandra.

Genre is determined partially by its structure and use of conventional devices, such as the appeal to the muse, catalogs, and so on in epic, but mainly by the nature of the meaning of the work, determined by the kind of thing referred to--shepherds in a pastoral, the marvelous in romance, unknown worlds or modes of existence within a scientific or pseudo-scientific reference in science fiction, and the hero and what it means to be heroic in epic. Howard perceptively notes, "Lewis is attempting something in narrative for which he had few if any precedents. . . . Lewis is attempting to achieve in prose narrative [in Perelandra] what has been attempted in epic or dream vision or religious lyric in other areas of literature, namely the placing of human experience in the bright light of the Ultimate. . . . The important questions at work in this light are not so much social and psychological as moral. Behavior is good or bad, and it leads to actual states of being, those states being called, eventually, heaven and hell. This is imagined in Greek epic and in the myths and in mediaeval dream vision and in the poetry of such poets as Spenser, Milton, Donne, and Eliot. It is not common in prose fiction."⁹ Howard fails to note that Perelandra is achieving this synthesis within the epic tradition. Perelandra shows that epic is still a living tradition.

ENDNOTES

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⁵Lewis, p. 61.

⁶Spenser's World of Glass: A Reading of The Faerie Queene (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 233.

⁷C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936; rpt. 1981), p. 358.

⁸Lewis, Allegory of Love, p. 359.

⁹Thomas Howard, The Achievement of C. S. Lewis (Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw Pub. Co., 1980), p. 69.

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