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ABSTRACT

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Sehnsucht is a term used by C.S. Lewis to describe the immortal longing imparted to each soul by the Creator. The design of this longing is to draw one to a place of absolute surrender to the truth of God's preeminence. In Lewis' own life, as well as that of his fictional characters, the result of this longing is a relentless quest. In Out of the Silent Planet and Perelandra, the quest follows a structural pattern I have identified as the island motif. Elwin Ransom moves toward an island physically and spiritually. He is drawn by slowly intensifying encounters with Sehnsucht, occasioned by his sensory perceptions of the bizarre landscapes.

Ransom's journey is allegorically related to the Christian's pilgrimage in Out of the Silent Planet. The quest becomes a reenactment of the Redeemer Myth in Perelandra. Both stories culminate in the hero's mystic union with the numinous.

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Chapter I

Identification of Structural and Thematic Metaphors

In 1943, C.S. Lewis wrote in Christian Behavior, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."[1] These words hold the key to the writer's Christian Weltanschauung and suggest the motivating principle for his two space adventures, Out of the Silent Planet and Perelandra.

The key is revealed in Lewis' autobiography Surpised by Joy. He explains that the central story of his life is about the unsatisfied desire he named joy. In an attempt to communicate his meaning he uses the German word Sehnsucht, which literally means "longing" or "yearning." Lewis' first awareness of this feeling is related to the following experiences:

> This absence of beauty, now that I come to think of it, is characteristic of our childhood. No picture on the walls of my father's house ever attracted--and indeed none deserved--our attention. We never saw a beautiful building or imagined that a building could be beautiful. Once in those very early days my brother brought into the nursery the lid of a biscuit tin which he had covered with moss and garnished with twigs and flowers so as to make it a toy garden or a toy forest. As long as I live my imagination of paradise will retain something of my brother's toy garden. And every day there were what we called

[1] C.S. Lewis, "Hope," Mere Christianity: The Case for Christianity, Christian Behavior, and Beyond Personality (New York: Macmillan Company, 1969), p. 120.

> "the Green Hills"; that is the low line of the Castlereagh Hills which we saw from the nursery windows. They were very far off but they were, to children, quite unattainable. They taught me longing--Sehnsucht. . . .[2]

The concept of Sehnsucht is a phenomenon which appears at every turn in Lewis' religious and imaginative works. To understand his use of the word and its relationship to Christianity, we might look at some of his important statements about it.

Lewis' first mention of the concept of Sehnsucht is found in an essay on William Morris where he identifies the attitude:

> Morris, like a true Pagan, does not tell us (because he does not think he knows) the ultimate significance of those moments in which we cannot help reaching out for something beyond the visible world and discovering 'at what unmeasured price man sets his life.'[3]

The effect of Sehnsucht is both personal and ineffable. Lewis calls it "the secret signature of each soul." The immortal longing has been imparted to each soul by the Creator. Each individual experiences only the want of it. "The thing itself has never been embodied in any thought, or image, or emotion." The satisfaction of this desire is never fully present because "whatever you try to identify with it, turns out to be not it but something else. . . ."[4]

It is the search for this "unsatisfiable desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction" that is the motivation for

[2]C.S. Lewis, Surprised By Joy (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1955), pp. 6-7.

[3]C.S. Lewis, Selected Literary Essays, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1969), pp. 45-46.

[4]C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain (New York: Macmillan Company, 1973), pp. 134-7.

Lewis' hero in his allegorical Pilgrim's Regress. This story explains Lewis' own quest which led him to the Christian faith. Like John, the hero who is seeking the island of sweet desire, Lewis sees the universal pilgrimage of man to be inspired by the longing for something East or West of the world.[5]

In the end, Lewis realized that this longing cannot be fulfilled here on earth. We are made for another world. Man is born remembering a heritage lost to this world and "the numinous, the cord of longing. . . beckons to us, draws us" to find the source of all beauty.[6]

The quest for this place of beauty forms the basic plot for Lewis' science fiction fantasies set in another world. He uses exotic settings to capitalize on "the way of imagination, the appeal to the sense of wonder" which Sehnsucht encompasses.[7] Relating his literary technique to his moral purpose, C.W. Moorman states that "Lewis' main aim in the creation of his silent planet myth is to create and maintain a metaphor which will serve to carry in fictional form the basic tenets of Christianity. . . ."[8]

In Out of the Silent Planet and Perelandra the basic thematic metaphor of Sehnsucht is accompanied by a pattern of imagery that

[5]Robert C. Rice, "Sehnsucht and Joy," The Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society, Vol. 4, No. 8, Whole No. 44 (June, 1973), p. 4.

[6]Rice, p. 4.

[7]Gunnar Urang, Shadows of Heaven: Religion and Fantasy in the Writing of C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams and J.R.R. Tolkien (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1971), p. 66.

[8]Mervin Ziegler, Imagination as a Rhetorical Factor in the Works of C.S. Lewis. Diss. University of Florida, 1973.

becomes the structural principle for the design of the plot. I have identified it as the island motif. It involves Lewis' particular selection of images of Sehnsucht in connection with scenes of gardens/forest, mountains/valleys, and water/islands. In both stories, Elwin Ransom moves physically and spiritually toward an island. His physical movement and spiritual growth evolve as a direct result of his growing recognition of the objective of Sehnsucht, a union with the numinous presence.

Ransom's adventures begin in a garden on Earth. His progress through the alien landscape of Mars (Malacandra) and Venus (Perelandra) yields unusual sensory experiences. The limitations of his normal sensory responses are removed because he enters sinless worlds. His apprehension of non-sensory or spiritual realities intensifies because he is drawn toward Maleldil (God) by the numinous aspect of Sehnsucht. When Ransom reaches his island goal, in each case his longing culminates with a vision of the Great Dance, a spiritual spectacle of cosmic harmony.

The longing which draws Ransom to the island Lewis describes in terms of the conventional Christian allegory of the Way or Paths in Life:

> The strange longing is not for anything possible on earth. It is the thirst for Heaven. There are three ways to deal with the desire: "The Fool's Way" is to move from one inadequate goal to another; "The Way of the Disillusioned 'Sensible Man'" is to dismiss the desire as adolescent and accept the everyday world and its limited satisfactions; and "The Christian Way" is to reason that creatures are not born with desires impossible of fullfillment.[9]

[9]C.S. Lewis, Christian Behavior (New York: Macmillan Company, 1943), pp. 57-58.

"The Christian Way" becomes the pattern for Elwin Ransom's adventures. In constructing the worlds of Malacandra and Perelandra, Lewis leads his pilgrim toward the goal of Sehnsucht, which is "our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off. . . ."[10]

Considering the metaphor of Sehnsucht as the basic theme, and the island motif as the basic structural pattern, it is possible to see the two novels as "a fictive analogue for a prepared world-view."[11] The world-view is "The Christian Way" and the travels of the pilgrim portray both the patterns of the Christian myth and the pattern of Lewis' own search for joy. The design of these patterns emerges as the reader examines the hero's movements in time and space.[12]

[10] C.S. Lewis, They Asked for a Paper (London: Geoffrey Bles Ltd., 1962), p. 207.

[11] Wayne Schumaker, "The Cosmic Trilogy of C.S. Lewis," Hudson Review 8 (Summer, 1955), p. 241.

[12] The novels under consideration are part of a trilogy which includes a third novel, That Hideous Strength. In this paper, I am omitting the last novel.

Chapter II

Metaphors of Movement and Sehnsucht

Basic to an understanding of the island motif is an examination of Lewis' use of metaphors of movement in Out of the Silent Planet and Perelandra. He uses both temporal and spatial metaphors in describing the journeys of Ransom. His hero follows a course toward the island which is marked by intermittent and slowly intensifying encounters with Sehnsucht. It becomes obvious that each encounter is a necessary part of the preparation for his final island experience.

Lewis relates these encounters to temporal movement by the use of several patterns of metaphors or images. Images of past, present and future are embodiments of the specific aspects of Sehnsucht which are relevant to Ransom's spiritual journey. Images of the past are accompanied by nostalgia and comments on the nature of memory. Images of the present are experienced as momentary joy and wonder. Images of the future are presented as yearnings and desires for a union with the numinous.[1]

[1]C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), pp. 4-11. Lewis explains the background of the idea of the numinous presence. In pagan societies it developed as a sense of fear or dread in the presence of a mighty spirit. It resulted from no visible contacts and was separated from the dimension of physical fear. Eventually, the idea of the numinous became a direct experience of the supernatural. When societies identified a numinous power with ethics and morality, they began to experience religious awe or reverence. The Jews were the people who first took this step and began to identify the awful Presence as "the righteous Lord" who "loveth righteousness." In Lewis' two novels, the identification of the

Although these time images can be differentiated, the concept of Sehnsucht is not easily related to a temporal scheme. To Lewis, longing for joy is omnipresent. Each present experience is necessarily connected with the past and the future. The desire is so all-encompassing that it not only includes, but also transcends the temporal and spatial continuum of man's life.[2] Explaining this aspect of Sehnsucht, Lewis asks the reader if he recognizes that it (Sehnsucht) is

> that something which you were born desiring, and which, beneath the flux of other desires and in all the momentary silences between the louder passions, night and day, year by year, from childhood to old age, you are looking for, listening for? You have never had it. All the things that have ever deeply possessed your soul have been but hints of it--tantalizing glimpses, promises never quite fulfilled, echoes that died away just as they caught your ear. But if it should really become manifest--if there ever came an echo that did not die away but swelled into the sound itself--you would know it. Beyond all possibility of doubt you would say "Here at last is the thing I was made for."[3]

From the beginning of life, joy is perceived. Its influence is persistent but always unrealized in its totality. For Ransom, this influence grows through his journeys until the fulfillment on the island. In both stories, it is not until he reaches his island goal that he is aware of the scope of his mission and purpose in life.

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numinous begins in the present but has its culmination in eternity. It is reflected in the imagery of the island, Ransom's destination. It is described also in the Great Dance at the end of Perelandra.

[2]This transcendancy is part of the Christian doctrine of immortality which states that the soul of a Christian is united with the creator in everlasting paradise (John 17:2-3).

[3]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 134.

Lewis' use of temporal metaphors of Sehnsucht in both novels cannot be separated from his use of spatial metaphors. Just as a pattern of time imagery emerges, so does a pattern of spatial imagery. The quest motif directly links both patterns to Sehnsucht. Ransom's spatial movements are described by Carnell as "the compulsive quest, which brings with it both fleeting joy and the sad realization that one is yet separated from what is desired."[4]

During the quest, certain landscape images appear to suggest the pattern of the island motif. The movement from innocence (the garden), through experience (forest and mountains), to maturity (the island) is clearly an allegorical representation of the Christian life. This pattern is also consistent with Lewis' religious and philosophical viewpoints. In terms of Sehnsucht, he explains it in this way: "All joy (as distinct from mere pleasure, still more amusement) emphasizes our pilgrim status; always reminds, beckons, awakens desire. Our best havings are wantings."[5]

Each image in the pattern of the island motif has a type of symbolic relationship to the hero's pursuit of joy. The obvious starting point on a journey is an allegorical state of innocence or childhood. The garden is an appropriate image to portray this for two reasons. First, the garden is related to the Christian myth of the Garden of Eden which embodies the idea of innocence. Secondly,

[4]Corbin Carnell, Bright Shadow of Reality: C.S. Lewis and the Feeling Intellect (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 22.

[5]W.H. Lewis, ed., Letters of C.S. Lewis (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1966), p. 289.

it is one of the first images which Lewis recognized in his own childhood experience as bringing the joy of Sehnsucht. It is also reasonable to expand this view to include the nostalgic viewpoint of the romantics which sees nature as less tainted than mankind as a result of the Fall.[6]

The next image in the pattern emerges because much of Ransom's journey consists of traversing landscapes of mountains and valleys. His experiences with Sehnsucht in these locations afford him the present realities of fleeting moments of joy. On these occasions joy is identified only in the moment after it is experienced. In The Problem of Pain, Lewis illustrates this notion explicitly:

> Again, you have stood before some landscape which seems to embody what you have been looking for all your life; and then turned to the friend at your side who appears to be seeing what you saw--but at the first word a gulf yawns between you and you realize that this landscape means something totally different to him, that he is pursuing an alien vision and cares nothing for the ineffable suggestion by which you are transported.[7]

Indeed it is the "ineffable suggestion" which sustains Ransom through the difficulties of traveling across the mountains.

Since the real emphasis in Sehnsucht is on the future, the imagery of the island landscape is most important. Reaching his island destination is the fulfillment of the pilgrim's quest. Actually, it cannot be fulfilled in the life of a mortal. Full realization comes only when

[6]This is akin to the romantic viewpoint of Wordsworth who connects childhood innocence with contemplation of nature. He also anticipates Lewis' theory of Sehnsucht with innocence in a garden scene in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," ll. 1-18.

[7]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, pp. 133-34.

one can "put on immortality."[8] Of the goal of Sehnsucht, Lewis explains, "Now if we are made for heaven, the desire for our proper place will already be in us, but not yet attached to the true object. . . ."[9]

However, the pilgrim believes that the true object is the island, until he identifies joy with being in the numinous presence. Ransom's experience in this regard echoes Lewis' account of his own realization of the identity of the goal of Sehnsucht. He notes in his autobiography that the desire for joy is actually associated with the object: "The form of the desire is in the desire. . . . I had been equally wrong in supposing that I desired Joy itself. Joy itself . . . turned out to be of no value at all. All the value lay in that of which Joy was the desiring. . . . I did not yet ask Who is the desired? Only what is it?"[10]

Lewis' subsequent experiences revealed the goal of Sehnsucht to be a union with the Creator. In like fashion, Ransom discovers that all of his journey experiences have been part of Maleldil's design to accomplish his divine purposes.

In addition to the imagery patterns already outlined, a few more generalizations about time and space metaphors should be noted. In each of the space stories, motion is on three levels: the first is the upward movement (away from earth to an island in space); the

[8] I Corinthians 15:53.

[9] Lewis, They Asked For a Paper, p. 199.

[10] Lewis, Surprised by Joy, pp. 220-21.

second is toward an island physically; the third is toward an island spiritually.

While the represented time of the two worlds is in the present, they are allegorically represented to be a world of the past (Malacandra) and a world of the future (Perelandra). The nostalgia and numinous awe ultimately associated with Sehnsucht are appropriately related to the life on each of these worlds. For example, the beautiful simplicity of the hrossa's life on Malacandra evokes nostalgia for the loss of innocence of Thulcandra (Earth). The perfection and purity of the world of the Green Lady on Perelandra anticipates the Christian paradise.

These observations about Lewis' use of temporal and spatial metaphors of Sehnsucht can best be supported by a detailed look at their use in each novel.

Chapter III

Temporal and Spatial Metaphors in Out of the Silent Planet

Because Sehnsucht is the unifying theme of all Lewis' metaphors, it is possible to discuss images of time and space concurrently in Out of the Silent Planet.

In the opening chapter of this novel, Elwin Ransom finds himself, because of a promise to a stranger, an unwelcome evening visitor in the garden of Professors Weston and Devine. The "soothing stillness" and "underlying tranquillity" of the scene is disturbed by the angry sounds of a fight. Ransom, not desiring any adventure, but satisfied with his hitherto peaceful walking tour, feels compelled to investigate. When the two encounter Ransom and discover his usefulness to their purposes, he is drugged. Asleep, he dreams of another garden--bright and sunlit, surrounded by a wall. Behind the wall is darkness out of which emerge "the queerest people he had ever seen" (p. 18).[1] Later in the novel it seems clear that this mysterious garden dream prefigures his encounters with aliens on Malacandra (Mars). But the experiences Ransom has in the garden emphasize his relatively innocent state.

His spiritual and physical journey then begins to progress both temporally and spatially. Waking after a struggle with Weston, he

[1]C.S. Lewis, Out of the Silent Planet (New York: Macmillan Company, 1965), p. 11. All subsequent references of page numbers in this chapter are to this edition.

discovers he is aboard a spaceship moving away from Earth. His fear and excitement bring about a fleeting contact with a type of Sehnsucht: "He was poised on a sort of emotional watershed from which, he felt, he might at any moment pass into delirious terror or into an ecstasy of joy" (p. 23).

Though Ransom is in a disquieting predicament, he experiences a strange peacefulness and "severe delight." He imagines, "'sweet influence' pouring or even stabbing into his surrendered body" (p. 31). As time passes, Ransom observes that there was "another and more spiritual cause for his progressive lightening and exaltation of heart" (p. 32). Sehnsucht awakens his long suppressed memories of how great thinkers described the glory of the heavens. For the first time he can identify with the descriptions of Milton. Now he can see the vacuity and deadness of space as vital and fertile "the empyrean ocean of radiance" (p. 32). The first stage in his physical journey is thus accompanied by the beginnings of spiritual awareness of a divine presence.

Even after Ransom overhears Weston and Devine discuss him as a sacrificial offering to the alien Malacandrians, he is euphoric: "He had the feeling that one sailing in the heavens, as he was doing, should not suffer abject dismay before any earthbound creature" (p. 37). That this transformation is another result of his contact with the numinous aspect of Sehnsucht is demonstrated by the powerful effect on his emotions. He reflects that he can defend himself adequately with the knife he has pilfered and the narrator remarks that the "bellicose mood was a very rare one with Ransom" (p. 37).

The spatial movement upward ends with the landing on Malacandra. As the three arrive, Ransom is "wholly absorbed in a philosophical speculation" about the nature of the universe, again a result of his awareness of a numinous presence (p. 40). The first segment of the journey ends, therefore, with Ransom's movement from a garden on Earth to an island in space where he begins his adventure in the exotic Martian countryside.[2]

His first sights are of unidentifiable purple masses, jagged whitish shapes and a "rose-coloured cloud-like mass" which "looked like the top of a gigantic red cauliflower" (p. 43). The purple vegetation resembling "gigantic umbrellas blown inside out" is described as his idea of a submarine forest (p. 44). When he escapes from Weston and Devine and begins to run through the forest, he has no planned destination. It is not long before he begins to feel more secure and less fearful of the alien world despite his circumstances.

The strange panorama begins to affect his senses. He discovers that distant pointed objects are mountains, "and with that discovery the mere oddity of the prospect was swallowed up in the fantastic sublime" (p. 53). His progressive encounters with joy continue, even

[2]In an essay "On Science Fiction" in Of Other Worlds, ed., Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), p. 70, Lewis discusses his reasons for choosing an alien setting for his character's experiences with Sehnsucht. "If good novels are comments on life, good stories of this sort (which are very much rarer) are actual additions to life; they give, like certain dreams sensations of possible experiences."

In another essay "The Weight of Glory," in They Asked For a Paper, Lewis refers to an ingredient of Sehnsucht as a desire for a far-off country. The island as the goal for his pilgrim (his far-off country) is representative of this longing. In the space stories, removal from the known world is the first step toward the goal.

in this bizarre environment. Again, Sehnsucht affects him but the "exaltation of heart" that he felt on the spaceship becomes "a lift and lightening of the heart" (p. 53).

In chapters 9-11, Ransom is befriended by one of the native Malacandrians, the hross, Hyoi. He summons up the courage to meet the beast but is dubious and hesitant:

> It was only many days later that Ransom discovered how to deal with these sudden losses of confidence. They arose when the rationality of the hross tempted you to think of it as a man. Then it became abominable--a man seven feet high, with a snaky body, covered, face and all, with thick black animal hair, and whiskered like a cat. But starting from the other end you had an animal with everything an animal ought to have--glossy coat, liquid eye, sweet breath and whitest teeth--and added to all of these, as though Paradise had never been lost and earliest dreams were true, the charm of speech and reason. Nothing could be more disgusting than the one impression; nothing more delightful than the other. It all depended on the point of view (p. 58).

It is the change of point of view that Ransom gains from the hrossa which aids him on his pilgrimage. As they teach him their language and culture, they tell him about their philosophy of pleasure and memory. In discussing their mating system, Ransom finds that the creature looks for one mate, courts her, has young, rears them and then remembers all this. The hross explains that the pleasure and the memory of it are all one thing. "A pleasure is full grown only when it is remembered" (p. 73). This linking of a past and present experience of pleasure and memory reminds the reader of the nostalgia of Sehnsucht.

The hross Hyoi continues to explain that they have two verbs which both mean "to long or yearn." They distinguish between the

meaning of the two: "wondelone"--an instinctual longing practiced by their race, and "hluntheline"--a sensual longing not accepted in their race. Ransom learns that this is actually the great distinction between Malacandrians and his own race. It accounts for their lack of perversion or "sinless" state. For it is the desire for repeating pleasure that motivates greedy Thulcandrians (Earthmen) to seek wealth and power. The key to the hrossa's utopian happiness is their ability to enjoy the pleasures of Sehnsucht almost perpetually.[3] Hyoi's explanation clarifies this: "and how could we endure to live and let time pass if we were always crying for one day or one year to come back--if we did not know that every day in a life fills the whole life with expectation and memory and that these are that day?" (p. 74).

The hrossa agree that Ransom must go to Oyarsa, the ruling spirit of Malacandra whose abode is the island of Meldilorn. He must cross the mountains of the desolate harandra. The enchanting colorful forest settings which have provided security are replaced by a forbidding, rugged, and airless terrain of seemingly insurmountable peaks. Another native Malacandrian, a sorn, is provided as his traveling companion. Riding atop the giant's shoulders, Ransom gains a new perspective of the grim landscape. Entranced by the celestial light, he experiences joy. "He felt the old life of the heart, the soaring solemnity, the

[3]C.W. Moorman in "Spaceship and Grail: The Myths of C.S. Lewis," College English, 18 (May 1957), p. 401, explains that the Martians, being an unfallen race, have access to the immediate grace of Maleldil. Unlike Thulcandrians, they have no need of a redeemer. They have never been separated from God and the cord of longing has never been severed.

sense, at once sober and ecstatic, of life and power offered in unasked and unmeasured abundance" (p. 99). The reader notes that at this stage of his journey, Ransom again feels "the old lift of the heart" but, as the language suggests, the experience is deepening, becoming more intense and vital.

Ransom's contacts with the séroni show that they are the intellectual race on Mars. However, engaging in a discussion of books, he is told that it is unnecessary to keep written records for "'It is better to remember'" (p. 101). According to the séroni, Oyarsa always remembered valuable secrets and would recall them if necessary. Thus memory (seen as a part of joy) is removed from the intellectual to the spiritual realm as it is with the hrossa.

This segment of Ransom's adventure ends with his conversations about Earth. He feels great embarrassment at his answers to the séroni's discerning questions. At the end of chapter sixteen, he goes to sleep thinking nostalgically "of the old forests of Malacandra and what it might mean to grow up seeing always so few miles away a land of colour that could never be reached and had once been inhabited" (p. 103).

The climax of Ransom's travels is his arrival at the island of Oyarsa. With Augray the sorn, Ransom passes through the bright wilderness of the mountains, through the blue-grey valley to the varicolored downlands of the handramits. Here he sees "a circular lake--a sapphire twelve miles in diameter set in a border of purple forest" (p. 105). The romantic view causes Ransom to consider that "he had not looked for anything quite so virginal, as this bright

grove--lying so still, so secret, in its coloured valley, soaring with inimitable grace so many hundred feet into the wintry sunlight" (p. 105).

Ransom's sensations on the island are "curious" as he feels the island is looking at him instead of the other way around. He senses the presence of the numinous in tiny variations of light and shade and feels shy, uneasy and submissive. His affinity for the island recalls nostalgic images of Earth and gardens in summer. His shyness is accompanied by a mounting excitement and anticipation. As he is summoned to the interview with Oyarsa at the crown of the island, he physically perceives the presence of many eldila (spirit creatures) as faintly moving lights.

When Oyarsa approaches, Ransom's only method of describing his appearance is by comparing it to his other encounters with Sehnsucht: "Like a silence spreading over a room full of people, like an infinitesimal coolness on a sultry day, like a passing memory of some long-forgotten sound or scent, like all that is stillest and smallest and most hard to seize in nature. . . ." (p. 119). Oyarsa identifies Ransom's fear of the numinous and relates the history of the "bent" Oyarsa of Thulcandra. As his confidence grows, Ransom yields to Oyarsa and says, "Bent creatures are full of fears. But I am here now and ready to know your will with me" (p. 122).

The submissive spirit of Ransom is a mark of his spiritual progress. In this final stage of his journey his spiritual perception is at its peak. The change in his point of view is apparent when Weston and Devine are carried in. At first he does not recognize

them, but when he does he realizes that he "for one privileged moment, had seen the human form with almost Malacandrian eyes" (p. 125).

After Weston and Devine are questioned about the death of Hyoi and two other hrossa, Ransom witnesses the hrossa's funeral. The song of their mourning brings to him a "burst of delight." The numinous encounter is described:

> A sense of great masses moving at visionary speeds, of giants dancing, of eternal sorrows eternally consoled, of he knew not what and yet what he had always known, awoke in him with the very first bars of the deep-mouthed dirge, and bowed down his spirit as if the gate of heaven had opened before him (p. 131).[4]

Ransom's sharing of this experience with the Malacandrians is the culmination of all his moments of Sehnsucht. The goal of his pilgrimage, previously unknown, he now recognizes. It has been to achieve an understanding, however finite, of his own relationship to the real object of the fleeting moments of Sehnsucht. This recognition comes at the moment that he is bowed down in spirit. He is aware that past, present and future sorrows are "eternally consoled." He gains a further understanding of the omnipotence of Maleldil from the funeral oration of Oyarsa. With a blinding light, the dead bodies of Hyoi and two other hrossa are "unbodied" as Oyarsa says, "'Let us scatter the movements which were their bodies. So will Maleldil scatter all worlds when the first and feeble is worn'" (p. 132).

[4]This is a partial description of the Great Dance which can be equated with Lewis' Christian vision of heaven and immortality. It is discussed in a later chapter on the use of allegory in Perelandra.

The wonder which Ransom feels in his audience with Oyarsa is sustained on his return trip to Earth. The numinous awe persists in his reflections of his adventure. His few moments of fear are supplanted by his feeling that "they were not an island of life journeying through an abyss of death" (p. 146). He felt that if he were to be killed, it would be due to the excess [emphasis mine] of vitality that existed outside the spaceship. This parallels his experience in his outward journey, but that contact with Sehnsucht (the lift of the heart) is intensified tenfold.

His spiritual awareness is so keen that he becomes physically supersensitive to delicate sounds, vibrations and light changes. His awakening to the glories of the spiritual world provides a reserve of strength to prepare him for the physical hardships as they near the Earth's atmosphere.

When Ransom's voyage ends with a supernaturally safe landing, he has completed his trip to a physical and spiritual island in space. Each stage of his physical journey has had a concomitant spiritual stage. Every successive contact with an aspect of Sehnsucht has had a greater impact on Ransom. The cumulative effects of his experiences are the attainment of his physical goal, the island, and the attainment of his spiritual goal, a brief union with the numinous.

Because of his expanded conceptions of joy, Ransom returns to the Silent Planet as a transformed man. He is now an appropriate protagonist for the allegorical Perelandrian adventures.

In Perelandra images of Sehnsucht and metaphors of movement are more complex than in Out of the Silent Planet. This is because this novel deals with characters and settings of an allegorical nature. Ransom's spiritual successes also equip him for his role as "the Pendragon, the Fisher-King, the Ransom for many by God" in the final book of the space trilogy, That Hideous Strength.[6]

[6]John H. Timmerman, "Logres and Britain: The Dialectic of C.S. Lewis's That Hideous Strength," Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society, Vol. 9, No. 1, Whole No. 97, November 1977, p. 6.

Chapter IV

Temporal and Spatial Metaphors in Perelandra

Ransom's Perelandrian adventures follow a pattern similar to those on Malacandra. However, a slight variation in the use of metaphors of time and space arises for several reasons.

The first reason revolves around Lewis' character, Ransom. At the close of Out of the Silent Planet, Elwin Ransom is a transformed man as a result of his acquiescence to Maleldil. His physical courage has been tested, and his moral and spiritual vision has been expanded. Though he has reached a degree of maturity, his mortality still limits the complete spiritual union for which he yearns. Moreover, he has not been truly tested spiritually. A continued growth in his character requires a change in the type of journey he must take. In his adventures on Perelandra, his external physical journey is less important than his internal spiritual journey.

Another reason for a variation in use of metaphors relates to setting. Because Lewis concentrates on the spiritual journey, his setting is quite different. Perelandra is a sinless world. As it exists in a state of innocence and perfection, it already represents the physical goal of Sehnsucht which Oyarsa's island symbolized in Out of the Silent Planet. In addition, Lewis has designed this fantastic world to be composed entirely of floating islands. Ransom does not move toward any one island though he still moves through

landscapes of gardens, valleys, and mountains. The focus of his spiritual journey has to do with the spiritual ramifications of living on one island--The Fixed Land.

Lewis' unique treatment of metaphors of time produces another modification of the pattern. The reader has been prepared for this change at the end of Out of the Silent Planet. Ransom says, "the way to planets lies through the past; if there is to be any more space-traveling, it will have to be time traveling as well. . . !"[1] Even though the time represented in Perelandra is coexistent with Earth time, there is a seeming shift to the past as Perelandra is likened to prelapsarian Earth. This time metaphor becomes more complex when the future dimension is added. At the end of the novel, when temptation has been overcome, Perelandra can also be seen as a prefigurement of Paradise.

With these variations in mind, the reader can still discern the function of metaphors of Sehnsucht in Perelandra. As in Out of the Silent Planet, the starting point of Ransom's journey is a garden where the eldila place a coffin-like vehicle to transport the philologist.[2] The first segment of his journey is unobserved as Ransom remains in a state of suspended animation.

The spatial movement is once again toward an "island" in space, the planet Venus. Landing in the strange world of shifting islands,

[1]Lewis, Out of the Silent Planet, p. 160.

[2]C.S. Lewis, Perelandra (New York: Macmillan Co., 1944), p. 30. All subsequent references are to this edition.

Ransom is entranced by their primordial beauty. His first awareness of motion is the physical buoyancy he feels on the Perelandrian ocean. In Out of the Silent Planet, his first contacts with moments of Sehnsucht on the spaceship were represented as a lightness or buoyancy in spirit. In Perelandra, this buoyancy persists throughout his movement on the floating islands which rise and sink with the swell of the ocean. Of this aspect of Sehnsucht, Carnell suggests: "There is a mood of almost limitless possibility appropriate to the life of a planet which has not succumbed to evil. And it is precisely the buoyancy which makes me think of these interplanetary adventures as being in themselves an expression of Sehnsucht."[3]

The second stage of Ransom's adventure begins in chapter four when he meets the Green Lady or the Eve of this paradise. "She had stood up amidst a throng of beasts and birds . . ." (p. 54). Her innocence and spiritual purity are clear from his first conversation when she reveals that Maleldil constantly speaks to her. In her presence the landscape subtly changes and "Ransom's body was bathed in bliss . . ." (p. 61). "There was no category in the terrestrial mind which would fit her. Beautiful, naked, shameless, young--she was obviously a goddess . . . the alert, inner silence which looked out from the eyes overawed him . . ." (p. 64).

Once again in a garden setting, permeated with purity and innocence, Ransom experiences moments of joy. His responses to the Green Lady mark a continued growth in his apprehension of Sehnsucht.

[3]Carnell, Bright Shadow of Reality, p. 83.

The Green Lady is almost represented as an embodiment of Sehnsucht and Ransom's very ability to communicate with her is a result of his spiritual growth.

As Ransom converses with her, he learns of her accidental separation from the King. He discovers from her reaction at the mention of the King "that her purity and peace were not, as they had seemed, things settled and inevitable like the purity and peace of an animal--that they were alive and therefore breakable, a balance maintained by a mind and therefore, at least in theory, able to be lost" (p. 68). Her vulnerability is illustrated as she draws a comparison between the joy in finding the King and in finding a fruit:

> One joy was expected and another is given. But this I had never noticed before--that the very moment of the finding there is in the mind a kind of thrusting back or setting aside. The picture of the fruit you have not found is still, for a moment before you. And if you wished--you could send your soul after the good you had expected, instead of turning it to the good you had got. You could refuse the real good; you could make the real fruit taste insipid by thinking of the other (p. 69).[4]

The Green Lady recognizes the role her volition plays in accepting the present joys that Maleldil sends. It is her questioning about

[4]This analysis by the Green Lady is quite similar to Lewis' description of joy from his autobiography in which he says,

> The very nature of Joy makes nonsense of our common distinction between having and wanting. There, to have is to want and to want is to have. Thus, the very moment when I longed to be so stabbed again, was itself such a stabbing. Surprised by Joy, p. 145.

this characteristic of Sehnsucht that makes possible the temptation scenes which soon follow.

Ransom becomes physically and spiritually acclimated to Perelandra as he listens to the Green Lady. The growth of his spiritual sensitivity is obvious when he tries to lie. "It tore him as he uttered it, like a vomit. It became of infinite importance. The silver meadow and the golden sky seemed to fling it back at him" (p. 70).

Even when he is alone, Ransom is aware of the presence of Maleldil. He feels suffocated and uncomfortable. This feeling dissipates whenever he ceases to assert his independence. When he learns "not to make that inner gesture" he experiences an indescribable sense of well being" (p. 72).

The next stage of Ransom's journey involves his visit to the mountainous Fixed Land. The Green Lady tells him that Maleldil's one prohibition to her and the King is to avoid dwelling on this island. His first view of the island reminds him of Earth and is "a glimpse of home or of heaven" (p. 78). Later, after exploring the island he discovers much of it is infertile and barren. He acknowledges, "If I lived on Perelandra, Maleldil wouldn't need to forbid this island. I wish I'd never set eyes on it" (p. 98).

Appropriately, while on this forbidden island, Ransom learns his reason for coming to Perelandra. Professor Weston arrives after landing his spaceship in the ocean. Ransom realizes Weston is his adversary who has come to this world because his plans failed on Malacandra.

While awaiting Weston's arrival from his spaceship, Ransom tries to prepare the Green Lady for her encounter with him. As he is concerned for her safety, he questions her about the possible protection of the eldila. She tells Ransom that Perelandra "is the first of worlds to wake after the great change, they (eldila) have no power" (p. 82). Maleldil speaks directly to her, not through the eldila. They have decreased and their joy is to worship Maleldil and man. "Not that it is better joy than ours. Every joy is beyond all others. The fruit we are eating is always the best fruit of all" (p. 83). Ransom tries to explain about the "bent" eldil of Earth, but she cannot comprehend evil.

After meeting Weston, and confirming his suspicions about his arrival on Perelandra, Ransom resumes his journey by leaving The Fixed Land. Not yet aware what lies ahead of him, he contemplates the sea-centaurs and sea-dragons in the ocean. He experiences the longing of Sehnsucht:

> The cord of longing which drew him to the invisible isle seemed to him at that moment to have been fastened long, long before his coming to Perelandra, long before the earliest times that memory could recover in his childhood before birth, before the birth of man himself, before the origins of time. It was sharp, sweet, wild and holy, all in one. . . ." (p. 103).

In chapters seven through eleven, which deal with the temptation of the Green Lady by Weston, Ransom's spatial movements consist merely in following in the path of Weston. This becomes a path of horror and destruction seen first as "a trail of mutilated frogs" (p. 109). He watches in terror as Weston systematically tortures and rips open living creatures, leaving them in bleeding ruin. He sees Weston's

physical appearance as unrecognizable, perverted and contorted by the evil which possesses him. "The extremity of its evil had passed beyond all struggle into some state which bore a horrible similarity to innocence. It was beyond vice as the Lady was beyond virtue" (p. 111).

Throughout the temptation scenes, Lewis uses several temporal metaphors in his characterization of the Green Lady. Her acquisition of knowledge "makes her old." This becomes a desirable end to her. Weston tells the Green Lady that Ransom "does not want you to hear me, because he wants to keep you young. He does not want you to go on to the new-fruits you have never tasted" (p. 113). He also describes Ransom as the "one who always shrinks back from the wave that is coming towards us and would like, if he could, to bring back the wave that is past" (p. 114). These metaphors are part of Weston's arguments to cause the Green Lady to disobey Maleldil. He encourages her to seek Death on The Fixed Land and to "plunge into things greater than waves" (p. 114). He combines the two images, telling her that Maleldil has given her the command as a test, "as a great wave you have to go over, that you may become really old . . ." (p. 117).

The pressure of interminable conversation between Weston (referred to as the Un-man) and the Green Lady take their toll on Ransom. However, he continues to sense Maleldil's presence. He reasons out his action in his moment of greatest moral struggle and recognizes that the "eldila of all worlds, the sinless organisms of everlasting light, were silent in Deep Heaven to see what Elwin Ransom of Cambridge would do" (p. 142). He acknowledges that a struggle with the Devil meant a spiritual battle, but gradually he gains the courage to accept the

need for a physical struggle with the Un-man. Ransom has progressed spiritually to the point that he can now actually hear the voice of Maleldil, who comforts him by telling him, "It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom" (p. 147), and "My name is also Ransom" (p. 148).

Chapters twelve through fourteen might be described as the Descent as they detail Ransom's physical battle and subsequent pursuit of the Un-man. His spatial movement is across vast stretches of water, through an underground cavern, across mountains to another perfect island. Throughout these adventures Ransom experiences the isolation so necessary for the soul in a spiritual test.[5]

After the destruction of Weston's body, Ransom achieves both physical and spiritual freedom from its evil influence. During his period of recovery, he once again experiences the pleasures of Sehnsucht. Nostalgically, he describes this time, "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).

Ransom's travels end as he enters a valley much like that on Oyarsa's island. It is "pure rose-red, with ten or twelve of the glowing peaks about it, and in the centre a pool, married in pure unrippled clearness to the gold of the sky" (p. 193). In this forest chapel, he sees an altar and a coffin and realizes that Maleldil has prepared this place for him. As he had been summoned to Oyarsa's island, so he has been drawn to this holy place. He senses the numinous

[5]The obvious allegorical parallels of this segment are considered in a later chapter.

presence as he listens to the chiming voices of two eldila. When the King and Queen arrive, Ransom realizes that he has achieved his purpose. The Green Lady has resisted the temptation of the Un-man to go to The Fixed Land and has been reunited with the King. The King explains that they have knowledge of evil but have not succumbed to the evil. With this new understanding, the King affirms his faith in Maleldil as he explains, "Always one must throw oneself into the wave" (p. 210). The metaphorical use of the wave as time is thus extended to encompass a spiritual application of faith.

The group assembled in the garden participate in a celebration of the Great Dance of creation. This, like his experience on Malacandra, is a preview of the final perfection for which brief moments of Sehnsucht have prepared Ransom. He has difficulty in describing the ecstasy which is beyond any previous contact with joy. It was "a simplicity beyond all comprehension, ancient and young as spring, illimitable, pellucid. . . " (p. 219). His most intense experience of Sehnsucht is paradoxically like "awaking from trance, and coming to himself." It "drew him with cords of infinite desire into its own stillness" (p. 219).

Ransom returns to Earth as a transfigured man. He is "almost a new Ransom, glowing with health . . . seemingly ten years younger." In his physical journey he has reached the goal of victory over the Un-man, and he has thus prevented the loss of Sehnsucht on Perelandra. In his spiritual journey he has achieved an abiding sense of Maleldil's presence, and he has beheld the Great Dance.

Chapter V

Sensory Images and Sehnsucht

Lewis' particular use of the imagination as metaphor has been thoroughly discussed by Ziegler in his dissertation "Imagination as a Rhetorical Factor in the Works of C.S. Lewis." Ziegler says that for Lewis the function of the imagination is to draw a pleasurable response from the "artistic ordering of the parts of the narrative." This response directs one's attention toward a desirable "other" which brings satisfaction to the reader. "Imagination is an individual's mental activity which metaphorically interprets sensibles or expresses insensibles, the activity often inciting the experience of Sehnsucht."[1]

This line of thought can be effectively applied to the individual images or metaphors which are part of the island motif. These images are consistently related to Sehnsucht because of their inherent sensory nature. The joy of Sehnsucht is first experienced by the individual as it comes through his physical senses. It then enters his faculties of imagination and memory. It bypasses the reason because its intention is a spiritual effect.

Carnell has identified specific objects as eliciting Sehnsucht. The majority of these are used in Lewis' science fiction fantasies as the controlling images in the island motif. In addition to

[1]Ziegler, p. 39.

landscape objects (garden, forest, mountain, and island) Carnell mentions a poem, a song, and a mythology as metaphors of Sehnsucht.[2]

In his autobiography Lewis makes it clear that he gradually became aware of the relationship of these romantic images to joy. He notes that he came to the realization "that those mountains and gardens had never been what I wanted but only symbols which professed themselves to be no more, and that every effort to treat them as the real Desirable soon honestly proved itself to be a failure."[3]

Again in his fictional allegory of his journey to conversion, The Pilgrim's Regress, he explains in the preface,

> The sole merit I claim for this book is that it is written by one who has proved all other supposed objects of this Desire to be wrong. . . . Every one of these supposed objects for the desire is inadequate to it. . . . It appeared to me therefore that if a man diligently followed this desire, pursuing the false objects until their falsity appeared and then resolutely abandoning them, he must come out at last into the clear knowledge that the human soul was made to enjoy some object that is never fully given--nay, cannot even be imagined as given--in our present mode of subjective and spatio-temporal experience.[4]

The reason the object is never fully given, Lewis discovers, is that God cannot give us peace and happiness apart from himself because it doesn't exist.

With this as background, then, the reader can see that Ransom's contacts with images of Sehnsucht are all imperfect reminders of his

[2]Carnell, Bright Shadow of Reality, p. 103.

[3]Lewis, Surprised By Joy, p. 204.

[4]C.S. Lewis, The Pilgrim's Regress (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1933), pp. 8-10.

goal and "that the very best this life has to offer falls short of what those romantic longings and stabs of joy have been pointing to."[5]

Lewis' most consistent ordering of images as metaphors of Sehnsucht is in the area of light imagery. Variations in intensity and color are compatible with his joint purposes of depicting a world of fantasy and a world of the spirit.

Metaphors describing sound, taste, touch, and smell are less frequently used as a means of communicating joy. Images of various kinds of music, mostly distant and celestial, provide the nostalgia of Sehnsucht. Sensory imagery of smell, taste, and touch is used to intensify the exotic nature of the fantasy worlds. Occasionally, especially in Perelandra, smells and tastes bring a yearning for perfection. Touch is most notably experienced as a type of distorted perception in position and shape. By scrutinizing the physical and spiritual environment surrounding the use of these sensory images, we can see how they function metaphorically, relative to the concept of Sehnsucht.

Since Ransom's journey exhibits growing spiritual enlightenment, and since the numinous presence is generally associated with fire or light, it is fitting that light imagery is dominant in his physical perceptual field. Images of light and color are blended with the pleasure of Sehnsucht so that each instance becomes a foreshadowing of the numinous presence. At the end of both journeys, the accumulated effect of Ransom's visual perceptions is a mystical apprehension of

[5]Carnell, Bright Shadow of Reality, p. 4.

the source of light, Maleldil.[6]

In Out of the Silent Planet, Ransom's first observation from the spaceship reveals stars which are "pulsing with brightness as with some unbearable pain or pleasure . . ." (p. 22). His contemplation of this new experience with light causes him to speculate as to whether in the spiritual realm "visible light is also a hole or gap, a mere diminution of something else. Something that is to bright unchanging heaven as heaven is to dark, heavy earths . . ." (p. 40).

Throughout the novel in scenes dealing with the eldila, light is consistently a numinous characteristic. Ostensibly, these creatures of light are angelic beings akin to those in the Bible. Their source, however, is identified by Lewis:

> In deepest solitude there is a road right out of the self, a commerce with something which, by refusing to identify itself with any object of the senses, or anything whereof we have biological or social need, or anything imagined, or any state of our own minds, proclaims itself sheerly objective . . . the naked Other, image-less, . . . unknown, undefined, desired.[7]

In chapter fifteen, when the sorn explains the nature of the

[6]For a discussion of Lewis' use of the metaphor of light see "The Man Born Blind: Light in C.S. Lewis," by Martha C. Sammons in The Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society, Vol. 9, No. 2, Whole No. 98, December 1977, pp. 1-7.

Also see "The World's Last Night" in The World's Last Night and Other Essays by C.S. Lewis (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1960), pp. 93-113. Here Lewis says that God's perfect light is the intolerable light of utter actuality which will be our judge. "We can, perhaps, train ourselves to ask more often how the thing we are saying or doing (or failing to do) at each moment will look when the irresistible light streams in upon it; that light which is so different from the light of this world" (p. 113).

[7]Lewis, Surprised By Joy, p. 221.

eldila's bodies to Ransom, he does so by elaborating on what is actually a fundamental Christian doctrine in which natural senses are seen as the obverse of spiritual perceptions.[8] Of their form he says,

> But the body of an eldil is a movement swift as light; you may say its body is made of light, but not of that which is light for the eldil. . . . To us the eldil is a thin, half-real body that can go through walls and rocks: to himself he goes through them because he is solid and firm and they are like cloud. And what is true light to him and fills the heaven . . . is to us the black nothing in the sky at night. These things are not strange . . . though they are beyond our senses" (pp. 94-95).

Finally, in the presence of Oyarsa this spiritual perception of light is demonstrated as Ransom describes the approach: "The merest whisper of light--no, less than that, the smallest diminution of shadow--was travelling along the uneven surface of the ground weed; or rather some difference in the look of the ground, too slight to be named in the language of the five senses, moved slowly toward him" (p. 119).

Returning from Malacandra to Earth, Ransom's perception of light falls to the physical level, still associated with great pleasure. He considers the glorious light and desires "to dissolve into the ocean of eternal noon . . . a consummation even more desirable than their return to Earth" (p. 146).

In Perelandra light imagery is permeated with variegated colors. The eldila first speak to Ransom through a pillar of light. Of its appearance, Lewis, as narrator says, "No efforts of my memory can conjure up the faintest image of what that colour was" (p. 18). That

[8] The New Chain-Reference Bible, King James Version, Frank Charles Thompson, ed. (Indianapolis, Indiana: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Co., Inc., 1964). See Matthew 6:22-3, John 1:5, and I Corinthians 2:9-14.

these colors are indescribable is corroborated by Ransom in his description of "seeing life" in his semiconscious condition in his space coffin. Life appeared as a "coloured shape" but "not what we'd call colour" (p. 32).

In his first five minutes on Venus Ransom is exposed to a valley of water which was "variegated in colours like a patch-work quilt--flame-colour, ultramarine, crimson, orange, gamboge, and violet" (p. 36). His reaction to the sight brings "the strange sense of excessive pleasure . . ." (p. 37).

Kaleidoscopic colors saturate Perelandrian landscapes and seascapes. They are an integral part of this paradise. After his descent into the cave, Ransom discovers that the "starvation for light became very painful. He found himself thinking about light as a hungry man thinks about food--picturing April hillsides with milky clouds racing over them in blue skies or quiet circles of lamp-light on tables littered with books and pipes" (p. 176). When he finds his way out of the black hole, Ransom's perspective returns and he disdains any thought of "the horrible black vacancy . . ." (p. 179).

In the forest chapel when Ransom sees the eldila, their bodies of light take on a new form. In his visual field appear "darting pillars filled with eyes, lightning pulsations of flame, talons and beaks and billowy masses of what suggested snow, [which] volleyed through cubes and heptagons into an infinite black void" (p. 197). As these forms are frightening to him, they reappear "burning white like white-hot iron" (p. 198) and a "flush of diverse colours began at about the shoulders and streamed up the necks and stood out around

the head like plummage or a halo" (p. 199). Speaking of this strange visual manifestation, the Oyarsa of Mars tells Ransom: "You see only an appearance, small one. You have never seen more than an appearance of anything--not of Arbol, nor of a stone, nor of your own body. This appearance is as true as what you see of those" (p. 202).

This comment on spiritual perception is closely followed by another change in light imagery: "All was in a pure daylight that seemed to come from nowhere in particular. He knew ever afterwards what is meant by a light 'resting on' or 'overshadowing' a holy thing, but not emanating from it" (p. 204). He then has a vision of the Great Dance. It is woven of "the intertwining undulation of many cords or bands of light, leaping over and under one another . . ." (p. 218). Ransom no longer "saw" but at the height of his spiritual sensitivity he discerned "ribbons or serpents of light . . . minute corpuscles of momentary brightness . . ." (p. 218).

Ransom's view of this last panorama of light imagery results in a kind of spiritual fusion with the numinous source of light. In both novels, all images of light and color allied with the longing of Sehnsucht have pointed him toward this goal.[9]

The connection of Sehnsucht to other sensory perceptions is more subtle. The creation of two new worlds is a noteworthy accomplishment. But Lewis also had to accomplish a difficult task, "that of representing the sights, sounds, smells and all the unfamiliar sensations of

[9]Sammons, p. 7, says that "Lewis, in all his writings makes it clear that, if we take the imagery of the Scriptures literally, we shall one day not only see Light, but put on the Light of His glory. . . ."

a state of perfection."[10]

The worlds of Malacandra and Perelandra are sinless and in total submission to Maleldil, thus representing the Christian idea of spiritual perfection. One might say that describing the reality of such unreal states requires a sanctified imagination. Lewis believed that the task of creating such worlds demanded a reliance on an inner dimension of spirituality: "We must draw on the only real 'other world' we know, that of the spirit."[11]

The reader perceived that there is a spiritual dimension even in the details of Ransom's sensory responses to the physical stimuli of the exotic landscapes. When the hero's spiritual sensitivity is keenest, he is able to experience unusual sensory pleasure.

This perception occurs in isolated incidents in Out of the Silent Planet because Ransom is only on the threshhold of understanding the great spiritual truth that Maleldil is drawing him toward. The first of these incidents involves sensations of touch experienced on the voyage to Malacandra. Ransom's pleasure is nearly inexplicable: The heat 'seemed to knead and stroke the skin like a gigantic masseur . . . and Ransom felt "vigilant, courageous, and magnanimous . . ." (p. 29).[12] His high sense of adventure and wonder cause him to feel "his body and mind daily rubbed and scoured and filled with new vitality" (p. 32).

[10]Martin Faber, "Imperfect Paradise," rev. of Perelandra, New York Times Book Review, March 26, 1944, p. 4.

[11]Lewis, Of Other Worlds, p. 12.

[12]The following page numbers included in this section refer to Out of the Silent Planet.

Once on the planet, the irregular surface features of Malacandra, while interesting in terms of shapes and substances, do not bring joy. Even in the final scene with the eldila, tactile imagery is limited. However, the entrance of Oyarsa effects his body physically, causing him to feel "a tingling of the blood and a prickling on his fingers as if lightning was near him; and his heart and body seemed to him to be made of water" (p. 119).

Several references to sounds bear association to Sehnsucht. The first mention of the poetic chanting of the hrossa indicates that, though not disagreeable, the rhythm is not adaptable to humans. Later at the funeral of Hyoi, Ransom's response to the song implies spiritual growth. He is able for once to hear their music with their ears, just as he had come to be able to see with their eyes. It is a moment of revelation for him as he reflects that their rhythms are based on a different blood, a fiercer heat, and a faster heart beat. This insight prepares him to participate in viewing the Great Dance. The first bars of the "deep-mouthed dirge" bring him the heavenly vision.

After his return to Earth, Ransom recollects with longing the songs of the hrossa as always filling the woods with soft tones "like dim organ music" (p. 150).

As discussed earlier, the sense of sight is emphasized in Out of the Silent Planet through images of light and color. It is logical to concentrate on sight, the most developed of man's senses, especially since Lewis' character is introduced to an unfamiliar landscape. The few references to the other senses are at least briefly connected to Sehnsucht. It seems that Lewis lays a foundation for use of sensory

metaphors in this novel and is then free to build upon it in Perelandra. In the second novel the reader observes that an intensified spiritual atmosphere allows all Ransom's senses to be more acutely affected.

The very nature of a paradise connotes total sensory pleasure. Ransom, in Perelandra, describes the sensation as "an exuberance of prodigality of sweetness about the mere act of living which our race finds it difficult not to associate with forbidden and extravagant actions." This excessive pleasure is "communicated to him through all his senses at once" (p. 37).[13] With each of Ransom's encounters with new pleasures, the reader realizes that it is "the sense of inconsolable loss experienced on Earth and the necessity to prevent that loss on Perelandra" that makes Sehnsucht the theme of the novel.[14]

Tactile sensations are first described in Ransom's awareness of falling. His consciousness of both heat and cold is soon followed by the "delicious coolness" of the Perelandrian ocean. He enjoys the "tepid revelry" as he floats and follows the contours of the water. After reaching the resilient floating islands, he "rolled to and fro on the soft fragrant surface in a real schoolboy fit of giggles" (p. 40).

Thereafter, all touch sensations fill him with surprise and delight: "To be naked yet warm, to wander among summer fruits and lie in sweet heather . . ." (p. 43). Ransom receives pleasurable feelings from an enchanting shower of a rainbow colored spherical plant. At his touch the objects explode, refreshing his body and enhancing all his sensory perceptions.

[13]From this point on, page numbers included in the text refer to Perelandra.

[14]Margaret Hannay, "The Mythology of Perelandra," Mythlore, 2 (Winter, 1970), p. 14.

When Ransom goes to The Fixed Land, he momentarily ceases to encounter these pleasures. After sleeping there he awakes with "a dry mouth, a crick in his neck, and a soreness in his limbs." He thought for a moment he was back on Earth and felt "a sense of lost sweetness that was well-nigh unbearable" (p. 99).

Throughout Ransom's struggles with the Un-man, he also loses contact with physical pleasure. The presence of evil disrupts the paradise with a picture of "long metallic nails . . . ripping off narrow strips of flesh, pulling out tendons" (p. 113). But later, emerging victorious from his physical and spiritual battle, a feeling of contentment characteristic of Sehnsucht envelops him as his body slowly heals. He then experiences the generalized sensation of a "formidable sense of delight" which is sustained for the remainder of his journey (p. 189).

Always in the background of Ransom's greatest moments of pleasure is a sustained "phantom sense of vast choral music" (p. 66). The key passage relating to sound imagery identifies "a suggestion of music" which he can only describe as "like having a new sense" (p. 107). The source of this music is undetermined but it appears to emanate from various natural objects. He hears thunder "like the playing of a heavenly tambourine" (p. 126); moving streams are "rejoicing water"; caresses of the leaves in the dwarf forest are "rustling, whispering music" bringing joy (p. 189); the cry of a shy dog-like creature is "as a bird's voice is to a flute . . . low and ripe and tender, full-bellied, rich and golden brown . . ." (p. 185).

The effect of these musical tones is to link the limited sensory pleasure of Ransom's physical experience with the unlimited joy of his

ultimate spiritual union with Maleldil. In the novel's final pages, Ransom describes the Oyarses of Mars and Venus by comparing Malacandra to rhythm and Perelandra to melody. He senses this musical quality in their presence in a prelude to the description of the Great Dance, a type of cosmic harmony. The beginning can be described by Ransom only in musical terms. The conversation among Tor and Tinidril (the King and Queen), Malacandra, Perelandra and Ransom is "like the parts of a music into which all five of them has entered as instruments . . ." (p. 214). The musical harmony continues through the last scene and Ransom leaves Perelandra with the memory of the tingling voice of an eldil.

The smells and tastes of Perelandra bring a new delight to Ransom also. His first smells of the island paradise are "beyond all he had ever conceived" (p. 41). He recounts that the sweet fragrances which grow "every moment stronger and more filled with all delights" (p. 102) will forever fill him with nostalgia for his sojourn on Venus. The odors he enjoys arise from natural objects in the landscape and are always described as bringing him the nostalgic pleasure which is part of Sehnsucht.

Perhaps the greatest emphasis on sensory imagery is in the area of taste. Ransom's first drink of ocean water was "almost like meeting Pleasure itself for the first time" (p. 35). But the tastes of island fruits present one of the most interesting and complex sense metaphors of Sehnsucht. In Chapter IV we considered the Green Lady's discussion of the joy in finding a fruit as part of the metaphor of time. Fruit imagery is used allegorically also. The Un-man attempts to compare

the expected fruit to the Green Lady's need to be made older. Ultimately, he wants to convince her to disobey Maleldil and live on The Fixed Land which he deceptively equates with the fruit offered. Ransom has been prepared for this argument by his own experiments in eating the fruit. The great globe of yellow fruit brings a "totally new genus of pleasures" (p. 42). Eating it is almost a spiritual act and he thinks of repeating the action, though he is no longer hungry after finishing one fruit. "Yet something seemed to oppose" all his reasons for doing so (p. 42). He later decides that the desire to repeat the pleasure was a possible source of all evil, because, as he reflects, "You could refuse the real good; you could make the real fruit taste insipid by thinking of the other" (p. 69).

The fruit imagery is eventually connected with spiritual knowledge. Ransom describes the pleasure from eating a gourd as it seemed "to make the whole world a dance" (p. 151). He recalls that the sense of taste gave a knowledge that could not be reduced to words. At the end of the novel, Tinidril attempts to describe the knowledge: "It is like a fruit with a very thick shell. The joy of our meeting when we meet again in the Great Dance is the sweet of it" (p. 221). (She connects the shell or rind with the years before that event will occur.)

Sensory imagery in Perelandra provides explicit examples of Ransom's growing understanding of the numinous aspect of Sehnsucht. Appropriate to a paradise, the images of touch and sound are celestial; the images of tastes and smells are "beyond all covenant" (p. 42). Roger Lancelyn Green describes the success of Lewis' imagery:

> The imagination, the conception, the description of the Perelandrian Paradise . . . is astonishing and awe-inspiring; Lewis has depicted Venus once and for all, and it is impossible not to believe his picture--or to get it out of our minds and visual memories once it has been imprinted there.[15]

[15]Roger Lancelyn Green, C.S. Lewis (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1963), p. 29.

Chapter VI

Sehnsucht and the Island Motif as Archetypes

I have examined the role of Sehnsucht as it relates to patterns of structure and imagery in the two novels. Although I have referred to Ransom's spiritual growth as a consequence of his encounters with joy, I have yet to deal with the thematic implications of Sehnsucht in the stories.

In this regard, a brief exposition of Lewis' views on the use of symbols, myth and allegory is helpful. In An Experiment in Criticism, Lewis explains that meanings arising from literature derive from the way a literary reader relates scenes and characters to his own experience.[1] He maintained that he did not construct stories with a moral, but would rather "let the pictures tell their own moral." This is possible because "the moral inherent in them will arise from whatever spiritual roots the author has succeeded in striking during the whole course of his life."[2]

This admission permits the reader to assume that Lewis' own stories reflect his "spiritual roots." Since he explains in his autobiography that a search for joy is the central story of his own life, it is also reasonable to assume that his fictional characters will echo that pattern.

[1]C.S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 33.

[2]Lewis, Of Other Worlds, p. 33.

That Lewis chiefly chooses the Christian experience as a pattern appears obvious in most of his work. Whether he consciously uses Christian allegory or myth is not so easily discernible. In the main, Lewis denied that he set out to write an allegory or myth in the space adventures. His own definitions of these two forms are relevant. Lewis defines allegory as

> a composition (whether pictorial or literary) in which immaterial realities are represented by feigned physical objects; e.g. a pictured Cupid allegorically represents erotic love (which in reality is an experience, not an object occupying a given area of space) or, in Bunyan, a giant represents Despair.

He explains that his characters do not represent immaterial realities but are mere fictional inventions. Instead he refers to his stories as suppositions. About Perelandra he says, "'Suppose, even now, in some other planet there were a first couple undergoing the same [experience] that Adam and Eve underwent here, but successfully.'"[3]

Expanding on his definition of allegory, Lewis compares it to myth as follows:

> My view wd. be that a good myth (i.e. a story out of which ever varying meanings will grow for different readers and in different ages) is a higher thing than an allegory (into which one meaning has been put). Into an allegory a man can put only what he already knows; in a myth he puts what he does not yet know and cd. not come by in any other way.[4] [abbreviations and emphasis Lewis']

C.W. Moorman's interpretation of Lewis' idea of myth further clarifies the definition. Moorman interprets Lewis' concept in

[3]Lewis, Letters, p. 283.

[4]Lewis, Letters, p. 271.

this way:

> Myth itself represents an ultimate and absolute reality, myth in literature represents a reflection of that central reality capable of conveying the meaning and, to some extent, the power implicit in the myth itself. Myth functions in literature as a suggestive archetype to which ordinary fictional situations may be referred by allusion. In this way, myth lends its own total meaning and inherent power to the fictional situation.[5]

For Lewis, the myth that lends such total meaning is the Christian myth, and the one ultimate and absolute reality which concerns him is man's position to God and His Incarnation as Jesus Christ. In Mere Christianity, he gives the Christian myth an allegorical coloring:

> This universe is at war. But it [Christianity] 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 rebel. Enemy occupied territory--that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.[6]

Reviewing Ransom's role in the novels yields obvious parallels to this description. Lewis admits that "Ransom (to some extent) plays the role of Christ, not because he allegorically represents Him . . . but because in reality every Christian is really called upon in some measure to enact Christ."[7]

The role of Ransom as Christ in the mythic pattern is outlined by Carnell's description of Joseph Campbell's "monomyth." This

[5]Moorman, p. 405.

[6]Lewis, Mere Christianity, pp. 50-51.

[7]Lewis, Letters, p. 283.

pattern of a hero's adventures pictures the most universal story to be that which portrays a hero in a search for self. It includes the following aspects:

> (1) miraculous birth, (2) initiation and receiving a divine sign, (3) a time of withdrawal for meditation and preparation, (4) a series of trials or a quest, (5) a confrontation with death, (6) a descent into the Underworld as scapegoat, quester, or laborer, (7) a return to earthly life with an ability to confer boons and favors, and, (8) an ascent to Heaven.[8]

The criteria for (1), (7), and (8) are met in the last of the books of the trilogy, That Hideous Strength. The remaining criteria are fulfilled in the two space adventures.

Since we have established that Lewis' hero is actually seeking the goal of a union with the numinous, we can amend the mythic goal to be a search for joy (also resulting in self-knowledge) as we apply the pattern to the two novels. Regarded in this perspective, Sehnsucht underlies the mythic pattern which begins and ends with the numinous presence, aspects (1) and (8). Throughout the pattern of movement described in aspects (2) through (7), the hero's development is facilitated by his yearning for the numinous experience. In addition, his physical movement in the mythic pattern involves a specific physical goal. Therefore, when related to the Christian mythic pattern, we can regard Sehnsucht and the island motif as "suggestive" archetypes to which the ordinary fictional situations (of his space novels) may be referred to by allusion.

[8]Corbin Carnell, "Ransom in C.S. Lewis's Perelandra: Notes Toward a Jungian Reading of the Novel," Convention of the Modern Language Association of America, Special Session 104: Critical Approaches to the Ransom Trilogy, Chicago, December 28, 1977, p. 2.

In Out of the Silent Planet, Ransom's initiation follows the romantic pattern of aiding a "damsel in distress." This is also appropriate Christian behavior. The pedestrian's decision to abandon the broad road to follow a narrow and difficult path filled with "thorns and nettles" may allude to the Christian "straight and narrow way." Following this way results in Ransom's encounter with Harry's mother whom he promises to help. As he considers the task, the decision is described: "Whatever the process of thought may have been, he found that the picture of himself calling at the Rise had assumed all the solidity of a thing determined upon."[9] As the reader later learns the objective source which causes this decision is the Oyarsa of Malacandra who has sent for Ransom. This, in essence, is the divine call.[10]

Once aboard the spaceship Ransom is forced to enter the time of withdrawal and meditation. He turns from "a heady, bounding kind of fear" (p. 23) to an ecstatic submission to the beauty of the heavens where he feels the "irresistible attraction, to the regions of light . . ." (p. 31). His transformation begins as he considers his own unheroic qualities, a result of the humbling effect of the numinous presence.

[9]Lewis, Out of the Silent Planet, p. 9. All subsequent page numbers in the text refer to this source.

[10]Richard Scourza, "C.S. Lewis' Trilogy, A Modern Psychomachia," Convention of the Modern Language Association, Special Session 104: Critical Approaches to the Ransom Trilogy, Chicago, December 28, 1977, p. 2. Scourza explains that Ransom's mind is subject to intrusions of external objective thought.

On Malacandra Ransom is forced to choose between the forces of evil and good, thus beginning his period of trials. He chooses good even though the good is found in an alien and terrifying form. The reader may recognize that the sinless creatures of this planet represent more than mere science fiction creatures. The hrossa, seroni, and pfifltriggi may be Lewis' "conception of unfallen man in three divisions: refined emotion, rational mind, and constructively channeled physical activity." These rational animals serve a moral function in the novel's overall myth design: "By setting them in contrast with the self-divided, self-exiled, diseased Tellurians, he [Lewis] could dramatize the meaning of alienation from the Divine Will."[11]

Ransom's friendship with the hrossa leads to a confrontation with death. This involves the water-beast, the hnakra, loved and revered by the hrossa. Asked why Maleldil created these monsters, Hyoi says, "I do not think the forest would be so bright, nor the water so warm, nor love so sweet, if there were no danger in the lakes" (p. 75). This response echoes a Christian doctrine of the nature of evil held by Lewis: "God allows evil in the universe for reasons which man does not understand but which are eventually for man's good."[12]

Ransom accompanies Hyoi and the other Martians to the battle. He learns physical heroism. The narrator bluntly states, "And he,

[11]Stephen and Lois Rose, The Shattered Ring (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1970), pp. 25-26. Rose believes that the three alien forms are related to the Christian doctrine of the trinity of man.

[12]Wayne Schumaker, "The Cosmic Trilogy of C.S. Lewis," Hudson Review, 8 (Summer, 1955), pp. 242-3.

even Ransom, had come through it and not been disgraced. He had grown up" (p. 81). But he is maturing spiritually also. He has become "one with them," overcoming his prejudice against the singular nature of their alien forms. This may represent the beginning of a spiritual death to self which is necessary before he can begin to apprehend the nature of Maleldil.

This type of death cannot be attained without faith. Christianity declares that a man must believe the unseen. He lives not by sight, but by faith. Ransom is literally tested on this maxim in his observation of the eldila. Deep Heaven is filled with these creatures "who are fascinating hybrids of angels (to use the Christian term), or intelligences (the Greek term), and mythological creatures of light, who neither breed nor breathe, who are eons old, who guide and direct the elemental forces of nature, and influence . . . the actions of men."[13]

In Chapter V we noted the relationship of light imagery to Ransom's growing spiritual perception. At first Ransom cannot see the eldila and is told, "You must be looking in the right place at the right time . . ." (p. 76). A short time later he is able to hear the eldil's voice: "He realized that a very little difference in his ear would have made the eldil as inaudible to him as it was invisible" (p. 79).

When he reaches the island where Oyarsa resides, he can both hear and see the eldila. His spiritual perception is obvious in his clever interpretation of Weston's explanation of his scheme to conquer the universe. This scene is a type of the hero's descent

[13]Moorman, p. 402.

into the underworld in that it foreshadows the epic struggle before Tinidril on Perelandra. The conflict is a moral one with clear opposites engaging.

Oyarsa's speech to Weston, a prophetic (and biblical) description of the fate of Thulcandra in the hands of the "bent" eldil, alludes to the New Testament teaching that Satan has authority over the Earth (Luke 4:6) and that he is called Prince of this World (John 12:31). The eldil attributes the "bent" nature of Earthmen to their domination by fear. They are constantly fleeing from death. In contrast, the Malacandrians are "wise enough to see the death of their kind approaching" and "wise enough to endure it" (p. 139).

The explanation for this wisdom lies in the Martians' submission to Maleldil. Ransom has not submitted for he has come to Meldilorn reluctantly. His baseless fears of Oyarsa have resulted in the deaths of several of the hrossa. Their deaths have served as a type of atonement, but death to self is still the primary requirement. The Christian myth states that a seed dies to live, that the bread must be cast upon the waters, and that he that loses his soul will save it.

The climactic moment of the descent finds Ransom witnessing (as a foretaste of glory) the Great Dance of creation. It brings a depth of humility to his own spirit. For a brief moment the numinous presence summons him away from himself as he sees Maleldil unbody the dead hrossa to "scatter the movements which where their bodies" (p. 132). The blinding light and strong wind are followed by a deep calm. Ransom's understanding of the true nature of the universe is thus related to his moment of greatest humiliation when he recognizes his own mortality and finitude. His thoughts, which are unspeakable,

could probably be echoes of Lewis' own reasoning:

> As our Earth is to all the stars, so doubtless are we men and our concerns to all creation; as all the stars are to space itself, so are all creatures, all thrones and powers and mightiest of the created gods, to the abyss of the self-existing Being, who is to us Father and Redeemer and indwelling Comforter, but of whom no man nor angel can say nor conceive what He is in and for Himself, or what is the work that he 'maketh from the beginning to the end.' For they are all derived from unsubstantial things. Their vision fails them and they cover their eyes from the intolerable light of utter actuality, which was and is and shall be, which never could have been otherwise, which has no opposite.[14]

After this great spectacle, Ransom enters the last stage of the mythic hero's progress which involves his return to Earth, "no longer afraid of death, whenever it shall come." His faith has deepened from "that which had once been mostly form" to one which has substance and vitality.[15]

Out of the Silent Planet serves as a confirmation in the Christian experience. Ransom enacts the role of the Christian mythic hero searching for that joy which God alone fulfills. He becomes a man of faith depending on God's grace to give him new sight into ultimate realities. He visits Malacandra which is portrayed as a dying world with images of a petrified forest. His movement toward Maleldil also results in the death of the man he had been. The next step in his fulfilling the Christian mythic hero's role is to follow Christ experientially.

[14]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, pp. 141-42.

[15]John M. Phelan, "Men and Morals in Space," The Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society, Vol. 6, No. 5, Whole No. 65 (March, 1975), p. 6.

In tracing the hero's path in Perelandra, we find that he again follows the mythic pattern. As he has been changed by his adventures, he undertakes his mission with a different perspective. He is motivated by a sense of duty and gratitude. His willingness is made obvious by the contrast to Lewis' (the narrator's) reluctance to help his friend. In the first chapter of the novel, "The Christian Way" for the narrator is "a long, dreary road" wherein the journey "was such hard work that I felt as if I were walking against a headwind. . . ."[16] A battle goes on in his conscious mind which alternates between the impulse to retrace his steps and to continue. He finally finds himself inside Ransom's house reflecting that he doesn't know how he got there. The same external force which had called upon Ransom in the first novel affects Lewis. The divine call is audible to Lewis' ears as he hears the "inorganic" voice of the eldil speaking Ransom's name. Lewis' fear, like that of Ransom before his first trip, is transformed by an outside force also: "Oddly enough my very sense of helplessness saved me and steadied me. For now, I was quite obviously 'drawn in'" (pp. 19-20). The first scenes of the novel appear to serve as a type of initiation for the narrator; Ransom is already prepared. His first words indicate his readiness. Arriving late, Ransom apologizes to his friend saying, "'I never intended to leave you to make that journey alone'" (p. 21). He alludes to the spiritual battle of the bent eldils of Earth and those of Deep Heaven.

[16]Lewis, Perelandra, pp. 11-12. All subsequent page numbers in text refer to this source.

Ransom prepares for his journey as a "dead" man should--by climbing into a coffin.[17] He is willing to "die" because he has once attained, though briefly, a type of union with the numinous. But being mortal, he cannot retain this relationship. Thus, the longing associated with Sehnsucht remains.

The coffin as one image of death is succeeded by another. When the space vehicle melts into a confusion of color after landing on the Perelandrian ocean, Ransom experiences a literal and figurative baptism. This is a symbolic picture of the death of the sinful creature (buried with Christ and resurrected to a new life). For Ransom, this new life has genuine existence and in wonderment he describes the reality of it as "the most vivid dream I have ever had" (p. 45).

The period of meditation soon gives way to the challenge of the quest. The mythic hero's trials center on the masterful temptation scene which echoes and enhances the many images of the Edenic myth of the Fall. The action has already been discussed in terms of the images and Sehnsucht in Chapter V. However, the parallels to the Christian myth are clearly applicable. All temptations are to test the man of faith. Ransom faces both subtle and explicit attacks on his "new" self. The first temptation relates to his eating of the savory fruits of paradise. He had learned from the hrossa of the folly of repeating a pleasure. Delighted by the bright red centers of the oval green berries, he realizes "that he was once more forbidden by that

[17]Carnell, "Ransom in C.S. Lewis's Perelandra: Notes Toward a Jungian Reading of the Novel," p. 4.

same inner adviser which had already spoken to him twice since he came to Perelandra" (p. 50). The Green Lady also warns him (perhaps as an instrument of Maleldil) that the thought of the taste of an expected fruit could spoil the taste of the present fruit. In each case, the longing for the fruit, reminiscent of that of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, implies lack of true dependence on the Creator to provide one's needs. The conflict which man must resolve is described by Lewis' doctrines of "The Romantic Way" and "The Ascetic Way." In the first doctrine Lewis describes one viewpoint of man: "We see that every thing is, in its degree, an image of God, and the ordinate and faithful appreciation of [it] a clue which, truly followed, will lead back to Him." Using this line of reasoning, the fruit is a pure image of Sehnsucht. Ransom, however, recognizes his human limitations and chooses "The Ascetic Way." This is explained by Lewis: "We see that every created thing, the highest devotion to moral duty, the purest conjugal love . . . is no more than an image, that every one of them, followed for its own sake, and isolated from its source, becomes an idol whose service is damnation."[18] "The Romantic Way" teaches man to worship the creation; "The Ascetic Way" teaches man to worship the Creator. Accordingly, Norwood describes this as part of the process of Sehnsucht: "A person does not wish to gratify it; yet its very existence presupposes that a person desires not it but something other and outer. Its character is determined by that

[18]C.S. Lewis, The Arthurian Torso (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 151.

of its object. . . ."[19]

The temptation to repeat a pleasure as a defense against chance is also the temptation of The Fixed Land. It is the passion "to own things and know where one would be the next morning, to control one's own destiny rather than trusting Maleldil."[20] In attempting to persuade the Green Lady to spend the night on The Fixed Land, Weston's arguments parallel those Satan used against Christ in his temptation as well as those used against Eve. He causes her to doubt the word of Maleldil and then failing in that, twists the word for his own purposes. The persistence and depravity of Weston's arguments nearly immobilize Ransom. He enacts a mythical and literal confrontation with death as he takes on the role of the redeemer and savior of Perelandra. He is empowered by the inner voice which confirms his mission by causing him to reflect on the meaning of his name.

Given a clearer sense of identity, Ransom's trials take on a greater significance. He endures a brutal physical attack. Victorious spiritually, if not physically, he descends into a Dantesque cavern in an attempt to bring about total defeat of his enemy. He passes by one region of fire literally and through another spiritually, engaging in a battle of wills with the spiritual powers of the bent eldil. After smashing the Un-man's face and casting him into the pit, he emerges from the nightmarish depths into a scene of Spring beauty that recalls the resurrection.

[19]W.D. Norwood, Jr., "Unifying Themes in C.S. Lewis' Trilogy," Critique, 9, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1968), p. 76.

[20]Margaret Hannay, "The Mythology of Perelandra," p. 14.

Having fulfilled his role as redeemer, Ransom appears lost in wonder before the tutelary spirits of Malacandra and Perelandra and the King and the Queen, Tor and Tinidril. The Green Lady and her husband honor him as Maleldil's chief instrument in their deliverance. The eldila explain to him the Fortunate Fall of Adam and Eve which brought the incarnation of Maleldil to Thulcandra. The infinite love and power of Maleldil become the focus of Ransom's epiphanic vision of the Great Dance. His mystic union enthralls him for an entire year. He is unable to do justice to a description of the experience. Lewis' description of Heaven explains the Dance as the culmination of Sehnsucht:

> All pains and pleasures we have known on earth are early initiations in the movement of that dance. . . . As we draw near to its uncreated rhythm, pain and pleasure sink almost out of sight. There is joy in the dance, but it does not exist for the sake of joy. It does not even exist for the sake of good, or of love. It is Love Himself, and Good Himself, and therefore happy. It does not exist for us, but we for it.[21]

Ransom's understanding of cosmic unity completes his transformation from an introverted scholar to a champion of God. He "ascends" at the end of Perelandra and returns to Earth in his coffin. In the next volume, That Hideous Strength, he "rules in Logre, as Christ ruling over the faithful" and later truly ascends into Heaven.[22]

[21]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 141.

[22]Scourza, p. 10.

For Lewis, Ransom's journey is that of Everyman. At least, it is every Christian's. The two novels meet the criteria for the hero of the "monomyth." At the same time, the island motif is used as a controlling metaphor of the Christian pilgrimage motivated by Sehnsucht.

Conclusion

As a writer of fantasy and as a spokesman for the romantic tradition, Lewis felt that man wanted more than to see beauty: he wanted to become part of it. He explains this desire in "The Weight of Glory" in the following fashion:

> That is why we have peopled the air, earth, and water with gods and goddesses and nymphs and elves--that, though we cannot, yet these projections can enjoy in themselves that beauty, grace, and power of which Nature is the image.[1]

In the creation of the worlds of Malacandra and Perelandra Lewis allows the reader to participate in beauty. The beauty is both physical and spiritual. Its first impact is at the sensory level. But for some readers, the beauty slowly infiltrates the recesses of the creative imagination to nudge the reader to begin some spiritual speculation. This spiritual effect is part of the design of the author, whether consciously planned or not. All of Lewis' writings after his imagination is "baptized" reflect this design. In his description of nature, he shows his consistent two-dimensional way of looking at things: "Nature is only the image, the symbol; but it is the symbol scripture invites me to use. We are summoned to pass in through Nature, beyond her, into that splendour which she fitfully reflects."[2]

[1]Lewis, They Asked for a Paper, p. 208.

[2]Lewis, They Asked for a Paper, p. 209.

This "passing in through nature" is an apt description of Ransom's experiences in the two novels we have examined. His journeys actually represent a search for ultimate reality. This search is implicit in Lewis' description of his characters "who wish to visit strange regions in search of such beauty, awe, or terror the actual world does not supply. . . ."[3]

As we have noted, the quest motif is also part of the romantic outlook which can be clearly linked with Lewis' own search for a far-off country as an image of the yearning he described as Sehnsucht.

For Lewis, Sehnsucht became an expression for those moments which led to his recognition that "the soul is but a hollow which God fills."[4] This awareness comes to his character, Ransom, early in the first novel. It is foreshadowed as a type of physical perception of the landscape on Perelandra when the narrator remarks, ". . . he knew nothing yet well enough to see it: you cannot see things till you know roughly what they are" (Silent Planet, p. 42). The statement almost becomes a spiritual truism by the end of the novel. Ransom begins to see that true reality consists in his submission to Maleldil.

In Perelandra, facing Professor Weston, an instrument of evil, Ransom is made to say, "I am a Christian." His acquiescence to God has resulted in his being the recipient as well as the instrument of divine grace. His mythic reenactment of the Redeemer role brings about a more complete union of his soul with the Creator. According

[3]Lewis, Of Other Worlds, p. 68.

[4]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 139.

to Lewis, this union can result only after the soul experiences "a continual self-abandonment, an opening, an unveiling, a surrender, of itself."[5]

The spiritual goal is the real purpose for Ransom's journey. On the literal level, the island as a geographical goal has an irrevocable attraction for Ransom because it is the residence of the numinous presence. Likewise, all other images or objects are only foreshadowings of the true joy which awaits Ransom in the Great Dance. His physical arrival at the island site in both novels brings to fruition all the promises of the moments of joy.

In Ransom's spiritual union with Maleldil, Lewis presents the timeless and spaceless personification of Truth. Seen as an element of the Christian myth, it is ". . . a symbol of man's relationship to God and his glorious return to paradisal fellowship with the uncreated, unconditioned Reality Himself."[6]

[5]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 139.

[6]C.S. Kilby, The Christian World of C.S. Lewis (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 82.

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