

## ABSTRACT

Morality and the Medieval Cosmos: Musical Analogy in the Works of C.S. Lewis

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In many of his works, whether fiction or non-fiction, C.S. Lewis infuses passages with music. Despite the ubiquity of music throughout Lewis' writings, it remains a relatively unexamined topic in recent scholarship. In this thesis, I compile and analyze representative instances of music in Lewis' corpus, and contend that musical analogy performs an integral role throughout his works. Specifically, Lewis incorporates music into his own view of ethics, aesthetics, and cosmology. A thorough understanding of this musical analogy adds greater coherence to many of his works, because the relations of the analogy persist across diverse genres. Furthermore, it provides an underlying musical cadence to *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Cosmic Trilogy*, his two major fictional series. By studying first his works of non-fiction and then those of fiction, I hope to show the dynamic and important role that music played for the venerated British scholar.

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MORALITY AND THE MEDIEVAL COSMOS: MUSICAL ANALOGY  
IN THE WORKS OF C.S. LEWIS

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## PREFACE

*Look how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:  
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.*

...

*The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;  
The motions of his spirit are dull as night  
And his affections dark as Erebus:  
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (London: Minerva Publishing, 1605), 84.

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Also, thanks to my parents. Don't tell them I said that.

## INTRODUCTION

In his familiar sermon *The Weight of Glory*, C.S. Lewis describes music as a powerful avenue for the communication of divine beauty.<sup>1</sup> Though this instance is especially striking, such references to music are not unique to *The Weight of Glory*. On the contrary, Lewis consistently refers to music throughout many of his works, on a variety of different occasions and throughout diverse genres. As Peter Schakel notes, “allusions to music are scattered throughout Lewis’ writings,” with at least forty-five references to music in *The Chronicles of Narnia* alone.<sup>2</sup> This underlying musical cadence generates a coherence in Lewis’ works, especially those of fiction, that can only be appreciated after a thorough examination of music within his writings. On many occasions, Lewis reasons by way of musical analogy: in particular, music forms an integral part of Lewis’ own view of ethics, aesthetics, and cosmology. Before reviewing current scholarship on Lewis and music, it will be helpful to provide a definition of the musical analogy that so frequently characterizes his works.

Robert J. Palma contends that Lewis uses analogy “as a means to thoughtfully, adeptly, and at great length clarify and illuminate his own and his reader’s theological

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: HarperCollins, 1949), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Peter J. Schakel, *Imagination and the Arts in C.S. Lewis: Journeying to Narnia and Other Worlds* (University of Missouri Press, 2002), 99.

understanding.”<sup>3</sup> Among the various types of analogy that Palma identifies are “Analogies of the Creator’s Relationship to the Creation,” and “Analogies of the Christian Life,” both of which are useful foundations for thinking about Lewis’ analogy. Toward the end of his essay, though, Palma makes an assertion that closely parallels my own definition of analogy in Lewis’ works: “through compact analogies of relations...Lewis strove to render theological and moral truths more intelligible.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Lewis typically uses analogy to clarify theological and moral truths; truths, in a sense, of a higher order. And, in many instances, Lewis decides that music is an especially fitting object of analogy for these higher truths. Music, accessible to the reader by virtue of its universality yet bursting with analogical potential due to its intricacy, performs an essential analogical function within many of Lewis’ important works. So, an apt definition of musical analogy follows from Palma’s foundation: when Lewis refers to music in his works, he usually does so in order to evoke or clarify moral, aesthetic, or cosmological truths of the higher order.

Despite its prevalence, the role of music in the works of Lewis remains a relatively unexamined topic in recent years. As such, a characteristic mode of his thought—that of musical reasoning—remains largely undiscovered. Perhaps the most extensive explication of music in Lewis’ writings was performed by Peter Schakel (which I will consider further below). First, though, a brief overview of other pertinent works will serve to anticipate Schakel’s argument. In most cases, current scholarship on Lewis

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<sup>3</sup> Robert J. Palma, “C.S. Lewis’s Use of Analogy in Theological Understanding,” *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review* 22 (2005): 89.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 99



refers to music fleetingly, in order to supplement a more central theme. One of the concepts most commonly related to music in Lewis scholarship is the theme of cosmic harmony. In his brief essay, Alan Padgett traces the concept of harmony through history, and examines the importance of the song of the spheres to *The Discarded Image*.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Junius Johnson considers the moral, emotional, and imaginative dimensions of the Cosmic Trilogy as they relate to the medieval cosmology.<sup>6</sup> Each of these explorations of cosmic harmony are well founded: in his recent book, Michael Ward provides compelling evidence that the *Chronicles* ought to be read through a cosmic lens, where each of the seven novels corresponds to a planet from the medieval conception of the cosmos.<sup>7</sup> Undoubtedly, Lewis' understanding of the medieval cosmos informed his works of fiction, as a palpable cosmic ambience underlies both the *Chronicles* and the Cosmic Trilogy.

A second variety of Lewis scholarship considers music in relation to his personal life. John MacInnis, focusing on Lewis' personal view of music, concludes that Lewis believed that music could direct one's faculties towards God.<sup>8</sup> His essay dismisses the historically persistent notion that Lewis was averse to music, especially in the church setting. While Lewis was wary of music being idolized or replacing God as the object of

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Padgett, "The Music of the Spheres," *The Cresset* 68, no. 1 (2004): 38-39.

<sup>6</sup> Junius Johnson, "Theological Word and Literary Flesh: Bonaventuran Cosmology and the Cosmic Trilogy of C.S. Lewis," *Literature and Theology* 30, no. 4 (2016): 426-438.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> John MacInnis, "A Medium for Meeting God: C.S. Lewis and Music (Especially Wagner)," *Faculty Work: Comprehensive List* (2016), Paper 549.

praise, he consistently incorporated music into his writings, beginning in his earliest cycle of lyrics.<sup>9</sup> In a fashion similar to MacInnis, Deborah Klein focuses on instances of sound and song originating from nature in his works, to evince Lewis' desire for stewardship of the natural world.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes, most notably in David C. Downing's book on the Cosmic Trilogy, music is relegated to a secondary role, as more concrete aspects of Lewis' life are considered.<sup>11</sup> As a whole, these evaluations of Lewis' personal life underscore his admiration for music and heighten the importance of musical occasions in his works.

Additional scholarship hints at the previously mentioned analogical power that Lewis utilizes during scenes of music. C.N. Manlove identifies different types of growth throughout the *Chronicles*, beginning with the music of Narnia's creation.<sup>12</sup> Among other kinds, he recognizes the growth of magic and moral growth of the characters in the series, each dependent upon Aslan's life-giving initial song. Similarly, Lewis' concept of the Great Dance in the Cosmic Trilogy carries a crucial yet elusive analogical significance. Holly Ordway confirms the importance of Lewis' Great Dance in her review, and the Dance is studied more extensively in Teresa Hooper's comparative

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<sup>9</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Spirits in Bondage* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1919). See, for example, "Prologue," "The Satyr," "De Profundis," "The Song of the Pilgrims."

<sup>10</sup> Deborah Klein, "They have quarreled with the trees: perverted perceptions of 'progress' in the fiction series of C.S. Lewis," *Mythlore* 32, no. 2 (2014): 65-81.

<sup>11</sup> David C. Downing, *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> C.N. Manlove, "The Birth of a Fantastic World: C.S. Lewis's 'The Magician's Nephew,'" *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 1, no. 1 (1988): 71-84.

essay.<sup>13;14</sup> Each of these examinations of music captures one aspect of Lewis' understanding, but the entirety of his musical meaning is more integrated—a rich complex of ideas that helps to clarify his fictional narratives. A thorough investigation of occasions of music in Lewis' works should bring greater clarity to their intended meaning and, as a result, enliven the fictional worlds that Lewis creates.

As mentioned before, Peter Schakel provides perhaps the most comprehensive discussion of music in the works of C.S. Lewis. Each of the previously discussed aspects of Lewis scholarship form a part of Schakel's evaluation of music. He devotes an entire chapter of his book to music in the works of Lewis, and another to instances of dance. Schakel begins by recounting Lewis' personal view of music, surveying his letters and lesser known works. By way of this survey, he puts forward ample evidence that music was a significant part of Lewis' personal life as well as his fictional writing. As he continues his analysis, Schakel identifies three functions that music serves in the works of Lewis: to highlight occasions of revelry, to "convey imaginatively the order, unity, and harmony of the universe," and to capture a feeling of *Sehnsucht*, or intense longing.<sup>15</sup> This overview of Lewis' writings most closely approaches the sum of analogical meaning that music carries for Lewis, and provides an excellent discussion of the ubiquity of music throughout his works. As such, much of my own discussion of the *Chronicles* will

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<sup>13</sup> Holly Ordway, "C.S. Lewis's Perelandra: Reshaping the Image of the Cosmos" *Mythlore* 32, no. 2 (2014).

<sup>14</sup> Teresa Hooper, "Playing by the rules: Kipling's 'Great Game' vs. 'the Great Dance' in C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy," *Mythlore* 25 nos.1-2 (2006): 105-126.

<sup>15</sup> Schakel, *Imagination and the Arts in C.S. Lewis: Journeying to Narnia and Other Worlds*, 102-105.

be in conversation with Schakel's writings on music. I hope to not only confirm Schakel's discussion of music, but also supplement it with two important themes that Schakel does not consider: musical creation and finality within the *Chronicles*, and the persistent moral dimension of song throughout Lewis' writings.

The main goal of this work is to assemble the most important passages of music in Lewis' corpus, and conduct a diligent analysis of these excerpts through the lens of Lewis' own analogical reasoning. Although the examination will certainly not be exhaustive, it will focus on representative instances of music in Lewis' works of fiction and non-fiction. Discussion of Lewis' reasoning will be especially focused on three overarching themes that Lewis studied during his life: the harmony of the medieval cosmos, the existence and importance of moral law, and the inexorable beauty of music as an art form. In this project, I aim to show that Lewis meant to present music in connection with some, and occasionally all, of these concepts. Indeed, his utilization of musical analogy is most engaging and most rewarding where each of these aspects of music intersect. Hopefully, this examination will not only serve to illuminate Lewis' own perspective on music, but also shed new light on his inquiring and dynamic personal nature.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Music in Works of Non-fiction

#### *Overview*

Before studying occasions of music in his major works of fiction, an examination of C.S. Lewis' scholarly and personal view of music will help to situate his works in the appropriate context. In many of his writings, Lewis infuses passages with music in order to convey and clarify crucial points of his argument. By integrating his writing with references to music, he can draw on aspects of music that are accessible to his reader and capable of bearing analogical significance. One such aspect of music, its sublime harmony, does much of the analogical work in Lewis' writings. Accordingly, a major emphasis of this first chapter will be the notion of harmony: first, harmony as it relates to the medieval cosmos, and second, harmony as it corresponds to the moral law. Lewis' understanding of harmony pervades many of his works of fiction and non-fiction alike, and is a vital part of his own mode of reasoning—historically, as a medievalist, popularly, as an apologist. This discussion of harmony will constitute the first section of the chapter, in conversation with *The Discarded Image*.

Though the harmony of music does hold significant appeal for Lewis, it is not the only characteristic of music that Lewis utilizes in his writings. Additional aspects of music that are analogically valuable for Lewis include its accessibility (to a wide variety of audiences), its dynamicity (every note is situated in a unique context), and its universality (music pervades nearly all cultures). These characteristics of music will be

elucidated alongside one of his most famous works, *Mere Christianity*. Finally, we will consider the affective dimension of music in Lewis' personal life, drawing from various works in his corpus. In a way, the emotional capacity of music is the strongest reason for Lewis' reliance on it, and a testament to its contemporary relevance: the historically persistent, evocative nature of song renders it a worthy object of extensive study. The intersection of this enduring art form and the writings of a vastly influential 20<sup>th</sup> century thinker creates an intriguing and important space for scholarship. Overall, the aim of this chapter is to present compelling evidence of musical analogy with respect to both the cosmos and moral law, and then to underscore the prevalence of music in Lewis' own life.

### *The Discarded Image*

Although Lewis made use of medieval cosmology throughout his earlier works, his interest in this cosmic backdrop culminated in his final book, *The Discarded Image*. In this introduction to medieval literature, Lewis devotes a chapter to the heavens, focusing heavily on the characteristics and motion of the Ptolemaic cosmos. Even here, in an examination of the heavenly spheres, Lewis evokes musical imagery: "You must conceive yourself looking up at a world lighted, warmed, and resonant with music."<sup>1</sup> This theme—that the cosmos is infused with music, which evinces its harmony and order—pervades much of Lewis' fictional writings. In numerous instances, Lewis describes the divine ordering of the cosmos by way of musical metaphor, passages which will be explored in greater depth in forthcoming chapters. For now, however, our aim

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge University Press, 1964), 112.

will be to investigate Lewis' view of the medieval cosmology, music, and the moral law, in order to better understand the way this perspective informs his works.

A central theme that underpins both the arrangement of the medieval cosmos and the structure of music, for Lewis, is the concept of harmony. Although Lewis focuses mainly on the medieval universe in *The Discarded Image*, the concept of the singing spheres dates back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. As Alan Padgett explains, "It is to Pythagoras and his school of mathematicians that we owe the term harmony (*harmonia*), a Greek word meaning that the parts of a thing fit together in symmetry and beauty...the planets (they knew of six) would have to be spaced at perfect distances, and the crystalline spheres upon which the planets and stars rotate in serene, eternal motion would be of proportionate sizes in order to create a musical harmony of the heavens."<sup>2</sup> Thus, the ordering of the planets in the medieval cosmos was not simply a geometrical harmony—arranged at proportionate distances—but also an auditory harmony, as the spheres sung their way through the cosmos in spectacular revolutions. The heavens were alive and bursting with energy, a stark contrast to the modern idea that "heavenly bodies move in a pitch-black and dead-cold vacuity."<sup>3</sup> Lewis underscores some vital differences between the medieval and the contemporary models of the cosmos:

Again, because the medieval universe is finite, it has a shape, the perfectly spherical shape, containing within itself an ordered variety. Hence to look out on the night sky with modern eyes is like looking out over a sea that fades away into mist, or looking about one in a trackless forest—trees forever and no horizon. To look up at the towering medieval universe is much more like looking at a great building. The 'space' of modern astronomy may arouse terror, or bewilderment or vague reverie; the spheres

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<sup>2</sup> Padgett, "Music," 38-39.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 111.

of old present us with an object in which the mind can rest, overwhelming in its greatness but satisfying in its harmony.<sup>4</sup>

With this perspective in mind, the parallels between musical arrangement and cosmic concordance become more evident. Each are characterized by harmony and rhythm, structure and order, and an ethereal magnificence. In Lewis' understanding, these shared qualities certainly do not represent an unlikely coincidence, or a vague relation in manifestations of some natural force. Furthermore, Lewis would submit that they are not simply the result of an attempted reconciliation of the Ptolemaic cosmos with the medieval conception of God. Instead, in accordance with Aristotle, Lewis found that each of these characteristics are demonstrations of the same divine love—the “intellectual love of God.”<sup>5</sup>

Here, we encounter one of the paramount reasons that the medieval cosmos held such appeal for Lewis.<sup>6</sup> As noted earlier, the arrangement of the spheres was more than a mathematical concept, more than an organization of the planets in consistent and predictable ratios of distance. For Lewis, and for many who drew inspiration from

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>6</sup> Here, it is important to make a distinction between the medieval model of the cosmos and Lewis' own view of the cosmos. While Lewis certainly admired the medieval model and drew heavily from its imaginative possibilities, he was not averse to sound, scientific change: “Lewis is certainly not saying here that the shift from believing that the sun revolves around the Earth to the belief that the Earth revolves around the Sun is a mere social construct, subject to revisions when intellectual fashions change. Rather, he is saying that when we rejected geocentrism we rejected a lot of other beliefs as well because they were part of that Model—but not all of those beliefs had been disproven in the way that geocentrism was.” Alan Jacobs, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis* (New York: HarperOne, 2005), 167.



medieval conception, it was a declaration of God's unity, power, and foremost, God's divine love. In short, "the *Primum Mobile* is moved by its love for God, and, being moved, communicates motion to the rest of the universe."<sup>7</sup> It is important to note, as Michael Ward does, that this love was not provided *by* God (although, in a sense all things were galvanized by God), but channeled through the universe *to* God:

One of God's titles was 'The Unmoved Mover' because He moved the *Primum Mobile* 'by being loved, not by loving; by being the supremely desirable object.'<sup>8</sup> It is in this sense, Lewis says, that we should understand Dante's immortal line, the final words of *The Divine Comedy*: '*L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*'—'the love that moves the sun and the other stars.' To Lewis, this ceaseless dance of singing spheres around the home of God represented the revelry of insatiable love.<sup>9</sup>

So, the love of God sets the universe into motion, not careening recklessly through space, but in an ordered and satisfying manner that exemplifies its Creator. Perhaps, this is why Lewis infused so many of his works with moments of song: music, in its affective dimension, is able to bring about an atmosphere both reverent and joyful, both harrowing and ebullient—all qualities that direct the reader, however subtly, back to the Creator. Not only does a reference to the singing spheres create an enigmatic yet powerful mood within Lewis' writing, but it also serves to remind the reader of that underlying love to which all cosmic strands can be traced. In multiple dimensions, music expresses the love that underpins all creation for Lewis. In each of his musical analogies, whether they relate to the cosmos or morality, we find fragments of this enduring love.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>8</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1966), 51.

<sup>9</sup> Ward, *Planet Narnia*, 23-24.

By employing the analogy of music, Lewis can communicate a more coherent picture of his own understanding of this love. More will be said on this topic below, both in *The Discarded Image* and other works. For now, to conclude his discussion of the music of the cosmos, Lewis appropriately draws from the realm of poetry: “And secondly, as that vast (though finite) space is not dark, so neither is it silent. If our ears were opened we should perceive, as Henryson puts it,

every planet in his proper sphere

In moving makand harmony and sound.”<sup>10</sup>

The importance of the cosmic backdrop to Lewis’ works of fiction, most overtly the Cosmic Trilogy (consisting of *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*), is difficult to overstate. Scenes of music coincide with acts of creation, power, and structuring, each of which evoke the spheres of the middle ages. However, instances of song also occur alongside scenes of peril, deliberation, and most importantly, triumph. These occurrences of music do not call upon the spheres of old; instead, they are informed by Lewis’ view of morality and the moral law. Lewis wrote assiduously on the concept of morality in his earlier works, and this persistent investigation of morality continues in *The Discarded Image*. In fact, his introduction to medieval literature not only examines the relationship between music and the moral law, but also draws from the same notion of *harmonia* that characterized the cosmos.

As noted earlier, the relationship of harmony to music and the medieval cosmos can be traced back to ancient origins. Likewise, connections between harmony and moral order can be found before the middle ages, most notably in Plato’s *Republic*. This

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<sup>10</sup> Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 112.

concept of harmony, which plays a significant role in Lewis' understanding of the moral law, is grounded in Plato's works on justice and the soul. Plato submits that justice consists of a harmonious ordering of the soul; one in which the soul's rational element rules above the spirited and appetitive elements.<sup>11</sup> In his later work, *Timaeus*, Plato develops further his discussion of the soul by way of analogy with music:

So much of music as is adapted to the sound of the voice and to the sense of hearing is granted to us for the sake of harmony; and harmony, which has motions akin to the revolutions of our souls...is meant to correct any discord which may have arisen in the courses of the soul, and to be our ally in bringing her into harmony and agreement with herself; and rhythm too was given by them for the same reason, on account of the irregular and graceless ways which prevail among mankind generally, and to help us against them.<sup>12</sup>

Here, Plato directly relates the concepts of harmony and music with respect to the human soul. From his perspective, the harmony found in music is that same harmony which represents the proper organization of the soul. Therefore, Plato enlists music as a means of resolving internal discord—any dissension in the soul can be mitigated through the purifying power of music. Lewis, in *The Discarded Image*, follows a comparable line of reasoning:

Similarly, hearing exists primarily for the sake of music. The native operations of the soul are related to the rhythms and modes. But this relationship fades in the soul because of her union with the body, and therefore the souls of most men are out of tune. The remedy for this is music; 'not that sort which delights the vulgar...but that divine music which never departs from understanding and reason.'<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), 130.

<sup>12</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 47.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 56.

Evidently, Lewis sees a powerful analogy between musical harmony and uprightness within the soul. Additionally, he makes an important distinction between two types of music, which is vital to keep in mind while reading many of Lewis' works. In Platonic terms, the first type of music, "that sort which delights the vulgar," works solely on a person's appetites. This kind of music can be better viewed as an indulgence, one that engages little more than the pleasurable dimension of a person's soul. Stealthy and pernicious, the melody marches on, having the opposite effect that Plato endorsed; instead of purifying the soul, it steepens the soul still further in illicit desires.

The second type of music, "that divine music which never departs from understanding and reason," is the music that Lewis extols. A thorough knowledge of this music requires the activity of the intellect. Applying the intellect to a piece of music dramatically changes the listener's experience of the piece. If the pleasurable aspect of the soul is utilized alone, the listener will draw pleasure from the song only insofar as it pleases him, relegating the music to an inferior position—no more than a transient suitor to the listener's unrelenting personal whims. Using the intellect, however, melodic themes can be collected in the memory and revisited throughout the piece. Lewis emphasizes the importance of understanding and reason not only to underscore those same qualities within humankind and God, but also to acknowledge the inexhaustible beauty and power found in music. Even upon using the intellect, those fragments of a composition that were strikingly moving can only be assembled after listening, a mosaic of replicated emotions, each copies of the true experience yet never fully grasping it. This is the music that Lewis is concerned with, both in his works of fiction and non-fiction—a music which points to the proper organization of the soul, the harmony of the

universe, and the power of the Creator, but never encompasses these things in their entirety.

Overall, *The Discarded Image* provides valuable insight into Lewis' perspective on both the medieval cosmos and the moral law. Each of these seemingly disparate ideas can be tied back to the same idea of harmony—a harmony that can be found most prominently in music. Just as the singing spheres of old move through the cosmos in a magisterial procession, the aspects of the soul ought to revolve in perfect order. So, when Lewis speaks of music in his works, it can be inferred that he wishes instances of music to carry these connotations. Certainly, some of his references to music and song are mainly literal (especially in works of fiction), but without understanding Lewis' perspective on music and the universe, the reader would be overlooking a wealth of cosmic and moral importance on many occasions. This is because, in Lewis' mind, the medieval cosmos and moral order can be traced back to the same origin: “the Intelligence of the *Primum Mobile*, superior to all the rest in love and knowledge.”<sup>14</sup>

### *Mere Christianity*

Thus far, we have mainly been concerned with Lewis' perspective on the medieval universe, and how this relates to his view of morality in a historical sense. Lewis, when alluding to music, clearly has in mind a bevy of philosophical and theological connotations, not just its literal sound. Additionally, Lewis views music as a helpful analogy when it comes to more practical applications of the moral law. In *Mere Christianity*, he presents musical analogies at two critical junctures in the work: first,

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 116.

when proving the existence of the moral law, and second, when delineating the specifics of the moral law. In each of these instances, his comparison to music serves a different purpose. In the first place, music exemplifies the dynamic nature of the moral law as Lewis understands it. In the second, an analogy to music underscores the universality of the moral law, as well as its accessibility to each person.

To understand the emphasis that Lewis places on accessibility, it is helpful to consider the context of the work. The content of *Mere Christianity* was originally given as a series of radio lectures on BBC in the early 1940s, delivered to a Great Britain that was steeped in the effects of World War II. In the words of Kathleen Norris, “it is a work of oral literature, addressed to people at war. How strange it must have seemed to turn on the radio, which was every day bringing news of death and unspeakable destruction, and hear one man talking, in an intelligent, good-humored, and probing tone, about decent and humane behavior, fair play, and the importance of knowing right from wrong. Asked by the BBC to explain to his fellow Britons what Christians believe, C.S. Lewis proceeded with the task as if it were the simplest thing in the world, and also the most important.”<sup>15</sup> Lewis undertook with great fervor the great challenge of reconciling reality as it *was* with reality as it *ought* to be from the Christian perspective. Notably, one of his principal subjects of analogy was music, largely because it was so accessible to his audience regardless of their educational background.

Of course, before he is able to examine morality from a Christian viewpoint, Lewis must first establish the existence of a universal moral law. Throughout this

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<sup>15</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1952), XVII-XVIII.

section, Lewis presents a sustained musical analogy—that of a piano, which represents the various moral instincts that each individual possesses. In his customary style of explanation, Lewis simplifies his argument by providing a practical example for the audience to consider:

Supposing you hear a cry for help from a man in danger. You will probably feel two desires—one a desire to give help (due to your herd instinct), the other a desire to keep out of danger (due to the instinct for self-preservation). But you will find inside you, in addition to these two impulses, a third thing which tells you that you ought to follow the impulse to help, and suppress the impulse to run away. Now this thing that judges between two instincts, that decides which should be encouraged, cannot itself be either of them. You might as well say that the sheet of music which tells you, at a given moment, to play one note on the piano and not another, is itself one of the notes on the keyboard. The Moral Law tells us the tune we have to play: our instincts are merely the keys.<sup>16</sup>

By way of this comparison, Lewis argues for the necessity of the moral law and presents one of its characteristics. The various instincts that a person feels cannot be guided by the instincts themselves. If this were the case, then no contrary instincts could be present, because the instinct that directs a person's action would be in itself correct, and therefore the only option for a certain behavior. Lewis contends that this is not the case; each person must sift through a multitude of impulses that lead to a variety of possible behaviors, and that thing that advocates for the correct behavior is the moral law. As he puts it, “the thing that says to you, ‘Your herd instinct is asleep. Wake it up,’ cannot itself *be* the herd instinct. The thing that tells you which note on the piano needs to be played louder cannot itself be that note.”<sup>17</sup> By evoking the common standard among all people, Lewis provides a proof for the existence of the moral law.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 10.

So far, it may seem that Lewis' comparison between the moral law and a piano, or music in general, simply portrays the authoritative nature of the moral law. Just as sheet music guides the melody along, the moral law directs the impulses of a person. However, Lewis persists in his analogy:

Strictly speaking, there are no such things as good and bad impulses. Think once again of a piano. It has not got two kinds of notes on it, the 'right' ones and the 'wrong' ones. Every single note is right at one time and wrong at another. The Moral Law is not any one instinct or a set of instincts: it is something which makes a kind of tune (the tune we call goodness or right conduct) by directing the instincts.<sup>18</sup>

In this passage, Lewis references the dynamic nature of the moral law. Here, the musical metaphor is especially apt, because melodies and moral acts are contextualized in a similar fashion. A musical phrase is inextricably tied to the surrounding melodies, which are beautiful to the extent that they form a cohesive whole. Multiple emotions dance upon the canvas of musical creation, the darkness of sorrow juxtaposed with moments of scintillating bliss, but ultimately they contribute to the same unified piece. Seemingly, Lewis has this in mind when he explains the relationship between "right" and "wrong" notes. A combination of certain notes in particular instances is required to create an outstanding symphony. Likewise, people are in accordance with the moral law when they perform the proper action given a set of circumstances. This does not imply that there is no standard by which to judge moral correctness. On the contrary, Lewis argues, there is a universal standard for morality, and that is the moral law. Lewis favors the view that the moral law is adaptable to a given context, and the proper act is that which fits most cohesively into the moral standard among humanity. In other words, the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 11.



goodness of an act depends on its alignment to the moral law, but the manifestation of this morality will hinge upon the context of an act.

To better understand this “common nature” of the moral law, Lewis finds it helpful to establish another musical metaphor. Having illustrated the existence and practical implications of the moral law by means of music early in the work, he again uses music to illustrate its overarching importance to humanity. This aspect of the moral law can be appropriately labelled universality:

If you like, think of humanity as a band playing a tune. To get a good result, you need two things. Each player’s individual instrument must be in tune and also come in at the right moment so as to combine with all the others. But there is one thing we have not yet taken into account...the instruments might be all in tune and all come in at the right moment, but even so the performance would not be a success if they had been engaged to provide dance music and actually played nothing but Dead Marches.<sup>19</sup>

Immediately, Lewis emphasizes the commonalities among humankind by imagining them as members of the same band, performing the same piece. Moreover, he references a common purpose among the members of the band—the people of humankind—namely, that they each play the proper piece. This common purpose is especially important to Lewis’ notion of morality. Even if the band is technically perfect and produces a sublime work, the entire performance is lost if they play the incorrect piece. In this way, Lewis underscores the indispensability of the band’s unity and purpose. Humanity, as with music, must be directed towards right conduct, which is universally illuminated by the moral law. So, music plays an important role for Lewis not only because it is dynamic and accessible, but also because it is aimed towards some proper end. The “right music” that the band must play parallels the “right conduct” toward which each person should

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 71-72.

aim. In this instance, Lewis employs a musical metaphor to illustrate the universality and teleology of the moral law: just as music is experienced similarly in each culture on Earth, the moral law provides the common source of behavioral guidance among humankind.

Characteristically, to conclude his musical comparison in this section, Lewis draws upon the notion of harmony:

Morality, then, seems to be concerned with three things. Firstly, with fair play and harmony between individuals. Secondly, with what might be called tidying up or harmonizing the things inside each individual. Thirdly, with the general purpose of human life as a whole: what man was made for: what tune the conductor of the band wants it to play.<sup>20</sup>

Lewis, then, views morality on three different levels, each of which are tied back to music in some way. First, he is concerned with harmony among individuals. This view of harmony refers to justice in the legal sense, which ultimately points back to the common morality among humankind. Second, in the most specific sense, morality is linked to harmony within the individual. Tying back to the common theme between Plato and Lewis, they each view music as a means of purifying the soul—specifically, for Lewis, this is the job of the divine music. Third, from the broadest perspective, Lewis emphasizes that proper morality must be followed by all people in order to be successful. This point—that there exists *one* proper morality—is crucial to Lewis’ work as a whole, and is also critically important to his audience. In order to illustrate the gravity of this point, Lewis presents a strikingly relevant example: “If no set of moral ideas were truer or better than any other, there would be no sense in preferring civilized morality to

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 72.

savage morality, or Christian morality to Nazi morality.”<sup>21</sup> This alarming statement ties into Lewis’ assertion regarding the third aspect of morality. He references the conductor of the band in his analogy to point towards God, the universal director of human conduct. But his allusion to music, as with the idea of the piano and sheet music, is more than a mere device to show the relationship between director and follower. Earlier, Lewis referenced the piano and sheet music in order to demonstrate the dynamic nature of the moral law. Similarly, Lewis refers to the conductor of the band to examine not only the connection between God and humankind, but also the necessity of one correct standard for moral conduct.

To better understand both the universality of morality and the reason a musical explanation holds such appeal for Lewis, it is helpful to draw on our own musical metaphor. Suppose, as Lewis does, that the entirety of human behavior is a symphony of which God is the conductor. Each individual’s own moral behavior can be considered as one note of the symphony—an endless stream of notes, moving forward (as God would have it) in magisterial procession. However, each note is only on pitch insofar as that individual conforms to the proper moral law. Because of this, many notes would be out of tune. Instead of creating the majestic and mellifluous symphony that God composed, the result would be dissonant in many sections, as individuals depart from the common moral law. This analogy displays the importance of each person’s behavior, because the departure of a single note could derail the entire symphony; at the very least, such a departure would diminish its magnificence. Moreover, it illustrates the universal presence of the moral law, as each individual has equal opportunity to contribute to the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 13.

divine symphony. As we can see here, Lewis draws so heavily from music in this text because it is analogous to human behavior in a variety of explanatory aspects.

As a whole, *Mere Christianity* emphasizes three main characteristics of music that make it such an appealing subject for analogy—its accessibility, dynamicity, and universality. Additionally, the work provides an example of Lewis relying on music in one of his own works on morality. Where *The Discarded Image* shows the historical importance of music in relation to the cosmos of the middle ages, *Mere Christianity* is purely a work of Lewis' own beliefs. As such, his continual references to music evince its importance to Lewis as an author in general, and not just a medievalist. These are two of the main works of non-fiction in which Lewis utilizes music, but they represent only a small portion of his overall corpus. Next, we will consider some other works of Lewis' non-fiction, to understand more fully the connotations that Lewis has in mind when he references music in his works of fiction.

### *Other Writings*

Music, as an art form, does work on the listener on multiple planes. In the rational dimension, the listener is aware of the manifold themes that are present in a work, and cogitates on them as they are presented. This is an integrated type of listening; different themes are extracted from the work and compared in the listener's mind, resulting in a mindful evaluation of the overall piece. Technical characteristics—such as tempo, instrumentation, and harmony—are a primary concern of this kind of listening. Thus far, we have examined Lewis and music predominantly in the rational dimension of musical experience. However, another essential element of music has not yet been considered: the affective dimension. Symphonies are remarkably effective in bringing

about emotional transformation for many people, and Lewis was especially receptive to this transformation. John MacInnis acknowledges this fact: “In his many letters to Arthur Greeves, Lewis often mentioned their mutual love for Wagner’s music and critiqued concerts he had seen and recordings he enjoyed. Surveying Lewis’s correspondence, therefore, especially notes from Lewis to Greeves, is instructive for understanding the importance of Wagner and music generally in Lewis’s life and relationships and comparing his thoughts about music with his theological ideas.”<sup>22</sup> A better understanding of Lewis’ personal view on music will help to show that, even in his fictional works, his references to music are more than merely literal descriptions. Lewis would agree that some truths cannot be grasped by the intellect, rather, they are established through faith. Seemingly, the affective aspect of music, for Lewis, points towards those truths that elude human comprehension.

Lewis himself differentiates between the rational and emotive aspects of musical experience. In a 1956 letter to Mrs. R. E. Halvorson, he laments that he predominately experiences the latter: “One must first distinguish the effect which music has on people like me who are musically illiterate and get only the emotional effect, and that which it has on real musical scholars who perceive the structure and get an intellectual satisfaction as well.”<sup>23</sup> This divide is crucial to Lewis’ understanding of the theological role that music plays. He submits that music, even in its affective dimension, can serve as a

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<sup>22</sup> MacInnis, “Medium,” Paper 549.

<sup>23</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis, Vol. 3* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 731.

“medium for meeting God.”<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, he concedes that music, especially in the context of a church service, can become an impediment to knowing God when people “mistake [emotions] for religious emotions when they may be wholly natural.”<sup>25</sup> At this point, he emphasizes the dangers that come with music—or any form of art—namely, that it can become an idol, distracting the listener from truths that must be found in God alone.

So, when writing about its affective dimension, Lewis discovers the power of music not in the music itself, but in the thing that the melody points towards. Just as the song of the spheres reflects cosmic harmony and musical analogy demonstrates moral order, the affective dimension of music produces an intense longing for something beyond human intellect. Here, in this ravine between the intellectual grasp of the mind and the nameless yearnings of the heart, Lewis finds true fulfillment in only one object. In a 1930 letter to his dear friend Arthur Greeves, this object comes to mind when Lewis is listening to music:

Lying on the sofa and hearing these old favourites I had sensations which you can imagine. And at once (here is the advantage of growing older) I knew that the enemy would take advantage of the vague longings and tendernesses to try & make me believe later on that he had the fulfillment which I really wanted: so I baulked him by letting the longings go even deeper and turning my mind to the One, the real object of all desire, which (you know my view) is what we are really wanting in all wants.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 731.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 731-732.

<sup>26</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis, Vol. 1* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 898-99.

Lewis, in his 1941 sermon *The Weight of Glory*, develops this same idea even further. He explains that each person carries with them a secret, “the secret which hurts so much that you take your revenge on it by calling it names like Nostalgia and Romanticism and Adolescence...”<sup>27</sup> Certain forms of art have the ability to reveal this secret, and music is especially adept at performing this task:

The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was longing. These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshipers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.<sup>28</sup>

From an aesthetic perspective, music represents a reflection of an endless beauty that Lewis finds in one place only: the architect of all things. This longing, which Lewis identifies as *Sehnsucht*, plays a major part of his own life and his works, and will be examined more fully in the third chapter. Still, it is important to have a preliminary understanding of this yearning, because it held such immense importance for Lewis. In his biography of Lewis, Alan Jacobs captures the sensation of *Sehnsucht*:

He ‘yearns’ or ‘longs’ (*sehnen*) for the flower—and yet nothing he can grasp seems so desirable as that longing itself. This is the paradox of *Sehnsucht*: that though it could in one sense be described as a negative experience, in that it focuses on something one cannot possess and cannot reach, it is nevertheless intensely seductive. One cannot say it is exactly *pleasurable*—there is a kind of ache in the sense of unattainability that always accompanies the longing—and yet, as Lewis puts it, the quality of the experience ‘is that of an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction.’<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Jacobs, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*, 41.

Because this viewpoint persisted throughout Lewis' life and can be found in multiple works, we can reasonably infer that his references to music, in his works of fiction, were sometimes meant to carry this connotation of divine beauty and ardent longing. In fact, Lewis was writing the Cosmic Trilogy in the same years that he delivered this sermon, and many scenes from the trilogy call to mind this transcendent beauty.

In some of his most important passages, the powerful emotion evoked by music floods into the joyous physical manifestation of dance. Here, Lewis' philosophical musings merge with his fictional imaginings; he creates a jubilant celebration in the end of both *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*, which he labels the Great Dance (the Dance will be discussed extensively in Chapter Two). Lewis envisions a strikingly similar scene in the final pages of his 1940 work *The Problem of Pain*:

All pains and pleasures we have known on earth are early initiations in the movements of that dance: but the dance itself is strictly incomparable with the sufferings of this present time. As we draw nearer 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.<sup>30</sup>

In this passage, Lewis attempts to encapsulate the Christian conception of heaven, and he apparently views dance as a suitable metaphor for this divine ecstasy. Although he believes that earthly beauty is only a copy of this reality, the fact that Lewis employs a rhythmic description of heaven illustrates the importance that he places on dance and, by extension, music. Lewis even proceeds to underscore the significance of music by referencing it in the same chapter. As we have seen, Lewis understood all earthly beauty

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<sup>30</sup> Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 158-159.



to be a copy of the true thing, yet he indulges himself in an investigation of this beauty to the mind's fullest extent:

All the things that have ever deeply possessed your soul have been but hints of it—tantalising 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.'<sup>31</sup>

In each of the above excerpts, Lewis focuses on the emotive aspect of music. He examines its ability to bring about a myriad of emotions: regret and desire, sorrow and bliss, but most importantly, longing. Collectively, these writings attest to the importance—both aesthetically and theologically—that music held for Lewis. In light of this knowledge, it is crucial that instances of music in Lewis' fiction are given proper weight throughout the course of the work, whether they serve to invoke the cosmic order, highlight moral implications, or call upon a longing for superlative beauty.

Upon surveying each of the works presented thus far, a common theme begins to emerge. Although they approach this theme from vastly different angles, the study of the medieval cosmos, the understanding of human morality, and the emotive power of music all intersect at the same point. Underpinning each of these endeavors, for Lewis, is that power which directs the universe and presides over all human conduct: the Christian God. The force behind the cosmos was spoken into existence, and motion continues through the echoes of the divine word. Moral law, as Lewis understood it, is one of God's means of communication with humankind, a subtle yet unrelenting guide towards uprightness. Music, as with many forms of art, engenders a fervent longing for the object of all

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 150-151.

desires. Lewis conflates each of these seemingly disparate items into one stream of thought—the temporal manifestation of an eternal reality. Hence, it is not unwarranted to assume that music, both as an intellectual subject of analogy and as an emotive force, is meant to direct the reader’s attention toward this higher order.

Presumably, an objection could be made against the relevance of this thesis during Lewis’ life. After all, the medieval cosmos was an outmoded model of the universe, and could be attributed to wishful, literary thinking on the part of Lewis. Nonetheless, this conception of the universe was essential to Lewis’ fiction, informing the cosmic dimension of his stories and infusing them with greater meaning. Furthermore, Lewis viewed the dance of the heavens as endless and immutable despite the contemporary view of the cosmos:

[The music of the spheres] is the only sound which has never for one split second ceased in any part of the universe; with this positive we have no negative to contrast. Presumably if (*per impossible*) it ever did stop, then with terror and dismay, with a dislocation of our whole auditory life, we should feel that the bottom has dropped out of our lives. But it never does. The music which is too familiar to be heard enfolds us day and night and in all ages.<sup>32</sup>

Lewis explains that the music of the universe is so fundamental to human experience that it could only truly be realized if it were to cease, displacing the stability of our experiential foundations. This divine music, the same music with the power to command human behavior and reveal a yearning for the eternal, undergirds all of human interaction and introspection. As Lewis creates worlds and characters in his works of fiction, he

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<sup>32</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1966), 52.

undoubtedly has this music in mind, drawing upon it to construct inspired stories and, more importantly, persistent inquiries into the nature of the higher order.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Music in The Cosmic Trilogy

#### *Overview*

Many of the works discussed in the previous chapter, though lucid in their conclusions, are imaginatively confined by their genre. For the sake of clarity, Lewis had to present his comparison between music and morality as distinct from the medieval comparison between music and the cosmos. However, in his works of fiction, he is no longer bound by this restriction, and the areas of cosmology and morality merge together in musical passages. In the Cosmic Trilogy<sup>1</sup>, areas of consensus between morality and cosmology are expressed vividly in many passages throughout the series, culminating in the brilliant Great Dance. In this chapter, we will move chronologically through the trilogy, examining the most crucial instances of music in the series. Importantly, Lewis engages the affective dimension of music repeatedly throughout the novels, underscoring the tremendous aesthetic appeal of music. Furthermore, he illustrates the importance of harmony in a more tangible manner: the Cosmic Trilogy consistently situates moral warfare within a lively, conversational cosmos. Lewis examines analogous aspects of

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<sup>1</sup> I choose the label “the Cosmic Trilogy” over “the Space Trilogy” or “the Ransom Trilogy” in accordance with Junius Johnson’s remarks: “Both stories meet over the issue of cosmology—they are both concerned with how we view the universe: ‘if we could even affect in one percent of our readers a change-over from the conception of Space to the conception of Heaven, we should have made a beginning’. This is a necessary goal for the first book of the trilogy, because the narrative cannot continue if we do not accept this alternate view of the universe; for this reason, the trilogy is better named the Cosmic Trilogy than the Space Trilogy.” Johnson, “Theological,” 429.

cosmic ordering and moral uprightness to their fullest extent, and music consistently represents the common ground for these central concepts.

### *Out of the Silent Planet*

In the Cosmic Trilogy, Lewis utilizes the fictional platform to explore many of the attributes of the medieval cosmos that appealed to him throughout his life. In works of non-fiction, he was confined to the historical conception of the cosmos; by framing *Out of the Silent Planet* (*OSP*) as a work of fiction, he is able to examine the universe without these limitations. The result is a work of literature that is fully compatible with neither the spheres of the middle ages nor the contemporary model of the universe—a cosmic backdrop, in many ways, of Lewis’ own imagining. As Junius Johnson understands it, “he feels that medieval cosmology, in its affective dimension, has imaginative possibilities that are productive for narrative and capable of bearing significant moral meaning.”<sup>2</sup>

Lewis surrounds the novel’s protagonist, Ransom, in a uniquely rejuvenating light as he careens through space to his eventual destination, Malacandra (Mars). Space is bursting with energy, so much so that Ransom begins to view the planets as “mere holes or gaps in the living heaven—excluded and rejected wastes of heavy matter...formed by subtraction from the surrounding brightness.”<sup>3</sup> Just as Lewis infuses space with energy, he infuses the Cosmic Trilogy with scenes of music. These scenes serve to underscore

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 427.

<sup>3</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (New York: Scribner, 1938), 41.

some of the most important moments of the trilogy, tracing Ransom's development throughout the story. Moreover, they attest to the importance that Lewis places on music, both as a worthy art form and as a subject of analogy. Despite the prevalence of music in the trilogy, some of the most striking scenes in *OSP* are a product of its opposite: the silence referenced in the novel's title.

Lewis' story begins with Ransom "discouraged by the silence and the growing darkness."<sup>4</sup> While approaching Sterk, the town where he intends to stay overnight, Ransom is interrupted by a distraught woman. She implores him to search for her son at The Rise, a mysterious and largely abandoned house nearby. Grudgingly, Ransom obliges, delaying his journey to Sterk: a decision that, ultimately, places Ransom on the spacecraft to Malacandra and marks the beginning of his cosmic voyage. When he arrives at The Rise, Ransom is ambushed by two progress-minded scientists, Weston and Devine. The men incorporate him into their nefarious machinations, forcing him to board a spaceship bound for Malacandra. During the trip to Malacandra, Lewis describes a curious musical quality in the spaceship, coupled with a powerful emotional reaction from Ransom. When Ransom awakes on the spaceship, he considers his surroundings:

The room was walled and floored with metal, and was in a state of continuous faint vibration—a silent vibration with a strangely life-like and unmechanical quality about it. But if the vibration was silent, there was plenty of noise going on—a series of musical raps or percussions at quite irregular intervals which seemed to come from the ceiling. It was as if the metal chamber in which he found himself was being bombarded with small, tinkling missiles. Ransom was by now thoroughly frightened—not with the prosaic fright that a man suffers in a war, but with a heady, bounding kind of fear that was hardly distinguishable from his general excitement: he was

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 12.

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.<sup>5</sup>

Lewis, drawing on the emotive aspect of music, utilizes this description of sound to underscore Ransom's precarious emotional state. The unusual musical quality of the spaceship evokes a deluge of feelings, remarkably powerful yet difficult to interpret, which signifies both the excitement and horror of the unknown. The life-like vibration of the ship calls to mind the tremendous energy of the space that surrounds the ship, a constant reminder of the vitality of the cosmos. Shortly thereafter, Lewis revisits the same sound, this time with a decidedly positive emotional reaction:

All was silence but for the irregular tinkling noises. He knew now that these were made by meteorites, small, drifting particles of the world-stuff that smote continually on their hollow drum of steel; and he guessed that at any moment they might meet something large enough to make meteorites of ship and all. But he could not fear...the adventure was too high, its circumstance too solemn, for any emotion save a severe delight.<sup>6</sup>

So far, Lewis has tapped into the visceral level of musical experience, that which is frequently paired with an emotional response. Even here, in mainly literal occurrences of music, Lewis draws from the affective dimension of music. As the novel progresses, instances of music and sound begin to carry analogical meaning. First, Lewis employs music as a representation of beauty, as a defense against the bellicose march of scientific progress that is a persistent theme in *OSP*. Second, and more strikingly, Lewis underscores the absence of sound: in a cosmos characterized by constant interplanetary communication, the Oyarsa of Thulcandra (presiding angel of Earth) has gone silent, leading to a perversion of the moral law on Thulcandra.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 33.

Early in the novel, Lewis introduces the character of Weston. A belligerent scientist whose definition of progress consists of cosmic conquest and propagation of humankind, Weston intends to sacrifice Ransom to the inhabitants of Malacandra. His ideals of progress are a recurring theme throughout the novel, and are summarized towards the end of the book. Deborah Klein paraphrases them thus:

When, near the end of *Out of the Silent Planet*, Ransom tries to translate Weston's exploitative ideals to the Oyarsa of Malacandra, he explains that to Weston, Darwinian survival of the fittest precludes concepts like compassion and pity. As Ransom translates, Weston boasts that 'the best animal now is the kind of man who makes the big huts and carries the heavy weights...and [Weston] is one of these and...if the others all knew what he was doing they would be pleased. He says that if he could kill you all and bring our people to live in Malacandra, then they might be able to go on living here after something had gone wrong with our world...and so they would never die out.'<sup>7</sup>

Lewis weaves this discussion into the fabric of *OSP*'s narrative arc. In fact, Lewis juxtaposes Weston's ideals against those of the *hrossa* (one group of rational beings on Malacandra), a species that extols music and creativity. Ransom observes that "they seemed to have no arts except a kind of poetry and music...."<sup>8</sup> Later, as one *hrossa* teaches Ransom about the three kinds of *hnau* (rational beings) on Malacandra, he emphasizes the importance of music to their tribe, saying that "no *hnau* can match [the *pfifltriggi*] in making and shaping things as none can match us in singing."<sup>9</sup>

Evidently, Lewis places great emphasis on the importance of music to culture: one of only three rational species on Malacandra focuses specifically on song and poetry.

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<sup>7</sup> Klein, "They Have Quarreled," 68.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*, 67.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.



Lewis, aware of the tension between Weston's scientific ideals and the *hrossa*'s artistic endeavors, uses this opportunity to imagine a world ruled exclusively by science. He permits a brief digression by Ransom:

Unless, of course, the *hrossa* were after all under the thumb of the *sorns*, superior to their masters in all the qualities that human beings value, but intellectually inferior to them and dependent on them. It would be a strange but not an inconceivable world; heroism and poetry at the bottom, cold scientific intellect above it, and overtopping all some dark superstition which scientific intellect, helpless against the revenge of the emotional depths it had ignored, had neither will nor power to remove.<sup>10</sup>

This passage immediately calls to mind Lewis' 1945 work *The Abolition of Man*, written in the same time period as the Cosmic Trilogy, and shortly after *OSP*. In this work, Lewis imagines the consequences of a world ruled purely by psychology:

At the moment, then, of Man's victory over Nature, we find the whole human race subjected to some individual men, and those individuals subjected to that in themselves which is purely 'natural'—to their irrational impulses. Nature, untrammelled by values, rules the Conditioners and, through them, all humanity. Man's conquest of Nature turns out, in the moment of its consummation, to be Nature's conquest of Man.<sup>11</sup>

In both works, Lewis imagines the abolition of human values by a scientific oligarchy, and areas of creative expression are relegated to a secondary role, if any at all. Lewis views the destruction of values as nearly synonymous with the displacement of artistic endeavors, indicating an appraisal of creative expression as an invaluable conduit for higher, objective truth. Hence, music in *OSP* surpasses a purely literal or emotive significance; it carries enormous importance as a safeguard of beauty, a constant combatant against Weston's militant ideals.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>11</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1955), 80.

In light of his warnings—both in works of fiction and of nonfiction—against subservience to pure science, we can infer that Lewis is advocating for the importance of creative expression (e.g. music) to moral harmony. At the very least, the area of music and creative expression could provide a bulwark against the anthropocentric march of empirical progress embodied by Weston. Although Lewis underscores the capacity of music to prevent this cold, scientific picture of reality, Weston’s moral perversion has a different fundamental cause. The ultimate reason for the belligerence of Weston and his avaricious partner Devine can be found in the title of the novel: the Oyarsa of Thulcandra has gone silent. No longer guided by a moral being, the people of Thulcandra are left to wage war on each other. Thulcandra has fallen out of cosmic harmony, out of communication with the rest of the heavens, and the moral consequences are dire.

Although Thulcandra is referred to as the “silent planet” multiple times throughout the novel, the implications of this silence are not fully realized until the story’s denouement. The Oyarsa of Malacandra, in a resounding yet patient declaration to Weston, states that “I see now how the lord of the silent world has bent you.”<sup>12</sup> Clearly, the Oyéresu<sup>13</sup> of each planet are in constant communication with one another and with their realms, perpetuating a concord among the inhabitants of the heavens.<sup>14</sup> The inhabitants of Thulcandra, without guidance from their Oyarsa, have become morally perverted. Weston epitomizes this corruption, as noted by David Downing: “In the end,

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<sup>12</sup> Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*, 137.

<sup>13</sup> Plural of “Oyarsa.”

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., See p.95 for a discussion of the communication between Oyéresu.

after the Oyarsa has heard Weston's grandiose but vapid speech about scattering the human seed throughout the cosmos, the Oyarsa pronounces Weston to be a bent *hnau*, perhaps curable because he is at least motivated by some moral imperative, albeit a warped one.”<sup>15</sup>

Here, Lewis presents an overt connection between cosmic harmony and moral order. This analogical reasoning, rooted primarily in the works of Plato, pervades Lewis' writings and is manifest in *OSP*. More importantly, music provides a common tie, for Lewis, between the arrangement of the universe and the proper organization of the soul. The purity of the heavens is upheld through constant communication, the soul is made pure by the divine music, and each are bound to laws of harmony: the same harmony that is encapsulated in music. References to music throughout *OSP*, though sparse, are used to amplify scenes of this moral and cosmic harmony. In the second book of the trilogy, *Perelandra*, Lewis fashions a moral war between Ransom and a creature of unrelenting evil, the Un-Man. Fittingly, musical references are abundant in this novel, as Ransom seeks to prevent the corruption of an undefiled planet.

### *Perelandra*

*Perelandra*, the second book of the trilogy, presents the most compelling evidence for Lewis' use of musical analogy. Ransom arrives on Perelandra (Venus), an oceanic paradise, and soon encounters the queen of the planet, the Green Lady. Shortly thereafter, the Un-man (formerly Weston in *OSP*) appears on Perelandra as an

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<sup>15</sup> Downing, *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*, 45.

embodiment of evil. Initially, references to music are sparse and seem to be employed either literally (for instance, the description of birds as a “musical chattering noise”) or fleetingly (“a phantom sense of vast choral music was all about him”).<sup>16</sup> In the novel’s early stages, the realm is characterized not by song, but by brilliant sensory imagery; Lewis describes Ransom’s arrival as a plunge into “a bedlam of flaming and writhing transparencies.”<sup>17</sup> However, as the novel progresses and the Un-man’s incessant rhetoric begins to wear down the Green Lady’s spiritual defenses, the theme of music becomes increasingly prevalent. Just before the Green Lady succumbs to the Un-man, Ransom physically intervenes to destroy the creature, the conclusion of an extended battle that is littered with musical references. In the scene of rebirth that follows his triumph, Ransom is surrounded by song: moral victory and cosmic harmony coalesce in a coruscating musical festival. Lewis envisages this scene, the magnificent Great Dance, as the realization of the full analogical potential of music, where the cosmological and moral states of Perelandra exist in beautiful harmony.

Lewis first alludes to music midway through the text, at a pivotal moment during Ransom’s stay on Perelandra (and, in fact, a crucial moment for the planet itself). Weston, having recently arrived on the planet, approaches Ransom with a transformed demeanor and unusual mannerisms. As Ransom contemplates this new voice of Weston, later to be revealed as the Un-man, he concludes that “something which was and was not

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 45; 57.

<sup>17</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (New York: Scribner, 1943), 34.

Weston was talking.”<sup>18</sup> Ransom realizes with intense anxiety that a change has just occurred, both in Weston and in himself:

At the same moment he was conscious of a sense of triumph. But it was not he who was triumphant. The whole darkness about him rang with victory. He started and half raised himself. Had there been any actual sound? Listening hard he could hear nothing but the low murmurous noise of warm wind and gentle swell. The suggestion of music must have been from within. But as soon as he lay down again he felt assured that it was not. From without, most certainly from without, but not by sense of hearing, festal revelry and dance and splendor poured into him—no sound, yet in a fashion that it could not be remembered or thought of except as music. It was like having a new sense. It was like being present when the morning stars sang together. It was as if Perelandra had that moment been created—and perhaps in some sense it had.

Indeed, Perelandra had in some sense been created in this moment—the battle between the forces of good and evil had begun. Notably, the triumph of this passage is a triumph of evil. As Weston is overcome by this sinister power, he is transformed into a persuasive vessel, coaxing the Green Lady towards evil. This new, wicked creature—the Un-man—has begun its assault on the Green Lady and her descendants. In fact, the concepts of “good” and “evil” moralities have in this moment been introduced to the previously uncorrupted Perelandra. Certainly, Lewis infuses this passage with music to underscore its moral importance. Moreover, in this scene Ransom is instilled with a sense of duty. An evil force has begun on Perelandra, and Ransom must intervene in order to prevent its spread. Despite this reality, Ransom attempts to avoid his inevitable battle with the Un-man, favoring “the suggestion that he had been brought here not to do anything but only as a spectator or a witness.”<sup>19</sup> Eventually, despite his fear of

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 92.

confronting the Un-man, Ransom rejects this delusion of safety and prepares for his battle with the creature. Characteristically, Lewis brings forth a musical simile to signify the end of his internal battle of conscience: “It snapped like a violin string. Not one rag of all this evasion was left.”<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the only section in the novel more significant than the introduction of evil to Perelandra is the renewal of the planet following Ransom’s conquest over the Un-man. After Ransom has triumphed over the Enemy, Lewis creates a scene of rebirth for him, labeling it a “second infancy, in which he was breast-fed by the planet Venus herself.”<sup>21</sup> Three indelible impressions are left in Ransom’s mind, the first being “the endless sound of rejoicing water,” and the last “is the song... low and ripe and tender, full-bellied, rich and golden-brown: passionate too, but not with the passions of men.”<sup>22</sup> Ransom, and the new, sinless, triumphant planet of Perelandra, are greeted by a pure and perfect harmony. Following this passage, Lewis references music repeatedly, a stark contrast to its relative absence in the majority of the book. The effects of this steady reliance on music are twofold: first, Lewis continues the analogy of music as a representation of beauty, and second, he extends the analogy of musical harmony as a reflection of harmonious moral and cosmic ordering.

The emotional response of Ransom upon hearing music after his rebirth is reminiscent of his response in *OSP*: “The soft, almost impalpable, caresses of the long

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 159.

thin leaves on his flesh, the low, singing, rustling, whispering music, and the frolic of movement all about him, began to set his heart beating with that almost formidable sense of delight which he had felt before in Perelandra.”<sup>23</sup> The journey into the unknown, once fraught with terror, has been transformed into a wonderful musical experience.

Additionally, Ransom learns of the singing beast, “the most delicate and glorious of all beasts,” whose song accompanies the joyous realization that “there will be no [Noah’s Ark] needed in this world.”<sup>24</sup> Ransom eradicated the evil force from the planet, and the celebration befits the occasion: “The song of four singing beasts rose in almost deafening triumph above the restless multitude...proclaiming joy to all ears.”<sup>25</sup>

Finally, to further emphasize the relationship between music and beauty, Lewis makes a direct analogy between them. As Ransom reflects on the King of Perelandra, he is struck by the King’s image:

Plaster images of the Holy One may before now have drawn to themselves the adoration they were meant to arouse for the reality. But here, where His live image, like Him within and without, made by His own bare hands out of the depth of divine artistry, His masterpiece of self-portraiture coming forth from His workshop to delight all worlds, walked and spoke before Ransom’s eyes, it could never be taken for more than an image. Nay, the very beauty of it lay in the certainty that it was a copy, like and not the same, an echo, a rhyme, an exquisite reverberation of the uncreated music prolonged in a created medium.<sup>26</sup>

This passage calls to mind the words visited earlier in *The Weight of Glory*, that beauty lies in “the echo of a tune we have not heard.” Again, Lewis submits that some truths

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 177.

cannot be accessed except by way of analogy, and music is the suitable subject of analogy for some cosmological and moral truths. An exemplar of these higher truths should be delightful and mysterious, and music is unequivocally so. With his renewed ears and mind, Ransom perceives music as a joyous, playful, and exquisite form. Moreover, the subject of analogy should exhibit substantive ties with the other objects of comparison, in this case, moral and cosmic harmony. When examining Lewis' Cosmic Trilogy, these connections grow increasingly robust, and the final pages of *Perelandra* refer once more to consonance in the universe.

When describing the Oyéresu of Malacandra and Perelandra, Ransom finds that musical simile can help to fill in where words fall short, stating that “one could try—Ransom has tried a hundred times—to put it into words. He has said that Malacandra was like a rhythm and Perelandra like a melody.”<sup>27</sup> Fundamentally, he decides, even these words are inadequate. Instead of attempting to encapsulate with language the celebration taking place on Perelandra, Ransom chooses to be still and admire the spectacle:

But he had never till now seen the reality. For now he saw this living Paradise, the Lord and Lady, as the resolution of discords, the bridge that spans what would else be a chasm in creation, the keystone of the whole arch. By entering that mountain valley they had suddenly united the warm multitude of brutes behind him with the transcorporeal intelligences at his side. The closed the circle, and with their coming all the separate notes of strength or beauty which that assembly had hitherto struck became one music.

Musical analogy, in this instance, is elevated to a supernatural occasion. In a land where no evil may dwell, all things come together to sing praise. Each of the vastly different beings of Perelandra—be they brutish creatures or translucent spirits—join in an

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 171.



awesome celebration, their various notes of praise uniting into one divine music. Lewis explicitly illustrates the unifying power of the music; song resolves potential discord between these different entities, resulting in an otherwise unreachable synergy among them. More importantly, the celebration on Perelandra marks a rare instance in which Lewis employs the full analogical power of music: cosmic harmony and moral triumph are blissfully united, and culminate in the eternal and immutable Great Dance.

In all of his writings, the Great Dance stands out as one of the most complex yet rewarding concepts imagined by Lewis. It is an intricate and ceaseless motion, elusive in precise meaning but bursting with universal significance. Holly Ordway summarizes Paul Fiddes' findings regarding the Great Dance thusly:

Paul Fiddes's essay "'For the Dance All Things Were Made': The Great Dance in C.S. Lewis's *Perelandra*" engages productively with the image of the Great Dance as part of Lewis's overall interest in medieval cosmology. Fiddes argues that this extraordinary passage at the end of the novel "uncover[s] the depths of Lewis's religious vision of the universe." Noting that the medieval authors depict "the spheres, angels, and other beings" in a dance around God, Fiddes shows that Lewis has converted this dance "into a dance of the Trinity", an image of the nature of God as well as of creation's response to God.<sup>28</sup>

Notably, each of the *eldila* (spiritual beings) of *Perelandra* preface the Great Dance with a brief hymn, concluded by the exclamation, "Blessed be He!" Ransom says of their utterances: "The speeches followed one another—like the parts of a music into which all five of them had entered as instruments or like a wind blowing through five trees that stand together on a hilltop."<sup>29</sup> Gradually, by accumulation, Lewis presents a tantalizing

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<sup>28</sup> Ordway, "C.S. Lewis's *Perelandra*," 189.

<sup>29</sup> Lewis, *Perelandra*, 183.

picture of the Great Dance, one that evokes his earlier writings on the Dance in *The Problem of Pain*. The eldila announce that “the dance which we dance is at the centre and for the dance all things are made.”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the eldila emphasize the symmetry of the Dance: “In the plan of the Great Dance plans without number interlock, and each movement becomes in its season the breaking into flower of the whole design to which all else had been directed.”<sup>31</sup> Finally, at the heart of the Great Dance lies a moral division: “There is no way out of the centre save into the Bent Will which casts itself into the Nowhere. Blessed be He!”<sup>32</sup> So far, the reader can conclude that Lewis’ Great Dance is infinitely symmetrical and desirable as the *telos* of all things, and cannot be avoided except by succumbing to the “Bent Will.” The affective dimension of music, the perfect harmony of the heavens, and the proper moral order are each integral parts of the Great Dance. Its magnificence, however, is realized only when Ransom sees a glimpse of the Dance itself.

Suddenly, so quickly that he does not notice it, the Dance is upon him:

He thought he saw the Great Dance. It seemed to be woven out of the intertwining undulation of many cords or bands of light, leaping over and under one another and mutually embraced in arabesques and flower-like subtleties...He could see also (but the word “seeing” is now plainly inadequate) wherever the ribbons or serpents of light intersected, minute corpuscles of momentary brightness: and he knew somehow that these particles were the secular generalities of which history tells—peoples, institutions, climates of opinion, civilizations, arts, sciences, and the like—ephemeral coruscations that piped their short song and vanished.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 187.

Compared to the brilliance of the Great Dance, the entirety of human history is nearly inconsequential. Clearly, the Dance cannot be understood but by analogy. Although he devotes pages of sensory imagery to its characteristics, Lewis submits that the fundamental properties of this procession transcend human (and in fact, any) language. Despite this, Lewis views music as a foundational subject of analogy to better elucidate the Great Dance, and the Dance itself is characterized by musical ecstasy. The scintillating conclusion of *Perelandra*, in some ways, is made believable by its cosmic backdrop. In the final novel of the trilogy, *That Hideous Strength* (*THS*), Lewis indicates the earnestness of this spectacle by bringing it to Earth.

### *That Hideous Strength*

Lewis' *THS*, although it takes place exclusively on Earth, still relies heavily on intervention from cosmic powers. Where Ransom had to journey into space to encounter the worlds of *OSP* and *Perelandra*, the cosmic forces come to Ransom's own planet in the final novel of the trilogy. In fact, Lewis devotes an entire chapter to the "Descent of the Gods," chronicling the arrival of these powers at St. Anne's, and describing their effects on the members of Ransom's camp. Notably, this passage is one of two in which Lewis makes multiple explicit references to music and dance—throughout the novel, his sparse references to music again reinforce the importance of the scenes that are accompanied by song. Strikingly, as the novel continues, the cosmic dimensions of the story become more prevalent alongside instances of music. In *THS*, Lewis maintains the cosmic emphasis that he has placed on music in the first two novels (especially

*Perelandra*), by utilizing it at both a major turning point in the book and in the climax of the novel.

Lewis begins by creating a realistic setting on Earth, a setting largely bereft of musical imagery. In a way, this attests to the importance of music in the other cosmic realms; on planets marked by constant interplanetary communication, delicate and delightful songs abound. On Earth, however, much of the sound is lifeless: “shouts and the sound of lorries heavily drumming past or harshly changing gear, rattling of chains, drumming of mechanical drills, clanging of iron, whistles, thudding, and an all pervasive vibration.”<sup>34</sup> These sounds reflect the progressive ideals of the N.I.C.E., a malevolent group of elite psychologists whose *modus operandi* most closely resembles that of the Un-man. The N.I.C.E. desires total scientific control, and uses any means (including propaganda and murder) to attain it. The opposition to the N.I.C.E., a small group of people recruited by the Director (Ransom’s new identity on Earth), gather at St. Anne’s in order to devise a plan to combat the N.I.C.E. One of the members of the resistance, Jane Studdock, plays a crucial role throughout the story: her husband, Mark, has been hired by the N.I.C.E., and the tension between the two embodies an overarching struggle between good and evil. The first major scene of music arrives near the midpoint of the novel, just after Jane’s initial meeting with the Director, and accompanies a scene of rebirth that evokes Ransom’s own renewal on *Perelandra*.

Lewis describes four different “states” of Jane’s reaction to her meeting, but “the fourth and supreme Jane was simply in the state of joy.”<sup>35</sup> At this point, musical

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<sup>34</sup> C.S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, (New York: Scribner, 1945), 88.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

description dominates the scene: “she was in the sphere of Jove, amid light and music and festal pomp...”, and she resolved “to listen to many chorales by Bach on the gramophone that evening,” even the sunlight fell over the woods “like the notes of a trumpet.”<sup>36</sup> By itself, Lewis’ characterization of Jane could be downplayed as a creative way to illustrate her joy. However, taken in context, the passage represents a much more significant moment, both for Jane and for the cosmic warfare that underlies the entire plot. Already, Lewis has written repeatedly that Jane’s “world was unmade” upon meeting the Director.<sup>37</sup> This suggests the beginning of a softening of Jane’s heart, a surrender of her own control in the novel. To conclude the passage, Lewis states that “her beauty belonged to the Director. It belonged to him so completely that he could even decide not to keep it for himself but to order that it be given to another, by an act of obedience lower, and therefore higher, more unconditional and therefore more delighting, than if he had demanded it for himself.”<sup>38</sup> Jane has begun to cede control over her will and join the group at St. Anne’s and, more importantly, to join the cosmic forces of good that will become more apparent towards the end of the book. Lewis infuses this passage with music in order to illustrate not only Jane’s ebullience, but also her surrender to the benevolent higher power.

A closer examination of this passage reveals, once again, the purifying power of music that Lewis has referenced in his other works. Lewis creates the four distinct

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 140-141.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 149.

“states” of Jane in an attempt to demonstrate her internal conflict upon meeting the Director. The first and second versions of Jane operate on an observational level; the first “was a Jane simply receptive of the Director,” and the second Jane, a combatant against the first Jane, “was trying to control it.”<sup>39</sup> The third version of herself introduces a moral dimension to her conflict:

But the third one, this moral Jane, was one whose existence she had never suspected. Risen from some unknown region of grace or heredity, it uttered all sorts of things which Jane had often heard before but which had never, till that moment, seemed to be connected with real life...It kept on pressing into her mind those new feelings about Mark, feelings of guilt and pity, which she had first experienced in the Director’s room. It was Mark who had made the fatal mistake; she must, must, must be “nice” to Mark. The Director obviously insisted on it.<sup>40</sup>

Evidently, the Director demands proper morality, and implores Jane to treat her husband lovingly despite his involvement with the N.I.C.E. Still, she remains conflicted until the fourth Jane—the triumphant, musical Jane—enters her awareness: “And this produced in her such a confusion of sensations that the whole inner debate became indistinct and flowed over in to the larger experience of the fourth Jane, who was Jane herself and dominated all the rest at every moment without effort and even without choice.”<sup>41</sup> As the conflicting elements of Jane’s own person come into consonance, and she forfeits control of her will to an overarching “good” will, the world is transformed into a festival of light and music. This first scene of song in the novel accompanies the personal transformation of Jane, and a realignment of her own will. The second major scene of music describes a

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 148-149.

transformation of the universe, restoring Earth's place in the communicative harmony of the cosmos, and enabling the members of St. Anne's to participate in the Great Dance.

Shortly after their "dazzling festival of double meanings and puns" towards the end of the book, the members of St. Anne's are bathed in the presence of the gods.<sup>42</sup> The first part of the passage speaks explicitly of music and order. "There was no fear anywhere: the blood inside them flowed as if to a marching-song. They felt themselves taking their places in the ordered rhythm of the universe, side by side with the punctual seasons and patterned atoms and the obeying Seraphim."<sup>43</sup> Lewis alludes to a cosmic harmony and order, and describes it as a rhythm, as a marching-song, that not only permeates the magnificent universe, but also the "patterned atoms;" the microscopic elements of the cosmos. As the gods descend upon the members of St. Anne's, the Earth is transfigured: the members of St. Anne's, once fraught with anxiety, dispel their fear as they are united with the Great Dance.

While the Great Dance on Perelandra signified the height of revelry, the Dance is only made available to humankind in *THS*. Teresa Hooper compares the two Dances as follows:

This dance on Perelandra takes place in the absence of evil. When Lewis moves the story to Earth, we see one great difference between the model of the Dance set up here and the Dance as it exists on Earth: whereas the celestial pageant of Milton is pre-lapsarian, Lewis creates a dance on Earth wherein evil chooses not to participate. The disobedience of many of its members tries to set the music of the dance out of tune...Therefore, creatures who have never participated in the Dance must somehow enter in from the outside; through the characters of Ransom and Jane, he reveals

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 322.

how people out of step with the rest of the cosmos can learn, literally, to dance among angels.<sup>44</sup>

Lewis, by making the Dance attainable for humans, suggests that it is a plausible aim of the human life, a life marked by universal moral harmony. Additionally, to underscore the magnificence of the Dance, Lewis relies on musical simile. As Jove's presence passes through St. Anne's, "it was like the first beginning of music in the halls of some King so high and at some festival so solemn that a tremor akin to fear runs through young hearts when they hear it," and Ransom and Jane find themselves "momentarily caught up in the *Gloria* which those five excellent natures perpetually sing".<sup>45</sup> Lewis uses music to illustrate the proper order and harmony of the cosmic realms and to show humankind's correct relation to the supernatural. This scene is also central to the work as a whole, because it directly precedes the downfall of the N.I.C.E. and the curse of Babel that Merlin imposes upon them.

In his academic works, Lewis examines cosmic harmony and moral order independently, yet each are linked by analogy with music. In the Cosmic Trilogy, though, Lewis imagines each of these topics together, revolving around each other in the Great Dance. Certainly, Lewis draws on the affective dimension of music, as Ransom's journey and the Dance are each marked by an overwhelming delight. But Lewis also draws from the analogical power of music, utilizing the concepts of harmony, synergy, and unity. These fundamental elements of music each serve to elucidate his understanding of the medieval cosmos and moral law. The grandeur of the Great Dance,

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<sup>44</sup> Hooper, "Playing by the Rules," 106.

<sup>45</sup> Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 324.



not to be overlooked, can be best encapsulated by musical analogy: so, Lewis integrates each of these concepts in the regal form of music, as each character seeks to join the angelic Dance.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Music in *The Chronicles of Narnia*

#### *Overview*

Throughout *The Chronicles of Narnia*, occasions of music guide the narrative and elevate the series towards profound analogical significance. Apart from the use of military instruments during the many scenes of battle in the land of Narnia, Lewis employs musical description advisedly to communicate the higher order of the universe. Although some novels rely more heavily on sound and song, musical themes undergird the entire series. This underlying musical cadence not only adds to the overall coherence of the *Chronicles*, but also provides a powerful impetus for the analogical dimension of the series. In fact, both the creation of Narnia in *The Magician's Nephew* (MN) and its final moments in *The Last Battle* are brimming with musical reference: the stars of Narnia, sung into existence by the Lion, are called home by Aslan in the final moments of the series. Undoubtedly, this musical symmetry in the *Chronicles* heightens its analogical effectiveness. Music is intrinsically bound to time, and a musical piece is, in many ways, perfected by its finitude. Seemingly, Lewis recognizes the correlation between musical composition and literary composition, and relies on music as a reflection of beginning and end. Correspondingly, the first and last sections of this chapter will be devoted to the music of creation and to the music of finality. In between, we will examine the coincidence of music and scenes of magic, which remind the reader of the persistent moral and cosmic dimension of the series.

### *Music as a Medium of Creation*

Though Lewis refers to music frequently in the *Chronicles*, the most prominent instances of music in the series accompany moments of creation, which once again attests to Lewis' understanding of the analogical pertinence of music. Moments of creation (most notably, the creation of Narnia) carry with them an inherent relationship to the cosmos, and the cosmos is governed by an unavoidable moral law. Lewis establishes this connection very early in the narrative of Narnia, underscoring it with a magnificent song from Aslan himself. Before the reader learns of this song, Polly and Digory (the young protagonists of *MN*) discover these underlying relationships early in the novel. Shortly after this discovery, Lewis overtly describes the fundamental tie between song and the creation of the cosmos, a connection that is continually developed throughout the *Chronicles*.

In a similar fashion to the Cosmic Trilogy, Lewis first acknowledges the vitality of sound in the *Chronicles* by describing the lifelessness of its opposite, silence. In *MN*, Polly and Digory, still ecstatic from their discovery of the magic rings, eagerly plunge into one of the pools in the Wood between the Worlds. The ruins that await them on the other side are terrifyingly silent:

They stood still and listened, but all they could hear was the thump-thump of their own hearts. This place was at least as quiet as the Wood between the Worlds. But it was a different kind of quietness. The silence of the Wood had been rich and warm (you could almost hear the trees growing) and full of life: this was a dead, cold, empty silence. You couldn't imagine anything growing in it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (New York: HarperCollins, 1955), 47.

This passage calls to mind the “pitch-black and dead-cold” vacuity that Lewis sought to dismiss in *The Discarded Image*. Moreover, it emphasizes the life-giving qualities of a rich silence, one that is attuned with the natural world. As Polly and Digory soon discover, this eerie silence is not to last; when Digory strikes an enchanted bell that awakens the Witch, Lewis describes the increasingly chaotic timbre of the bell:

As soon as the bell was struck it gave out a note, a sweet note such as you might have expected, and not very loud. But instead of dying away again, it went on; and as it went on it grew louder...very soon it was so loud that they could not have heard one another even by shouting. And it still grew: all on one note, a continuous sweet sound, though the sweetness had something horrible about it, till all the air in that great room was throbbing with it and they could feel the stone floor trembling under their feet.<sup>2</sup>

At first, the bell’s ringing is seemingly harmless, even pleasant. As it the sound continues to swell, unnatural tones work their way into the musical experience of Polly and Digory. Though still the same note, the sweetness has been overtaken by a much stronger element of terror, as the music creates an unwelcome change. Importantly, this transformation parallels that of Perelandra, when evil is introduced to the planet and a musical transformation occurs around Ransom. In *MN*, as with the Cosmic Trilogy, a perfectly still and uncorrupted realm is sullied by evil.<sup>3</sup> Lewis continues to describe the ringing:

Then at last it began to be mixed with another sound, a vague, disastrous noise which sounded like great weights falling. Finally, with a sudden rush and thunder, and a shake that nearly flung them off their feet, about a quarter of the roof at one end of the room fell in, great blocks of masonry fell all

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>3</sup> The noteworthy difference here is that the land of Perelandra had never known evil, where the evil in *The Magician’s Nephew* had been reawakened by the bell.

round them, and the walls rocked. The noise of the bell stopped. The clouds of dust cleared away. Everything became quiet again.<sup>4</sup>

Although the episode of brief destruction is over, its effects will continue to radiate throughout the series: the world of the *Chronicles* has in this moment been pulled into a war of good and evil, as with Perelandra. In this scene, an initially sweet note is transformed into a crashing and unsettling noise, presumably a moral analogy. Lewis further develops the creative power of music and reveals Narnia's moral and musical origins later in the book, in a chapter devoted entirely to the founding of Narnia.

Without a doubt, the scene in which Aslan creates Narnia in *MN* is Lewis' most prolonged, and perhaps most important, use of music in his works of fiction. Peter Schakel, in his literary criticism, identifies it as "one of the most dramatic uses of music anywhere in his writings," as Lewis uses "music to convey imaginatively the order, unity, and harmony of the universe."<sup>5</sup> As the novel progresses, Queen Jadis (later to become the White Witch), chases Polly and Digory back to England. As with many of Lewis' novels, a scene of confusion and hilarity ensues. Finally, after a chaotic scramble in the streets of London, Polly, Digory, Uncle Andrew and Queen Jadis find themselves transported into an empty world, the realm of Nothing. Suddenly, the world begins to change. Lewis relates music, beauty, and cosmic harmony during the crux of the entire series: the creation of Narnia. In the words of Lewis:

In the darkness something was happening at last. A voice had begun to sing. It was very far away and Digory found it hard to decide from what direction it was coming. Sometimes it seemed to come from all directions at once.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>5</sup> Schakel, *Imagination and the Arts in C.S. Lewis: Journeying to Narnia and Other Worlds*, 109.

Sometimes he almost thought it was coming out of the earth beneath them. Its lower notes were deep enough to be the voice of the earth herself. There were no words. There was hardly even a tune. But it was, beyond comparison, the most beautiful noise he had ever heard. It was so beautiful he could hardly bear it.<sup>6</sup>

This, for Lewis, is the music of creation. In its initial moments, there is little character to the song other than a deepness and an omnipresence. However, the one quality that Lewis decidedly notes is beauty, a superlative beauty grounded in persistent music. Although there is inherent significance in Lewis linking this music with beauty, he continues to develop both the harmonic and cosmic dimensions of the song:

Then two wonders happened at the same moment. One was that the voice was suddenly joined by other voices; more voices than you could possibly count. They were in harmony with it, but far higher up the scale: cold tingling, silvery voices. The second wonder was that the blackness overhead, all at once, was blazing with stars. They didn't come out gently one by one, as they do on a summer evening. One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leapt out—single stars, constellations, and planets brighter and bigger than any in our world. There were no clouds. The new stars and the new voices began at exactly the same time. If you had seen and heard it, as Digory did, you would have felt quite certain that it was the stars themselves which were singing, and that it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing.<sup>7</sup>

Not only does Lewis demonstrate a tie between the cosmos and music, but he also presents an ordering of the events of creation. The simple initial sound of creation precedes the harmonious song of the stars; here, Lewis explicitly extends the mathematical relation of musical theory to the universe. In doing so, he identifies an invisible strand that links the cosmos together: the First Voice of creation. The voice engages (or perhaps, in a sense, invents) the fundamental laws of creation in the Narnian

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<sup>6</sup> Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, 106.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 107.

universe. These laws are perfectly attuned with the concepts of ratio and harmony, originating in one sound then exploding into a polyphonous and vibrant cosmos. As the song continues, its timbre changes alongside its effects: “The Lion was pacing to and fro about that empty land and singing his new song. It was softer and more lilting than the song by which he had called up the stars and the sun; a gentle, rippling music. As he walked and sang the valley grew green with grass.”<sup>8</sup> The Lion’s song, powerful and stable during the creation of the stars, has become a melodic, whimsical tune as the ground is painted with life. Though Aslan galvanizes the cosmos in an instant, the echoes of his song reverberate throughout all of creation: ““This world is bursting with life for these few days because the song with which I called it into life still hangs in the air and rumbles in the ground.””<sup>9</sup>

Lewis frequently revisits the lasting effects of the Lion’s song throughout the series. Sometimes, in the most striking passages, music comes from the waters of creation itself. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* contains one notable example. The White Witch has covered the entire land in an eternal winter, symbolic of her oppressive reign. Throughout much of the novel, this permafrost prevents the flourishing of plant and animal life and, instead of providing lively imagery, Lewis focuses on defining characters and revealing the backstory of the realm to the four Pevensies. However, as the Lion returns to Narnia and the White Witch’s power begins to diminish, her perpetual winter comes to an end. Edmund, separated from the other three Pevensies, rejoices when he discovers the invigorating sound:

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 185.

And in that silence Edmund could at last listen to the other noise properly. A strange, sweet, rustling, chattering noise—and yet not so strange, for he'd heard it before—if only he could remember where! And then all at once he did remember. It was the noise of running water. All round them though out of sight, there were streams, chattering, murmuring, bubbling, splashing, and even (in the distance) roaring.<sup>10</sup>

Though Edmund did not know the origins of Narnia, for the reader this passage functions as a distinct reminder of Aslan's song. The playful sound of the streams welcomes Aslan back to Narnia, and invites the reader to revisit its musical origin.

In other instances, music comes from the inhabitants of creation. The created animals offer songs of praise to their creator, as birds join together in a chorus of exultation.<sup>11</sup> Later in the series, the most overt musical reminder of Narnia's origin comes with the reappearance of Aslan. In *The Horse and His Boy*, as Shasta and his group of runaways (his horse Bree; Aravis and her horse Hwin) make their way towards Narnia, a lion chases them across the desert. Later, the lion reveals himself to Shasta as Aslan, and discloses his motive for the chase: to ensure that the group travelled swiftly across the desert to avoid capture. While Aslan begins his discussion with Shasta, Shasta "could hear birds singing...He turned and saw, pacing beside him, a Lion...No one ever saw anything more terrible and beautiful. Then instantly the pale brightness of the mist and the fiery brightness of the Lion rolled themselves together into a swirling glory and gathered themselves up and disappeared. He was alone with the horse on a grassy hillside under a blue sky. And there were birds singing."<sup>12</sup> By bookending Aslan's

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<sup>10</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (New York: HarperCollins, 1950), 118.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>12</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1954), 165-166.



arrival with references to birdsong, Lewis subtly reinforces the theme of musical creation throughout the series.

Lewis utilizes music as a medium of creation in order to illustrate a moral organization of the realm, from which its inhabitants should not stray. The function of music, though, is not confined to this task alone. As Peter Schakel notes, “at least forty-five references to music appear in the *Chronicles*, in six of the books and in many different contexts, creating a wide variety of imaginative effects.”<sup>13</sup> When departures do occur from this proper ordering, music functions as a revealer. Moral failures are brought to the surface by song, as the music taps into the magic that courses throughout Narnia. In some cases, this magic produces a surface level charm or enchantment; in others, a more potent Deep Magic arises. Either way, these occasions of music illustrate a second purpose of music throughout the *Chronicles*: to highlight moments of moral significance by evoking magic in the realm.

### *Music as Magic*

During the creation of Narnia, Polly and Digory are overjoyed by Aslan’s song: “The Cabby and the two children had open mouths and shining eyes; they were drinking in the sound, and they looked as if it reminded them of something.”<sup>14</sup> Their wonder at the music is not simply due to its breathtaking creative power. Though the children are transfixed, the song has the opposite effect on Uncle Andrew:

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<sup>13</sup> Schakel, *Imagination and the Arts in C.S. Lewis: Journeying to Narnia and Other Worlds*, 109.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis, *The Magician’s Nephew*, 108.

Uncle Andrew's mouth was open too, but not open with joy. He looked more as if his chin had simply dropped away from the rest of his face. His shoulders were stooped and his knees shook. He was not liking the Voice. If he could have got away from it by creeping into a rat's hole, he would have done so.<sup>15</sup>

So, the song performs a secondary function—not simply to create, but to shine light upon moral failure. Perhaps, this is the same “purifying power” to which Lewis alludes and that Plato posited in his works. Uncle Andrew, morally perverted and submissive to Queen Jadis, has a distorted soul. The music illuminates the schism between his soul and the properly ordered one.

Lewis proceeds to identify the Lion's singing as a type of Magic. This Magic opposes the evil Queen's, and her reaction to the song is even more violent than Uncle Andrew's:

But the Witch looked as if, in a way, she understood the music better than any of them. Her mouth was shut, her lips were pressed together, and her fists were clenched. Ever since the song began she had felt that this whole world was filled with a Magic different from hers and stronger. She hated it. She would have smashed that whole world, or all worlds, to pieces, if it would only stop the singing.<sup>16</sup>

In the same way that the stars appear concurrently with the higher harmonies, Magic fills the world at the same time as the song. Here, we also learn more about the character of the Magic that pervades Narnia. In itself, magic is not inherently good; as we will see below, it frequently induces harmful enchantments. This type of magic belongs to the Queen, to the forces of evil throughout the series. The other kind of Magic, the powerful and inescapable Magic of the realm, belongs to Aslan. Evidently, as this passage

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 109.

illustrates, this Magic is strongly correlated to the moral law for Lewis. The Queen's magic may momentarily distract or mislead, but the Lion's elemental Magic immutably directs the realm towards moral uprightness.

Duly, in this passage Lewis characterizes music as a sort of defense, a bulwark against the Queen's ruinous intentions. A war has begun between the malevolent Queen and the relentless singing of the world. C.N. Manlove, with a nod to the creative power of music, summarizes the conflict as such: "[The Queen's] whole object is domination and destruction. But when she reaches Narnia her power is nothing against the Lion, and she flees. Like the stars spreading in the dark sky, or the grass spreading over the bare earth, so the magic of the book has finally ended at the deep magic of creativity."<sup>17</sup> In one pivotal moment, music and Magic permeate the world and the Queen's strength begins to crumble. Once again, Lewis marshals the imaginative power of music in order to convey the correct ordering of the world. The Lion, introduced by a sonorous and mellifluous song, takes his rightful place above the Queen, who was awakened by a cacophonous ringing.

Two other significant instances of music in the *Chronicles* exemplify the Queen's weaker variety of magic. In these cases, the music does not call upon a Deep Magic, but induces a kind of charm or enchantment. The first occasion of musical spell comes early in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, just after Lucy stumbles through the wardrobe into Narnia. The faun Tumnus cordially invites Lucy to his home for tea, and begins to play an intricate and moving melody: "he took out from its case on the dresser a strange

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<sup>17</sup> Manlove, "The Birth of a Fantastic World," 77.

little flute that looked as if it were made of straw and began to play. And the tune he played made Lucy want to cry and laugh and dance and go to sleep all at the same time. It must have been hours later when she shook herself...”.<sup>18</sup> Just after the song, Tumnus confesses to Lucy his intent to kidnap her, per the request of the White Witch. This moral dilemma elevates the scene of music past just the affective change that Lucy felt during the song. Immediately after using this tune to enchant Lucy, Tumnus reverses his course and hurriedly sends her out of Narnia, back through the wardrobe. Again, as with Uncle Andrew, the music functions to reveal his error; as Lewis might put it, the song helps to illuminate his deviation from the moral law. Crucially, Tumnus performs the spell under the Witch’s orders—the desire to commit evil does not come from him. It might be said of this scene that Tumnus initially uses the melody in accordance with the Queen’s magic, but the Magic of Aslan, ever-present and increasingly insistent, demands that he help Lucy flee instead. Once again, Aslan’s Magic triumphs over the meretricious magic of the Queen.

In the second striking example of musical spell, the charm is conjured not by a conflicted character, but by an evil Witch herself. Even so, the charm does not succeed because it cannot draw upon the Deep Magic, set in place by Aslan. This instance of musical magic occurs in *The Silver Chair*. Towards the end of their quest, Eustace and Jill find themselves in the Underworld, a land inhabited by gnomes who serve the

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<sup>18</sup> Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 16.

Witch.<sup>19</sup> They have succeeded in setting free Prince Rilian, a prisoner of the Witch, and are preparing to escape the Underworld when the Witch confronts them:

She took out first a handful of green powder. This she threw on the fire. It did not blaze much, but a very sweet and drowsy smell came from it. And all through the conversation which followed, that smell grew stronger, and filled the room, and made it harder to think. Secondly, she took out a musical instrument rather like a mandolin. She began to play it with her fingers—a steady, monotonous thrumming that you didn't notice after a few minutes. But the less you noticed it, the more it got into your brain and your blood. This also made it hard to think. After she had thrummed for a time (and the sweet smell was quite strong) she began speaking in a sweet, quiet voice.<sup>20</sup>

Slowly, the three captives of the Witch (along with their guide Puddleglum) begin to forget the existence of the Overworld, including that of Aslan. The Witch methodically disarms them, utilizing the intoxicating scent and the persistent strumming of the mandolin to help lower their guard.<sup>21</sup> Just before they become captives of the Witch, Puddleglum rouses from his trance, lambasting her mandolin playing and stamping out the noxious fumes. This scene points to the inferiority of all magic that does not align with Aslan's Magic; the children, though naïve, have the Deep Magic, the first music, on their side. Therefore, they prevail over even the most cunning of witches, as all enchantments disintegrate before the name of the Lion. Undoubtedly, Lewis has set up a contrast of magic that relates to his conception of the moral law. Pernicious charms and enchanting tunes, as deviations from the moral law, fail to fulfil their purpose. The

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<sup>19</sup> Though this Witch is different from the White Witch, Lewis compares them thusly in *The Silver Chair*; "A wicked witch (doubtless the same kind who had brought the Great Winter on Narnia long ago) had contrived the whole thing." C.S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (New York: HarperCollins, 1953), 226.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, 173.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis repeatedly revisits the thrumming of the mandolin: *Ibid.*, 175-179.

divine music, on the other hand, “that sort which never departs from understanding and reason,” always succeeds because it invokes the Deep Magic of the fictional world and is in step with the cosmic rhythm of Narnia.

Finally, just as the song of the birds and streams reminded the reader of Narnia’s founding, so Aslan’s return in *Prince Caspian* is accompanied by music and magic. The four Pevensies, en route to meet Prince Caspian, stop to rest near a glade of trees. Lucy is awakened by the voice of Aslan, and follows his summons to the nearby forest. What she sees there both excites and bewilders her:

She got up, her heart beating wildly, and walked toward them. There was certainly a noise in the glade, a noise such as trees make in a high wind, though there was no wind tonight. Yet it was not exactly an ordinary tree-noise either. Lucy felt there was a tune in it, but she could not catch the tune anymore than she had been able to catch the words when the trees had so nearly talked to her the night before. But there was, at least, a lilt; she felt her own feet wanting to dance as she got nearer. And now there was no doubt that the trees were really moving—moving in and out through one another as if in a complicated country dance.<sup>22</sup>

The trees, enlivened by the return of Aslan, guide Lucy through their dance and to the Lion himself. When Aslan created Narnia, he sung the trees into existence; when he returns to Narnia, the trees dance upon his arrival. The narrative significance of this moment is not to be overlooked, as creation responds to its creator in a symmetrical and poetic manner. Additionally, there is an analogical import to this passage that supplements Lewis’ other writings on music. In many cases, especially in Lewis’ fiction, a properly ordered world is symmetrical, as with the Great Dance. This symmetry, though, need not be spatial; indeed, it can be a temporal symmetry, a proper relation of beginning and ending, that bears analogical significance. This time, Aslan’s

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<sup>22</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian* (New York: HarperCollins, 1953), 138.

homecoming is met with song and dance, a testament to his praiseworthiness. Moreover, it marks a moment of a symmetry in the series, as Aslan returns to the realm and enkindles his creation once more. As the *Chronicles* reach their end, a sense of finality is signified by occasions of music. Where music tapped into the power of Magic to indicate a rightful ordering of things, it does work in the emotional plane during moments of ending.

### *Musical Finality*

Though the dance of the trees during Aslan's return is significant, it is but a shadow of the revelry that follows in *Prince Caspian*. Aslan, sensing that his army requires more strength to prevail, calls upon the creatures of Narnia, this time with a resonant roar: "The sound, deep and throbbing at first like an organ beginning on a low note, rose and became louder, and then far louder again, till the earth and air were shaking with it."<sup>23</sup> Following the call, creatures all across Narnia flood towards Aslan; "in every field and wood, the alert ears of rabbits rose from their holes, the sleepy heads of birds came out from under their wings, owls hooted, vixens barked, hedgehogs grunted, the trees stirred."<sup>24</sup> Once again, Lucy finds herself caught up in the lively motion: "The crowd and the dance round Aslan (for it had become a dance once more) grew so thick and rapid that Lucy was confused."<sup>25</sup> All of creation continues to respond to its creator appropriately, and song and dance are the fitting modes of celebration. In

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 107.

the moment that Aslan returned, hope was restored to the Narnians, when he let out his enormous roar, the tide of the war shifted immediately. In this instance, the finality provided by Aslan proves to be joyous. However, the other examples of musical finality in the *Chronicles* are frequently marked by a sadness or, occasionally, a bittersweet feeling. These are the passages where Lewis maximizes the power of music on both the affective and intellectual planes, as reason and emotion collide in his exploration of finality.

One theme that Peter Schakel identifies in many of C.S. Lewis' works is that of longing. As he contends, "the most significant development of the theme appears in the character of Reepicheep in *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader,"* and it is closely associated with music. Reepicheep's hope, in joining the voyage, is to reach the very eastern end of the world and there to find Aslan's own country. When he was very young, a Dryad sang over him a song that epitomizes divine longing, or *Sehnsucht*, for Lewis."<sup>26</sup> Reepicheep longs for Aslan's own country and the sense of finality that it entails. Certainly, Lewis utilizes music because of its ability to convey emotional disposition; however, his usage of song, in light of his other works, carries far greater meaning than simply emotional. As the voyage continues eastward, music highlights two crucial parts of the journey.

Towards the end of their travels, the crew comes upon two inhabitants of an island, an old man and his daughter. In a strongly symbolic scene, they begin to sing:

Then both of them held up their arms before them and turned to face the east. In that position they began to sing. I wish I could write down the song,

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<sup>26</sup> Schakel, *Imagination and the Arts in C.S. Lewis: Journeying to Narnia and Other Worlds*, 106-107.



but no one who was present could remember it. Lucy said afterward that it was high, almost shrill, but very beautiful, ‘A cold kind of song, an early morning kind of song.’ . . . For now they knew that they had truly come to the beginning of the End of the World.<sup>27</sup>

This passage, an invigorating directive towards the east, marks the beginning of the fulfilment of Reepicheep’s quest. Lewis capitalizes on this opportunity to stretch the reader’s imagination, as the *Dawn Treader* nears the end of the world. Schakel, again exploring the theme of longing, characterizes the end of the novel thusly:

The description of the end of the world is one of the most dazzlingly imaginative and emotional passages in the Chronicles. As the *Dawn Treader* glides smoothly eastward through the lilies, the light becomes more brilliant, no one wants to eat or sleep, and everyone grows younger every day and is filled with joy and excitement. When the ship has gone as far as it can, the voyagers encounter things always associated for Lewis with Joy: “eastward, beyond the sun . . . a range of mountains . . . so high . . . they never saw the top of it”; and a breeze bringing both a smell and a sound, a musical sound they never forgot. “Edmund and Eustace would never talk about it afterwards. Lucy could only say, ‘It would break your heart.’ ‘Why,’ said I, ‘was it so sad?’ ‘Sad! No,’ said Lucy.”<sup>28</sup>

The music sounds as Reepicheep makes good on his lifelong quest, and all in the novel is ordered as it ought to be. Each of the seven missing lords has been accounted for, and Reepicheep has sworn never to return from the end of the world. So, the music recognizes an element of loss. Perhaps, this loss resides in Reepicheep’s departure, but, more likely, it is found in the tantalizing closeness to the end of the world—to Aslan’s country. Alongside this loss, though, is a joy that the quest has been completed and the *Dawn Treader*’s voyage was successful. Moreover, this joy can be found in the

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<sup>27</sup> C.S Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (New York: HarperCollins, 1952), 204-205.

<sup>28</sup> Schakel, *Imagination and the Arts in C.S. Lewis: Journeying to Narnia and Other Worlds*, 107.

possibility of reaching Aslan's country, the existence of a happiness beyond all present pain. So far, Lewis has created scenes of music both joyous and bittersweet. *The Silver Chair*, on the other hand, contains a scene of heartbreaking music that carries the novel to a close.

In the final chapter of *The Silver Chair*, the people half-heartedly celebrate the return of the Prince: "the music played on, but you could feel that everyone was becoming uneasy."<sup>29</sup> Just after King Caspian blesses his son, he dies as "the musicians stopped and there was a dead silence. The Prince, kneeling by the King's bed, laid down his head upon it and wept."<sup>30</sup> Music, on this occasion, is unequivocally sad; "slowly, mercilessly, with wailing strings and disconsolate blowing of horns, the music began again: this time, a tune to break your heart."<sup>31</sup> Suddenly, Jill begins to feel guilty about her wrongdoings but cannot articulate an apology. Aslan consoles her, then prepares to send her home. Once more in the *Chronicles*, music serves to reveal disorder of the soul, by facing each person with their past iniquities. Otherwise, thus far, the funeral song has mostly engaged the audience on the emotional plane. As the passage continues, Lewis again taps into the transcendent dimension of music that makes it so analogically effective.

As the Lion sweeps Jill and Eustace home, they admire the countryside, but are soon overwhelmed with emotion:

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<sup>29</sup> Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, 235.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 236.

Then they saw that they were once more on the Mountain of Aslan, high up above and beyond the end of that world in which Narnia lies. But the strange thing was that the funeral music for King Caspian still went on, though no one could tell where it came from. They were walking beside the stream and the Lion went before them: and he became so beautiful, and the music so despairing, that Jill did not know which of them it was that filled her eyes with tears.<sup>32</sup>

In this moment, the music becomes so heartbreaking that Jill cannot determine the stimulus for her emotional response. Lewis, in a crucial literary move, combines the beauty of Aslan with the dispirited music of Caspian's funeral, until they arrive at the body of Caspian himself. There, all three weep over his body, and Aslan commands Eustace to drive a thorn through the paw of the Lion. As the blood from his paw washes over the body of Caspian, two things happen concurrently: first, the body of the King becomes reinvigorated with life, and second, in an instant, "the doleful music stopped."<sup>33</sup> King Caspian, thrilled over his revival, kisses Aslan and then looks at the others with "a great laugh of astonished joy."<sup>34</sup> At long last, all is set right in the realm, and the heartbreaking music has come to an end. Grief has been transformed to joy, a transformation undergirded by music and, in the end, punctuated by the final notes of Caspian's funeral march. During this final scene of *The Silver Chair*, Lewis utilizes music as both an emotional emissary and a moral illuminator. Fittingly, the last scenes of music in the *Chronicles*, found in *The Last Battle*, employ both of these roles of music as

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 239.

well as its connection to cosmic harmony, as the realm of Narnia finally stops its persistent singing.

The world sung into existence by the Lion, at long last, comes to an end at the sound of Father Time's horn. Here, more clearly than anywhere in the series, Lewis uses music as a literary device. The underlying musical vibrations of the realm, introduced by Aslan during its creation, are called to a standstill by Time itself. The vibrant, musical inertia of Narnia and its narrative culminate in this scene, as the purpose of the realm has been fulfilled. Father Time, a slumbering giant, awakens, and the characters of the series watch in awe as night falls on Narnia:

Then the great giant raised a horn to his mouth. They could see this by the change of the black shape he made against the stars. After that—quite a bit later, because sound travels so slowly—they heard the sound of the horn: high and terrible, yet of a strange, deadly beauty. Immediately the sky became full of shooting stars.<sup>35</sup>

At first, the scene parallels that of creation, as the sky explodes with stars. Soon, though, everyone begins to understand what is truly occurring:

With a thrill of wonder (and there was some terror in it too) they all suddenly realized what was happening. The spreading blackness was not a cloud at all: it was simply emptiness. The black part of the sky was the part in which there were no stars left. All the stars were falling: Aslan had called them home.<sup>36</sup>

Lewis engages the affective dimension of music by referring to the horn's high and deadly beauty, and the cosmic harmony of song as the stars are called back home.

Furthermore, the entire sequence includes a key moral component: during the final

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<sup>35</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: HarperCollins, 1956), 172.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 172-173.

seconds of the stars' existence, Aslan judges all of creation. Those who remained faithful to the Lion enter Aslan's country, those who opposed him are consigned to a bestial, temporal life. These different elements of music, that Lewis has employed consistently throughout all of his works, culminate in this final scene of fiction.

As the children follow Aslan towards his country, the riotous animals grow increasingly excited: "'Further up and further in!' roared the Unicorn, and no one held back."<sup>37</sup> Eventually, they reach the top of their climb, and stop outside of golden gates. They are welcomed into Aslan's country, the real Narnia, by the sound of a horn: "But while they were standing thus a great horn, wonderfully loud and sweet, blew from somewhere inside that walled garden and the gates swung open."<sup>38</sup> Despite the number of different functions that music has performed for Lewis throughout the series, these characteristics of music fall secondary to its extraordinary sweetness. In a sense, each of these attributes, from universal harmony to moral organization, perfect the sweetness of Lewis' music. Ultimately, though, the incredible analogical power of music comes from its ability to evoke such breathtaking emotion; where prose falls short, Lewis infuses his work with music to elevate the imaginative ceiling of his writing. All the while, he invites the reader to test the limits of their own imagination. Where cosmic harmony, moral uprightness, and immeasurable beauty coalesce, there lies the perfection of Lewis' divine music. As the gates of Aslan's country swing open, the children are reunited with

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 202.

Reepicheep the mouse: “Welcome, in the Lion’s name. Come further up and further in.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 203.

## CONCLUSION

As Lewis concludes *The Problem of Pain*, he envisions the Great Dance, a blissful and ceaseless procession set to the song of the heavens. In an attempt to capture the spectacle, he invokes Shakespeare; “then indeed the eternal dance ‘makes heaven drowsy with the harmony’”<sup>1</sup>. As we have seen, Lewis frequently calls upon the analogical power of music in order to convey the desirability of harmony. The notion of harmony underpins many of Lewis’ writings, whether it refers to the ordering of the cosmos or the proper ordering of the soul. In fact, in the same way that music pervades his work, harmony fundamentally undergirds many of his writings, as it is relevant to a variety of topics and useful across genres. So, in a way, Lewis utilizes analogy with music in order to clarify and make palatable the concepts of ethical and cosmological harmony. Moreover, Lewis views musical harmony as a reflection of that which is beautiful in the world and an emissary of God’s transcendent beauty. On multiple occasions, Lewis situates musical analogy at the heart of his aesthetic perspective, which elevates its importance to his works and to his personal life.

Despite the versatile purposes of harmony, the analogical potential of music is not confined to harmony alone. Lewis demonstrates this fact in many of his lectures, most notably, in *Mere Christianity*. For the many readers and hearers of Lewis, the accessibility of music was crucial, and served a twofold function: first, to help package Lewis’ ethical arguments in a manner that was easily comprehensible, and second, to

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 158.

illustrate implicitly the accessibility of the moral law to every person. Lewis continues in his analogy to illustrate the dynamicity of the moral law. Just as each note of a symphony (or simply of piano music) is “right” or “wrong” depending on the surrounding notes and phrases, each individual action is judged “right” or “wrong” depending on the circumstances of the moral decision. Finally, Lewis employs musical analogy to demonstrate the universality and teleology of morality: musical creation persists across nearly every culture, and a piece of music is only beautiful insofar as each component is aimed at the proper sound. Similarly, human conduct, according to Lewis, has a universal standard, and must all be aimed at “right conduct,” the proper *telos* of human behavior.

In works of non-fiction, such as *Mere Christianity* or *The Discarded Image*, Lewis presents his analogies with music distinctly and explicitly. However, in his fictional narratives, Lewis uses the sum of this analogical potential—each of the individual components indistinct, and all of them masterfully combined. Cosmic and ethical harmony converge in moments of divine music. In the Cosmic Trilogy, these references to music are frequently pivotal to the direction of the series (as with Jane’s unmaking) or indelible images of power and beauty (as with the Descent of the Gods and the Great Dance). Lewis carries these themes into *The Chronicles of Narnia*, alongside his emphasis on moral uprightness and cosmic concordance. Aslan’s song of creation founds the realm of Narnia and establishes the unwavering laws of Deep Magic that course through the realm. Throughout the series, scenes of music invoke this Deep Magic and remind the reader of the Lion’s vitalizing song. The musical inertia of the



*Chronicles* comes to a close in the final moments of the narrative, as the realm finally stops its singing at the command of Time's horn.

Ultimately, all of these variegated uses of musical analogy fall under the same purpose: that of education. Lewis' overarching project, in large part, depends on instilling a desire for knowledge within his students. In fact, "desire" may not be strong enough—Lewis sought to galvanize every person who read his works, to awaken in them an unrelenting passion for discovery. As Alan Jacobs writes, Lewis warns against the abdication of this responsibility, "the responsibility to seek knowledge," saying that such a failure "will lead to the 'abolition of man,' our transformation into a species unable ever to hear the music that Creation really *does* make."<sup>2</sup> Lewis refuses to let this knowledge escape him, and places a similar duty on his fellow educators. Indeed, Lewis' critical view of much of modern education is overtly, if humorously, stated at the end of *The Last Battle*. When the characters of the series find themselves in the "real" Narnia, a Narnia that is not only changed but perfected, an attitude of confusion reigns. Digory (one can hardly miss the shadow of Lewis the scholar here) is taken aback, and exclaims "It's all in Plato, all in Plato: bless me, what *do* they teach them at these schools!"<sup>3</sup> Part of Lewis' project, through education (and in part through musical analogy), is to reinvigorate the human imagination and remind the world of its own undying and enchanting song. Surely, Lewis hopes that our world, much like the land of Narnia, will refuse to give up its persistent singing.

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<sup>2</sup> Jacobs, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*, 174.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 170.

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