

## ABSTRACT

C.S. Lewis and the Conversion of the Aeneas Story in the *Ransom Trilogy*

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Many readers of C. S. Lewis's writing consider his science fiction trilogy an odd divergence from his expected repertoire. Though Lewis' "Ransom Trilogy" proves distinctive among his works, the books grow from the same deep roots in classical and medieval literary traditions that inform his other writings. Drawing from Virgil, Dante, and Arthurian legend to structure his narrative, Lewis unites ancient myth and modern fiction in order to illumine Classical stories with Christian faith. This thesis considers how Lewis's science fiction draws on the features of secondary epic and its attendant meanings that appear in the *Aeneid* and in Arthurian stories. Ultimately, Lewis models how contemporary writers can make old stories live anew.

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C.S. LEWIS AND THE CONVERSION OF THE AENEAS STORY  
IN THE *RANSOM TRILOGY*

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
Baylor University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Honors Program

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Waco, Texas

August 2016

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere thanks both to Dr. Alan Jacobs and to Dr. Phillip J. Donnelly for directing my research. Without their intellectual and imaginative resources—as well as their steady encouragement—this thesis would not have been possible. I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Baylor University faculty and to the C.S. Lewis Foundation staff who inspired this research and offered their time and expertise throughout this venture. Finally, I am extremely grateful and indebted to my family and to Dorothy M. Kincaid for their unwavering support in my educational and vocational endeavors; to them I owe this achievement.

## INTRODUCTION

In *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, C.S. Lewis writes of Virgil, “In making his one legend symbolical of the destiny of Rome, he has, willy-nilly, symbolized the destiny of Man...The real question is whether any epic development beyond Virgil is possible. But one thing is for certain. If we are to have another epic it must go on from Virgil” (38). In such a way, Lewis claims that there is a need for any epic which imitates original—or primary—epic (such as Homer’s *Iliad*) to pick up the narrative scope of Virgil’s hero as champion of the destiny of humankind. Whether or not there can be further development with regard to *mythopoeia* beyond Virgil’s poem is questionable to Lewis, however it is clear to him that the *Aeneid* marks a shift in the history of human thought and spirituality that can never be forgotten without a serious betrayal. One of the most influential examples of this type of epic—“secondary epic” as Lewis refers to it in *A Preface to Paradise Lost*—which stems from the Virgilian precedent is Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, a poem in which “there is a fusion” of classical and Christian elements which fit together to create a whole picture (Lewis, *Preface* 5). Although there are few so prominent examples of the fusion of Christianity and Classical *mythos* as Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (and very few so delicately wrought as his), there do exist on the part of C.S. Lewis multiple works both of fiction and of allegory which walk this line. *Till We Have Faces* certainly fits this description as it weaves together the myth of Cupid and Psyche with the Christian

narrative of the soul's quest to reunite with its Creator. The *Narnia Chronicles* are stuffed with an even greater mixture of Christian and pagan influences (with creatures from legends and fairy tales included, as well). However, no work of Lewis' unites Christianity with pagan poetry in a way that "[goes] on from Virgil" so well as his *Ransom Trilogy*.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Ransom Trilogy*, C. S. Lewis draws from many literary and mythical works for imaginative elements and narrative form. A first reading of the trilogy reveals that the Arthurian elements (including the figure of Merlin Ambrosius) in the final book of the series present the most obvious imported literary aspect of the trilogy. With *That Hideous Strength* seemingly disparate from *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra* (and decidedly more terrestrial), many readers criticize the discontinuity of the series. Certainly, the inclusion of a medieval wizard seems an unusual diversion from the celestial inhabitants of the previous books. Of course, there are other questions that the series raises, such as why Mars and Venus are chosen over other planets as the settings of *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra* as well as why Elwin Ransom's role and name change throughout the series. Although the connection of the Arthurian legend seems the most prominent to demonstrate, I posit that there is a stronger current of an even older mythological precedent running throughout the series into which Lewis incorporates the Arthurian myth. This mythic influence provides a holistic framework for the three books and dictates how they function as a singular unit rather than as three separate but related episodes. In this paper, I shall explore the strong evidence that suggests Lewis modelled

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, I refer to Lewis' science fiction trilogy as the *Ransom Trilogy* to respect Ransom's observation in *Out of the Silent Planet* that "space" is not an appropriate term for the radiance of Deep Heaven.

his *Ransom Trilogy* after the great Roman poem, Virgil's *Aeneid*, paying special attention to how the author of the trilogy uses the Roman precedent to provide context and cues for the interpretation of his own narrative. To claim that Lewis used the *Aeneid* as a guide for constructing his own great voyage seems at first far-fetched, but by examining the *Ransom Trilogy* as a whole—as well as how the individual books function—it becomes obvious that the similarities between Virgil's poem and Lewis' trilogy are not merely coincidental. Rather, the latter author (a great admirer of the Latin poet) intentionally crafted his works with Virgil in mind to capture better how the aspects of redemption, courage, and love pertain to the hero.



## CHAPTER ONE

### *Out of the Silent Planet*

Bent creatures are full of fears. (Lewis, *Silent Planet* 132)

With the *Ransom* Trilogy, Lewis elaborates upon a tradition outlined in Part One of *Gawain and the Green Knight*, namely the progression of history from the Fall of Troy through the founding of Britain, “wherein have been war and waste and wonder, and bliss and bale, oftentimes since” (Weston 1). By the end of the *Ransom Trilogy*, Lewis unites the *Aeneid* with Arthurian legend again within his own narrative, delving deeper into the complexities of the complements and dissonances in the tales and allowing them to guide his account of faithful Christians fighting for the will of Heaven to unfold on Earth. Before the war, waste, and “bale” of the N.I.C.E. organization in *That Hideous Strength*, the reader becomes privy to the wonder of Ransom’s journeys to Malacandra and Perelandra. Ransom serves as both Aeneas and Arthur in the trilogy, and the evolution of this central character from the sojourning Virgilian warrior to the long-awaited protector found in Arthur’s character will continue to be examined throughout this paper. Thus,

before we examine Ransom as an Arthurian figure in *That Hideous Strength*, we must pay attention to the correlation Lewis draws between Ransom and Aeneas of Classical fame.

The bulk of the action in *Out of the Silent Planet* occurs on the planet, Mars—called “Malacandra” in the Old Solar tongue spoken by its inhabitants. Dr. Elwin Ransom finds himself on the foreign planet having been kidnapped in England by Richard Devine and Professor Edward Weston who intend to offer Ransom as a sacrifice to the Malacandrans. Once on the planet, Ransom escapes his captors and comes to live among the *hrossa*, learning about their culture and encountering the other species of *hnau*—rational creatures with language and knowledge of the divine. Much of *Out of the Silent Planet* marks the beginning of Ransom’s attempt to harmonize the *hnau* of Malacandra with his understanding of religion. Ransom even considers whether or not it is his duty to provide religious instruction to the *hrossa*, long before he realizes that his is the broken understanding of the divine workings of the universe (70).

Among the *hrossa*, Ransom finds a culture for which courage is a fundamental virtue. The whole assembly becomes excited at Ransom’s mention of the *hnakra* (a great beast that lives in the waterways of the planet). Cubs begin to fight, and youths prepare their weapons at the very mention of the creature. Preparations for hunting the beast raise many questions for Ransom, who recognizes immediately the martial arrangements underway. Questioning Hyoui, Ransom finds that the warlike nature of the *hrossa* stems neither from hatred nor a desire to stamp out the race of *hneraki*, but rather from the courage of battle and self-defense; according to Hyoui, the lives of the *hrossa* are

sweetened by the danger of the creature they hunt (78). The *hnakra* episode reveals the importance of the hunt to the *hrossa*, with one hundred ships in three parties stalking the creature. When the *hnakra* is killed, Hroi affirms that killing the beast is what he has wanted for his entire life (86).

The *hrossa*'s devotion to hunting is especially pertinent to the planet on which they live. Lewis did not arbitrarily choose to send his hero to a courageous culture on Mars, but rather chose the planet because of the classical relationship of the figure of Mars with the values of the *hrossa*—a culture not only Martian but also martial, as well. Sensitive to the classical significance of Mars and his domain in epic poetry and mythological tradition, Lewis seems to attempt a development in the minds of his readers regarding war just as the *hrossa* provide an opportunity for Ransom's understanding to "grow up" (85). Mars, of course, proves an exceptionally important figure to the Roman identity in many of the city's founding legends, and he features prominently in the poetry and architecture of Rome. In fact, Mars and Venus are the two most influential progenitors of the Roman race. In Virgil's poem, Aeneas must operate within the domains of the two gods, securing the land for Rome in Latium as commanded by Jupiter either through love (of Lavinia) or war (with Turnus). Naturally, the god of war aligns with the values of Roman society, and this association becomes evident in the warring conclusion of Virgil's *Aeneid*. For even though Rome's founding is the will of Zeus, when the relationship with Lavinia's family goes awry, Aeneas turns to the force of Mars to secure the destiny of his people.

However, when the connection between this Virgilian force and the *hnakra* hunt of *Out of the Silent Planet* are examined, one finds two very different Martian influences. When Ransom asks Hyoi if the *hrossa* ever fight the *seroni* or the *pfifltriggi*, the *hross* is puzzled by the question and overturns Ransom's hypothetical proposal for war between the species. Neither resources nor mates ever prove problematic on the planet, because the Malacandrans steward both respectfully and with an attitude of moderation (75). Soon, Ransom realizes that the *hrossa* have never turned their bellicose desires against each other or the other *hnau* of the planet; rather than celebrating victory over subjugated enemies, the songs and poems of the *hrossa* honor the pleasures of love, wisdom, and courage (76). Thus the *hrossa*'s relationship with the *hnakra* proves significant because it places the emphasis on the courage involved in the hunt and not on the destruction of an enemy. The *hrossa* differentiate between those creatures who are *hnau* and those which are not. The *hnakra* is not *hnau*, and the *hrossa* recognize that the creature is a beast and not a person—otherwise, they would never make it the object of their hunt. Nevertheless, they still respect the creature, taking joy in its existence and delighting in the relationship as both the “enemy” and the “beloved” of the *hrossa*; an enemy because it longs to kill the *hrossa*, but the beloved because it brings out the courage of the *hross* (78).

Immediately after Hyoi enjoys his lifelong desire of killing the *hnakra*, he is shot by either Devine or Weston with an English rifle. Hyoi's death comes so suddenly that at once one may appreciate the stark comparison between the hunting of the *hnakra* and the shooting of Hyoi. There is no interaction between Devine and Weston and the hunting party before Hyoi is shot; in fact, the party does not even know the two are nearby. Nor is

there any interaction with the two after Hyoui is shot because the two men flee the area. The party never sees either Devine or Weston, and they know the culprits only because Ransom is familiar with men and their firearms. Thus, with no discernable motive or attempted outcome, the men fatally shoot Hyoui. There is no courage whatsoever in this act. Rather, cowardice colors the sniping of the unsuspecting and undeserving victim. It is obvious to Devine and Weston that the *hrossa* are reasoning creatures based on their communications with each other and with Ransom and also the evidence of their prepared strategic hunt. However, the “bent” invaders do not differentiate between *hnau* and other creatures, though Ransom explains that even if they could, they still likely would not hesitate to kill *hnau* (87). The murder of Hyoui also serves no purpose—Ransom struggles to explain to Whin that Weston and Devine may have killed their friend out of fear or pleasure. But if from the latter, one must acknowledge that the pleasure of the kill was of a kind very different from the pleasure of the *hnaprapunti* (those who have killed the *hnakra*). The bent invaders had no aspect of courage in their hunt, and they killed a *hnau* out of either ignorance or joy at the destruction. Here lies the fundamental difference between the aspects of Mars that are bent from those which are rightly ordered. The aspects of Mars as known by the Romans pertain to battle and the wars among people. As the *hrossa* live, courage is a thing itself in which to delight because it brings joy and satisfaction. The *hrossa* do not use courage to fortify themselves for fear of loss, but rather they enjoy the use of their courage knowing that even if loss comes, they will still enjoy the hunt and the kill of their beloved enemy (78). Thus Lewis presents what he considers to be an ordered example of courage apart from

fear or a delight in the act of destruction itself. Though the Thulcandran domain of Mars becomes muddled with unholy motives, Malacandra's Mars is initially characterized by respect for life and stewardship of created things. In this unfallen planet, war among *hnau* is nonexistent; battle exists only among the *hnau* and their natural enemies which are not *hnau*. An understanding Hyoui, on his final breath, calls Ransom *hman hnakrapunt* because he helped him accomplish their goal of killing the great creature. But Ransom must destroy another beast: one that has upset and perverted the natural order. The evil of Devine and Weston become the *hnakra* which Ransom must overcome in the next two books.

If this evidence does indeed show that the *hrossa* practice an ordered understanding of valor, one must ask why Lewis reflects on the theme in the context of Ransom's space travels for an entire book. Certainly, there must be some intentionality in choosing to address the topic of valor. A clue lies in a striking similarity between a scene from the end of *Out of the Silent Planet* and a famous section of poetry from Virgil's *Aeneid*. Both instances hinge on an *ekphrasis*: a vivid and evocative species of description under the broader genus of *enargeia* (vividness) that began as a rhetorical device and later developed into a poetic figure in literature (Adamson, Alexander and Ettenhuber 115). The effect of *ekphrasis* is the virtue of painting a picture in the mind's eye that imitates reality exceptionally well—according to Aristotle—by the “enlivening of inanimate things” (Adamson, Alexander and Ettenhuber 115). Thus, the enlivening of inanimate things naturally calls for an intellectual or emotional response from the

audience, and the ability of *ekphrasis* to evoke such a response keeps the device in the repertoire of great orators and writers alike.

Such an instance of *ekphrasis* may be observed in Chapter 17 of *Out of the Silent Planet* when Ransom—having recently arrived in Meldilorn—studies a series of monumental sculptures over the harbor. Ransom marvels from afar at the stone huts of the city and the busy *hnau* tending fires and going about their daily labors (115). Over the city stands stonework, as well—not quite like a temple or house, Ransom thinks—but like a huge Stonehenge (116). The *hross* accompanying Ransom informs him that the island teems with *eldila* in apparent response to Ransom’s awe at the silvery buzz and the sacred aura of the place. In a manner both sedate and enchanted, Ransom crests the hill over the city which shimmers from an unknown play of light, and it becomes clear to him that *eldila* cause the scintillation. Pausing to rest his travel-weary bones, Ransom looks down on the stir of the city, crowded with *hnau* arriving at Meldilorn by the ferry or the water, mixing in the streets about their work and travels (118).

When Ransom resumes his walk, he approaches the monolithic avenue and finds himself studying the pictures intricately carved into the stones; spellbound, he memorizes their details (119). He sees the ancient birds flying through the red forests; extinct creatures he does not recognize, shot down with the arrows of a *hnakra* (the Malacandran *Oyarsa* later corrects Ransom’s interpretation by informing him the Thulcandran *Oyarsa* struck down these creatures with the cold [130]). Ransom marvels at this ancient representation of a bygone age in which some of the inhabitants of the planet were markedly distinct from the contemporary population, for birds truly no longer inhabit the

Malacandran surface in Ransom's experience. The very face of the world has changed for Malacandra, and the planet no longer enjoys all of the inhabitants of previous ages. Malacandra, like Earth, has experienced ages which have seen different types of creatures and inhabitants due to the trauma of Thulc's treachery. The words of Augray, the *sorn*, may call to the reader's mind Hesiod's theory of the Ages of Man: "But a world is not made to last for ever, much less a race; that is not Maleldil's way" (100). These words pertain not only to the past of Malacandra but also to the future of Thulcandra, though Ransom may not yet know it.

Throughout the trilogy, Ransom serves as a hero amidst the transitional period by tying the corruption of Thulcandra by great and powerful forces— through a series of perils and divine struggles— to the reconstruction of his home as a more perfect world in alignment with the will of God. But before Ransom becomes aware of this, he considers the rest of the creatures in the pictographs. The remaining creatures gather around a figure Ransom takes to be the Malacandran *Oyarsa*, and under his direction each of the *pfifiltriggi*, the *seroni*, and the *hrossa* according to their abilities develop the land by making furrows, by piling up the earth in spires, and by constructing channels of water (120). Then, Ransom sees the model of the solar system and the concentric circles of each planet: the first (Mercury) with a flaming figure holding a trumpet, then the feminine Venus, and finally—where Earth would fit—an irregular cut to erase the planet from the monument as if in *damnatio memoriae* (120). Fourth in the order, the sphere of Malacandra stands out in perspective as if toward the viewer in detail that astonishes Ransom and sparks his dawning understanding (121). Awakened quickly from his reverie



by the sound of a nearby *pfifltrig*, Ransom nonetheless is equipped by the images to speak with the *Oyarsa* with a desire for enlightenment regarding the history of Ransom's own planet. This conversation opens Ransom's eyes to the fallen state of his own world and the dangers of humankind's ability—as Lewis puts it in *Reflections on the Psalms*—to, “distribute upon new worlds the vomit of our own corruption” (103).

But now let us examine the Virgilian precedent found in *Aeneid* I for this *ekphrasis*; for the intentional connection between the two scenes is undeniable when one considers the similarities. Ransom—through the *ekphrasis* at the Malacandran stones in *Out of the Silent Planet*—bears a distinct resemblance to the hero Aeneas who reflects on the depiction of his own significant history on a Carthaginian wall. Having fled the burning city of Troy, Aeneas suffers the wrath of an enraged Juno. Bitter about the Judgement of Paris and bilious about the future destruction of her beloved city, Carthage, Juno enacts her personal vendetta against Aeneas by frustrating his attempts to reach the Lavinian shore (*Verg. A.* 1.1-3). Having reached the new city of Carthage after a Junonian tempest, Aeneas ventures into the heart of the city to seek refuge from the queen and procure resources.

In the city's center, Aeneas experiences his first feeling of solace as he looks on the construction of a temple to Juno in the heart of a sacred grove—a grove to which Juno had led the fugitive Tyrians and presented an auspicious portent (1.441).<sup>2</sup> Depicted beneath the temple are battle scenes from the Trojan War—Hector and his brothers

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that Lewis' usage of the word “grove” recalls of Virgil's use of the term *lucus*, a sacred grove, in reference to the location of Juno's temple (*Verg. A.* 1.441)

fighting the Achaeans, Achilles routing the Trojan troops, Pallas turning her stone gaze from the Trojan women's supplication—all poignant scenes of a fallen, noble race. The scenes from the war carry weight in this context as an allusion to Homer's nod in the *Iliad* to Hesiod's "Ages of Man". According to Hesiod, mankind experienced several generations, namely the Golden, Silver, Bronze, Heroic, and Iron Ages throughout the course of human history (*Hes. Th.* 2.109-169).<sup>3</sup> The Heroic Age includes figures such as Heracles, Perseus, and the *Diaskouri*; these were far greater men than even the most prominent soldiers on either side of the Trojan conflict. Nestor reminds the Achaeans of the degeneration of man and the lapse into what Hesiod would consider the Age of Iron. Nevertheless, men such as Hector, Achilles, and Diomedes carried on the legacy of the heroes despite their more limited abilities.

Aeneas features as Virgil's tie from the Age of Heroes to the Age of Iron. Aeneas is mortal, but he enjoys the genes and patronage of the goddess Venus and therefore her powerful father, Jupiter. As a result of this and due to the fidelity of the famed hero, Jupiter burdens Aeneas with the duty of founding the city of Rome. As Aeneas looks upon the mural in *Aeneid* I, the audience of the poem may appreciate the pain of the Trojans and the labors ahead for the Roman progenitor. Aeneas straddles an age of great moment—he is a figure caught in an epic struggle with the appointment to restore the will of the most powerful god, Jupiter.

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<sup>3</sup> Note that these are mythological ages and therefore do not necessarily line up with historical ages of corresponding metals.

Now let us examine the specific elements of the Carthage episode. Having arrived at a safe harbor and been directed toward the city by Venus, Aeneas climbs the hill over the city and gazes over the buildings (once huts) and the Tyrians busy at work (1.419-423). Reaching a grove in the city's center, but invisible to others because of a charmed aura placed on him by Venus, Aeneas finds the construction of a temple to Juno in a grove (1.439-442). On the site of this rising temple, Virgil tells the reader, the newly arrived Phoenicians uncovered a portent in the form of the head of a war-horse which Juno sent as a promise of their domination in war (1.443). A mural on the wall of the temple brings tears to Aeneas' eyes, and the hero gazes on scenes from the Trojan War "feeding his spirit" with the images of the frieze (1.464). He recognizes the Greeks and the Trojans in battle, Achilles and Hektor, even himself among the fury of the battle. Before he wakes from his reverie to meet with the ruler of the land, Aeneas experiences a strong emotional response to the mural, one of the most famous cases of *ekphrasis* in the Western tradition. The *ekphrasis* at the frieze preempts Aeneas' recounting of his troubles to Dido, the Carthaginian queen, and it provides a moment which shows the hero in limbo: he sees the destruction of his Trojan home as he envies the rising towers of Carthage ("How fortunate are those whose walls are already rising!" [1.437]).

So many of these elements that characterize the Virgilian *ekphrasis* are present in the Lewisian one: climbing the hill overlooking the bustling city, experiencing the effects of the divine, stumbling across images in a holy place within a grove, and responding strongly to those images. Lewis intentionally draws a situational connection between the two protagonists, but for what purpose? To begin, there is a prominent distinction

between the responses of the men to the pictures which colors how their responses spur their development. When Aeneas sees the Carthaginian frieze, he immediately recognizes the images as those he has experienced. In a cry of pain, he proclaims that his trials and those of his companions are known throughout the earth (“What place is there on the earth that does not brim with our struggles?” [1.459-460]). What he fails to realize, however, is that the portrayal does not conjure empathy; the destruction of Troy depicted on a temple of the goddess rather celebrates the vanquishing of Juno’s enemies. The pictures serve him as no more than a painful reminder of the Trojan downfall—a series of tales he would soon recount to the Carthaginian queen.

On the other hand, Ransom does not at first know the meaning of the Malacandran pictographs. He deciphers what he can with the knowledge he has acquired on the planet, but his response is far more intellectual than the emotional response of Aeneas. Ransom’s initial reaction to the images is one of confusion, a contrast to Aeneas’ instant recognition of the events depicted in Carthage. This can be attributed to the fact that Aeneas was an active participant of the events depicted in the *Aeneid*, whereas Ransom enters the Malacandran story after many of its historical events have transpired. As Aeneas reflects on his own history, Ransom considers the history of other *hnau*, not yet able to know how he fits into the history of the world’s occupants, terrestrial or otherwise. All of the pieces do not fall into place for Ransom until he speaks with the *Oyarsa* and learns of his own planet’s connection with the engravings of Malacandra’s history: the fall of Thulcandra, Thulc’s attempt to destroy Malacandra, and the vulnerability of the unfallen world (even with the protection of the *Oyarsa* and Maleldil)

to the bent ambitions of the invaders from Earth. Whereas Aeneas' experience serves to fuel his own pain, Ransom's serves to make him aware of the pain inflicted on others, and—more importantly—to recognize a larger framework than he had previously imagined for redemption. Additionally, another important distinction exists between the *ekphrases* of Virgil and Lewis, namely that of content. Whereas the Carthaginian wall depicts images of war and destruction, the Malacandran stone bears images of regeneration and rebuilding. Athena's cool neglect stands in stark contrast to the active guidance of the *Oyarsa* in the depicted history. Not only does this characterize the deities differently, but also it projects the development of those who look upon them. For Aeneas, the goddess's refusal to aid means the razing of his home, and it spurs his need to found a new kingdom. But the *Oyarsa*'s preservation of Mars brings an opportunity for Ransom to gain wisdom and courage to face the very evil of Thulc from which Malacandra was spared. But whereas Aeneas moves on to found his city, Ransom must return to his own home and work to free it from the grip of sin—in effect successfully recapturing “Troy” from its assailants.

Although the Carthaginian *ekphrasis* proves the model for Lewis' Malacandran grove, there is another *ekphrasis* in the *Aeneid* that is worthy of note: the unveiling of the shield of Aeneas in *Aeneid* VIII. In order to protect her son, Venus procures for Aeneas a set of armor from her blacksmith husband, Vulcan. The shield bears images of the future of Rome and all its glory. The sight of the shield astounds Aeneas whose divine purpose is contextualized for the reader by the images of Rome's leaders and accomplishments. The gift of the shield accomplishes the two-fold purpose of highlighting the glory of the

recipient and reminding the audience that a struggle is imminent. A shield, of course, serves its true purpose only in battle. On the other hand, Ransom enjoys the context the Malacandran stone affords him for the world to which he travels. Indeed, at the stone, Ransom sees in etching the fall of the Thulcandran *Oyarsa* and the separation of his home planet from Deep Heaven. Ransom's ability to discern and appreciate the images of Malacandra's history highlights his place in the narrative, but it also foreshadows Ransom's struggles against the evils of invasive spirits on Perelandra and on Earth. It again sets him apart from Aeneas however, who once more does not recognize the significance of the future events presented to him in the images, even as he did not comprehend the significance of the past events on the temple (1.731). The instances of *ekphrasis* in both the *Aeneid* and in *Out of the Silent Planet* demonstrate purpose and duty. Aeneas knows his purpose—to establish Rome—and how he fits into the context of his age. Ransom, however, first glimpses his duty far from home at the Malacandran stone.

This most powerful revelation of the novel—Ransom's learning of his own titular "Silent Planet" and its history—comes to Ransom not only through the *Oyarsa's* explanation but also initially through a powerful moment of *ekphrasis*. Through the medium of the monoliths and their etchings, Ransom experiences a powerful and vivid "enlivening" of the inanimate things that provokes an intellectual and emotional response. It guides his understanding and breaks down the remnants of the superiority he initially felt toward the planet's inhabitants. Far from the self-assuming missionary whose duty was to educate the *hrossa* regarding God, Ransom confesses to the Malacandran

*Oyarsa* that his fear did indeed keep him from their meeting, agreeing that, “bent creatures are full of fears” (132). Thus having journeyed on a planet dwelling among a people for whom courage is a central virtue, Ransom acknowledges his own bent nature and the accompanying fears. Courage’s *telos* therefore does not prove to be bravery itself or glory, but rather it is a virtue of character that demonstrates a proper alignment with the will of God.

Take, for instance, the following quotation from the *Oyarsa*’s conversation with Weston and Devine: “The weakest of my people does not fear death. It is the Bent One, the lord of your world, who wastes your lives and befouls them with flying from what you know will overtake you in the end. If you were subjects of Maleldil, you would have peace” (152).<sup>4</sup> Although the *hrossa* demonstrate courage in battle, according to their *Oyarsa* they also demonstrate courage in the face of death; Hyoï demonstrates this as he faces death. Not overtaken by fear or overwhelmed by confusion, the *hross* celebrates the victory over the *hnakra* and extends one last phrase in friendship to Ransom. But not only the weapon-wielding *hrossa* face their deaths with courage and not fear, rather all of the *hnau* of Malacandra down to the weakest individual face death without the fears that “bent” humans experience. The perpetuity of fortitude and obedience to Maleldil are directly connected in this regard; thus there is something of momentous importance about courage and its connection with the soul.

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis seems to suggest through this interaction that the virtue of courage corrects undue fears (specifically those fears which result from the introduction of sin into the world). In *Perelandra*, the Unman is an example of a figure whose lack of fear indicates disorder. Thus, it seems that not every fear proves adverse to courage, rather only those which stem from wickedness.

An explanation of courage as a virtue may be found in Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, for Lewis writes, "the head rules the belly through the chest—the seat...of Magnanimity" (Lewis, *Abolition* 24). Because Lewis borrows from Plato's taxonomy of the soul, he explores the interplay between the three aspects of the human psyche: the rational, the appetitive, and the spirited (*Plat. Rep.* 442a-c).<sup>5</sup> Reason governs the appetites not through direct means, according to Lewis, but through the "spirited element" (Lewis, *Abolition* 24). Thus, when all three aspects of the psyche are properly ordered, the virtues that grow from reason, appetite, and spirit are wisdom, temperance, and courage (also called fortitude). Reason and appetite constitute parts of the soul, but the spirited aspect constitutes the individual because, "it is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal" (Lewis, *Abolition* 25). That courage would carry out wisdom and manage temperance upholds justice as Aristotle's social virtue: for without the three moral virtues, nothing would limit the compulsion for those who are able to take more than their share, or less if it benefits them (*Aristot. Nic. Eth.* 1129b.5). This justly ordered society can be seen on Malacandra numerous times, notably in the aforementioned interchange between Hyoui and Ransom in which the *hross* reveals to the human that there is no need for war among the *hnau* because none of the creatures take more than their share of resources; they also temper their desires as not to overpopulate the land (75). Later, Kanakaberaka the *pfifltrig* says of mining for gold that

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<sup>5</sup> This paper refers both to Plato and to Aristotle on the question of the relationship between reason, appetites, and the "spirited element". Philosophical debates notwithstanding, I have taken this liberty because Lewis refers to the writings of both philosophers in his treatment of the head, the belly, and the chest in his *The Abolition of Man*.



each *pfiffltrig* takes for himself only that which he wants for his work, wondering how any other way would be sustainable (125). To them, justice—according to Aristotle’s measure of taking only one’s allotment—is the most natural and reasonable thing in the world.

Because Lewis devotes such attention in *Out of the Silent Planet* to the virtue of courage, the reader must consider the connection between the virtue and the planet itself. Just as the planet Mars has classical connections with the god, so does it have Christian associations growing from the classical domain. If the Mars of Roman antiquity governs strength and ferocity in battle, the “redeemed” Mars of the Middle Ages directs courage in the face of sin and death. This is why Dante in *Paradiso* (one of Lewis’ favorite poems, along with the *Aeneid*) makes the heavenly sphere of Mars the realm of the martyrs and the altruistic. Those in Dante’s sphere of Mars defied the sting of death by embracing the eternal life beyond it. Dante meets a relative in the sphere of Mars who greets him as if he were Anchises reaching out to Aeneas in the Underworld (Dante, *Para.* 15.174). This relative describes for Dante the city of Florence as he knew it: a civilization properly ordered with men and women both working according to their respective domains. The Florentines lived chastely and temperately, according to Cacciaguida, prioritizing their children and celebrating marriages—no married woman had a childless home (Dante, *Para.* 15.106). Cacciaguida likens the inhabitants of the city to Cornelia [Africanus] and Cincinnatus, two famous Romans renowned for virtuous

parenthood and responding to the call for service of country, respectively.<sup>6</sup> Praising the virtue of this society, Cacciaguida remarks that the society in which he was raised prepared him for noble deeds in battle and in service (Dante, *Para.* 15.130-148). In his death, his martyrdom elevated him to the sphere of Mars.

Cacciaguida and the other courageous souls of Mars' domain in *Paradiso* seem to inspire (or at least they concurrently reflect) the type of society which the species of Malacandra practice quite naturally. It seems as if both Dante and Lewis develop the same idea through the models of their civilizations: that temperance and fortitude prove to be closely tied virtues which reinforce justice. Having examined fortitude as a component of justice in Lewis' work, let us now consider the virtue of temperance as it is tested in *Perelandra*.

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<sup>6</sup> Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus was a Roman hero in the Roman Republic. Though he lived humbly as a farmer, he was appointed the temporary dictator of Rome when the Republic was threatened by opposing tribes. Once he had successfully defended his country, he immediately resigned from the dictatorship. He is often cited as an exemplar of civic virtue and courage.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Perelandra*

Virgil, with no intention of allegory, has described once and for all the very quality of most human life as it is experienced by any one who has not yet risen to holiness or sunk to animality. (Lewis, *Preface* 38)

There is a long and well-known tradition of reflection on Virgil's *Aeneid*. Although the poem is in no way Christian, the trials and tribulations of Aeneas nevertheless resonate for audiences who also know the pains of Job, the wandering of the Jews in the desert, and the temptations of Christ in the wilderness (Hejduk, *Common Thread* 66). Christians who had directly experienced exile, violence, or the threat of death drew from Virgil's creative font. Dante prominently honors Virgil's ability to guide Christian reflection in his *Divine Comedy*. In *Purgatorio*, Statius emphatically praises the Roman poet:

Thou wast as one who, travelling, bears by night  
A lantern at his back, which cannot leaven  
His darkness, yet he gives his followers light.  
'To us,' thou saidst, 'a new-born world is given,  
Justice returns, and the first age of man,  
And a new progeny descends from Heaven.'  
Poet through thee, through thee a Christian –  
That's my bare sketch; but now I'll take to limning,  
And make a clearer page for thee to scan. (Dante, *Purg.* 22.67-73)

The lines that Statius credits with his calling and his conversion are taken from Virgil's Fourth *Eclogue* which celebrates the ushering in of a "golden age". The messianic tone of the eclogue and its remarkable similarities to the Christian gospel have stirred the Christian imagination since the poem was revisited in light of the death and resurrection of Christ. Lewis himself refers to the similarity between Virgil's Fourth *Eclogue* and the messianic promise in his chapter on second meanings in *Reflections on the Psalms*. For Lewis, the connection is a "striking accident" and "diabolically lucky" if lucky at all, however Lewis does not consider the connection to constitute prophetic status based solely on the evidence available (101). Lewis does, however, write in *A Preface to Paradise Lost* that through the *Aeneid* as well as his Fourth *Eclogue*, "Virgil has become almost a Christian poet" (38). For Lewis there seems to be in this eclogue some point of fascination which deserves mention. Likewise, for many the Fourth *Eclogue* has proven a bridge between the pagan epic and the Christian gospel (Hejduk,

*Common Thread* 78). Whether or not there is substance in this association, there is certainly in Virgil's poem a virtue that does align with Christianity: temperance.

Virgil's Aeneas is a figure who navigates the tension between piety and divine disobedience. The fate of Rome—and the will of Jupiter—rests on the hero's fulfillment of Jupiter's command to establish a new kingdom in Latium. Aeneas' task comes at great personal cost, and he loses loved ones, friends, and opportunities to rebuild a kingdom without conflict. However, in order to carry out his divine appointment, Aeneas must set aside his own desires. This example of self-sacrifice for the divine will may be seen in Lewis' *Perelandra*. Ransom must navigate the tension between the divine will and the satanic. Like Aeneas, Ransom's task comes at great personal cost. In order to explore this connection between Virgil's hero and Lewis' hero further, let us now consider the temperance of Aeneas to better understand him as the imaginative predecessor of Ransom.

Readers today may recall the Virgilian hero's lapses in self-control more so than his practice of temperance: Aeneas' lingering in Carthage on account of the African queen delays Jupiter's plans, and the killing of Turnus in the final book continues to spark either outrage over his unchecked rage or defense of his actions as necessary to fulfill Jupiter's orders. Clearly, the great poet imbues his narrative with duty, piety, the harsh realities of war, the pain of exile, and the struggle to navigate the establishment of a new city. However, many contemporary readers and experts claim that black-and-white moralism and clear-cut decisions are not present in the poem. They point to Aeneas' reluctance to follow his fate, for what he truly desires is an option that he cannot pursue:

returning to Troy to rebuild his beloved home (*Verg. A.* 4.340-44). But beyond the hero's reluctance, the reader must also interpret certain ambiguous verses: the Golden Bough—which should have broken from the tree easily or not at all—hesitates (6.210-11). Aeneas departs the Underworld through the Ivory gate, the gate associated with false dreams (6.898). And famously, Aeneas slays Turnus in the final lines of the poem; but does he fail Anchises' command to spare the conquered? Or does he fulfill his father's command to battle down the proud (6.853)? These are questions that have cast a shadow over the epic poem in contemporary academia. Naturally, readers' responses to the poem have changed in the last millennia; what may have seemed clear-cut to the Roman mind does not necessarily satisfy the modern one. Lewis himself, however, would warn against ascribing too much modern emphasis to ancient writings. His endorsement of old books because they stand apart from contemporary pitfalls and errors falls flat if the exercise becomes an attempt to deconstruct old works and reassemble them to make them more palatable for modern readers (Lewis, *God in the Dock* 203). Lewis encourages modern individuals to read old books; however a distinction must be observed between interpreting ancient narrative with a modern mind and attempting to press ancient books into a modern mold. For this reason—and because interpreting Virgil's masterpiece is far beyond the scope of this project—the swirling academic debates that pertain to the *Aeneid* will be set aside. There is only one perspective on Virgil's poem that matters for this paper, and that perspective belongs to C. S. Lewis.

My intention is neither to oversimplify the nuances of Lewis' response to Virgil's poem nor to suggest a response merely because it fits my argument. Ample evidence is

available to postulate Lewis' view of the text. This is possible both because Lewis translated excerpts of Virgil's poem, and because multiple letters and writings of Lewis survive that provide his commentary on the poem. For Lewis, the central importance of the *Aeneid* is not the failures of its hero but the fulfillment of his mission. Regarding the significance of Aeneas, Lewis writes:

The *Aeneid* puts forward, though in mythical form, what is precisely a reading of history, an attempt to show what the *fata Jovis* were laboring to bring about. Everything is related not to Aeneas as an individual hero, but to Aeneas as the Rome-bearer. This, and almost only this, gives significance to his escape from Troy, his *amour* with Dido, his descent into Hades, and his defeat of Turnus. *Tanta molis erat*: all history is for Virgil an immense parturition. (Lewis, *Aeneid* 10)

According to this insight, Lewis viewed the significance of the *Aeneid* not only as it pertains to Aeneas, but also more importantly as it relates to the kingdom that the hero's labors will establish. Aeneas is vital not because his is a story of closure, but because his is a struggle for transition. And a struggle it is, indeed. Information gleaned from Walter Hooper's introduction to Lewis' *Lost Aeneid* suggests Lewis' empathy toward the pains and losses that for some readers characterize the work. Especially poignant for Lewis was Virgil's expression of waste in the context of the *Aeneid*'s battles. Lewis was himself acutely aware of the tragedy of war as a First World War

veteran. Writing on this topic, Walter Hooper claims the following in his introduction to Lewis' *Lost Aeneid*:

But when Lewis thinks of the *Aeneid*, never far from his mind—even at its most analytical and academic or most playful and off-hand—is Aeneas' story. What moves him in particular is the tragedy of the narrative and the language in which that tragedy unfolds. (Lewis, *Aeneid* 10-11)

Lewis' own commentary echoes this sentiment. In a letter to his friend, Dorothy Sayers (herself a skilled translator whose work includes a translation of *The Divine Comedy*), Lewis writes:

I've just re-read the *Aeneid* again. The effect is one of the immense costliness of a vocation combined with a complete conviction that it is worth it. The whole story is littered with the cost—Creusa, Dido, Anchises, Palinurus, Pallas, Lausus, Camilla. Did [Virgil] do it so well because the making of the poem had for him the same costliness which the founding of Rome had for the characters? (Lewis and Hooper, *Letters* 750)

Lewis is keenly aware of the pain and heartache of the poem; not only the pain of Aeneas but also that of the characters who become collateral damage in the war to establish the kingdom. Lewis—himself a wounded veteran—knew firsthand the horrors of battle, and this knowledge likely contributed to his appreciation of Virgil's ability to capture just that in his work. However, the poem more appealed to Lewis as a man than



strictly as a veteran. A poem fragment of Lewis written soon after his conversion shows his deep personal connection to Virgil's poem:

I will write down the position that I understand  
Of twenty years wherein I went from land to land  
At many bays and harbors I put in with joy  
Hoping that there I should have built my second Troy  
And stayed. But either stealing harpies drove me thence,  
Or the trees bled, or oracles, whose airy sense  
I could not understand, yet must obey, once more  
Sent me to sea to follow the retreating shore  
Of this land which I call at last my home, where most  
I feared to come; attempting not to find whose coast  
I ranged half round the world, with vain design to shun  
The last fear whence the last security is won. (King 137-38)

Lewis remarks on a central idea in the *Aeneid*, a notion that yokes Plato with Christ: the issue of self-sacrifice for the good of others. He observes that, "The *Aeneid* means that the *res Romana* rightly demands the sacrifice of private happiness" (Lewis, *Other Worlds* 56). In other words, individual happiness is not the highest good that may be achieved by mortals. Rather, obedience is paramount even (and maybe especially) at the expense of personal desires. For Lewis, Aeneas is a hero who "suffers and obeys"

(Lewis, *Preface* 37). Aeneas' *obedience* in Lewis' view—with the exception of his tryst with Dido—allows him to “bear the yoke [of his duty] well” (Lewis, *Preface* 37). For Aeneas, obedience means following his vocation (literally his calling). Lewis evaluates the hero in light of Homer's Achilles, and Achilles—in his view—is found wanting. Little more than a “passionate boy,” Achilles' self-interest pales compared with Aeneas' vocation, detailed by Virgil in the “poetry of passion at war with vocation” (Lewis, *Preface* 36). Unlike sulking Achilles, Aeneas is “compelled to see something more important than happiness” (36). Aeneas longs for the *Hesperian land* in such a way as Lewis himself describes of Mr. Bultitude in *That Hideous Strength* as someone with, “infinite yearnings, stabbed with the threat of tragedy and shot through with the color of Paradise” (Lewis, *Preface* 36; Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* 303). Virgil's hero faces far more than passive suffering; rather his duty includes the need to temper his appetites in order to fulfill the will of Jupiter. Though Aeneas battles his own appetites and his desire to give up his mission, his labors eventually bring him to a stronger, more temperate state, making him—for many Christians—the pre-Christian hero who models the perfecting of the soul (Hejduk, *Common Thread* 66). Anchises' famous instructions in Book VI contain a call for temperance in Aeneas' rule:

*Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento  
hae tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem,  
parcere subiectis, et debellare superbos.* (Verg. A. VI.851-53)

Remember, Roman, to rule the peoples with your power; this will  
be your skill; to impress the custom of peace, to spare the  
conquered, and battle down the proud.<sup>7</sup>

This turning point in the poem hinges on Anchises' call for Aeneas to reign over his people well by ruling himself carefully. The tempering of desires and the accompanying aches are of great importance to Lewis, and he expounds upon these themes in *Perelandra* through the treatment of temperance. Temperance is by nature a virtue associated with transition and mortality. The free will of rational creatures permits them to choose obedience or to reject it, and by this same choice they must either cultivate the virtue of temperance or allow it to wither. When the stakes of temperance are failing to fulfill divine will, the consequences are either becoming more or becoming less like God. Lewis writes that in the *Aeneid* that Virgil has, "described once and for all the very quality of most human life as it is experienced by any one who has not yet risen to holiness or sunk to animality" (Lewis, *Preface* 38). This tension between *holiness* and *animality* characterizes *Perelandra* perhaps more succinctly than any other quality. Between the holiness of the Green Lady and the *animality* of the Unman, Ransom finds himself to be a Virgilian hero whose divine duty pains him both spiritually and physically. Ransom's burden is to obey the will of Maleldil in preserving Perelandra from the evils that destroyed his own. But just as Ransom's body reveals two disparate treatments (the Green Lady calls him "Piebald"), so does his bifurcated will fluctuate

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<sup>7</sup> All Latin translations are my own.

between two desires. One side holds his desire to protect the fresh world from the evil which threatens it, however the other side holds his weariness of the endless work that the assignment requires. Ransom also grows disheartened by the destruction wrought by the Unman on the planet's inhabitants.

For carnage and waste are not absent from Lewis' *Perelandra*; one of the most horrifying scenes from the entire series occurs in the book when Weston mutilates the frogs by skinning them and leaving them to suffer until they die (108-110). For the first time, Ransom realizes that the man before him is no man but rather some other type of life, entirely. Weston himself, though his body stands before Ransom, is gone (110). The *animality* of Weston is twofold. In one sense, Weston's brutish destruction is something which a rightly ordered rational being could never carry out. In another sense, Weston's body is *animated* by a spirit not his own (the definition for the Latin word *anima* includes "spirit" and "animating principle"). Because Weston has lost himself in the truest sense, Ransom gives him the appropriate title: the Unman. Throughout the book, the Unman threatens the perfection of Perelandra's paradise, destroying creation in his stride. All that is left of Weston by the end of the book is a soul that has lost its identity as it is consumed by Satan (173). Weston perceives reality as those evils and superstitions to which he has given himself (167).

The *holiness* of Perelandra, on the other hand, is as easily perceived as is the *animality* of Weston. Ransom longs for the planet as Aeneas longs for the *Hesperian lands*. Ward notes that Lewis, "[symbolizes] human longing for heaven" with the imagery of the Morning Star, a colloquialism for the planet Venus, one of the names of

the Roman goddess, and a title for Christ in the Scriptures (2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 22:16) (Ward 169). Ransom clearly sees that Perelandra is the true garden of the Hesperides, “the home of all sweetness and laughter and copper and warm wetness” (170). There Ransom, “‘lived and walked on the oceans of the Morning Star,’ bathing in it, receiving it into himself, becoming part of it. Indeed, he does more than unite himself to Venus; he saves the whole planet from a Fall and is given a final resting-place there” (169). The Hesperian paradise of Perelandra frames the Green Lady like a backdrop for a saint in Christian art to show that her holiness and the goodness of her world are united in their reflection of Maleldil’s goodness. Lewis includes descriptions that evoke iconography from Christian art, describing again and again the planet’s flat, gold sky like in medieval paintings, as well as the halo that old painters attempted to produce (an ornament which graces Tinidril) (35; 64; 69). Tinidril with her physical and spiritual perfection and her green visage (evoking a Venusian origin from the sea) is herself a *Venus Genetrix* figure. By her marriage and her care, the Green Lady is the future mother of all generations of Perelandra. The planet of Venus—the goddess classically associated with erotic love—proves a curious nevertheless appropriate setting for a book whose central virtue considered is temperance. Just as justice ordered around courage naturally unfolds in Malacandra, so do rightly ordered appetites prevail in Perelandra. Ransom correctly discovers through his observation of the Green Lady and her interactions with those whom she encounters that the Green Lady naturally differentiates her relationships appropriately; in other words, she does not confuse one type of love with another. She acts and speaks with charity—she knows no other way—however, she never confuses her

love for Ransom with her love for her husband, nor her love for her husband with her love for Maleldil. This distinction may be ascribed to her obedience of Maleldil; because she obeys, she knows no corruption. This very connection between obedience and rightly ordered love is precisely the connection the Director uses to instruct Jane regarding her marriage in *That Hideous Strength*.

The most obvious connection between paradise and temperance lies in the tempting of the Green Lady and her resistance of desires that defy Maleldil's commands. The Unman attempts to corrupt the imagination of the Green Lady by coaxing her into thinking too highly of herself in an attempt to subvert her obedience to Maleldil. His first attempt was a verbal assault, aimed not against the lady but against her status. Weston minimizes the roles of wife and mother (as wives "merely childbearing") and disproportionately emphasizes the power of royal status (Ward 170). When this approach fails, he uses the lady's own image in a mirror to cultivate both physical vanity and, "egoism concerning her beautiful soul" (Ward 170). His attacks continue throughout the days and the nights—for the Unman does not sleep—and he tries to draw the lady out of the protection of her divine obedience to an obedience of her alternative desires. Here in the balance between holiness and animality the Green Lady exists, and Ransom's painful vocation is to push her toward the former by removing the latter.

Although there are clear emblems of holiness and animality in *Perelandra*, most of the book follows a transition, not a fixed conclusion. The floating lands characterize the struggle of Ransom to persist through the Unman's temptations: sometimes so close to his goal, then so quickly blown off course, Ransom must learn to navigate the

undulations. Until the final chapters, Lewis' book includes two souls who have not yet risen to holiness or sunk to animality: Ransom and the Green Lady. Already, *Perelandra* has this tension in connection with the *Aeneid*. There are other similarities between Aeneas and Ransom in *Perelandra*. Ransom finds himself in the garden of the Hesperides for which Aeneas longs (according to Lewis, himself) (45). Of course, Venus is the mother of Aeneas, thus the Perelandran paradise and its refreshment for Ransom bear resemblance to the many times Venus heals and makes glorious her son, Aeneas. Both Aeneas and Ransom sustain wounds to the leg in battle. Aeneas' arrow wound is healed by his mother so that he may rejoin the battle in *Aeneid* XII. Readers of *That Hideous Strength* learn that Ransom's wound to the heel will heal only in the Venusian paradise which vivified him. Both men are (or were) soldiers. The similarities are many, and clearly Lewis draws inspiration from the *Aeneid* when writing *Perelandra*. There is one central connection, however, between Virgil's epic and Lewis' novel which unmistakably shows that Lewis models his book on that of his intellectual predecessor: Lewis crafted the battle of Ransom and the Unman in a manner that recalls the battle of Aeneas and Turnus.

In order to observe sufficiently the similarities in the two battles, two points require note. The first point is this: according to the Classical tradition, Aeneas remains "unburied" thus implying one of two options: either the best possible fate of *apotheosis* or the worst possible fate of drowning in a river and washing out to sea without a burial (Hejduk 16). The second note presents a widely recognized connection between the final bout of Aeneas and Turnus in *Aeneid* XII and the boxing match between Entellus and

Dares in Book V. Because the term “boxing” occurs in *Perelandra* to describe the struggle of Ransom against the Unman, it will be important to observe the similarities of Ransom’s fight with the boxing match and Aeneas’ final act of war. Here follow the events of Lewis’ culminating battle in *Perelandra* with notes on formal similarities to Virgil’s boxing match of *Aeneid* V or to the final battle where applicable.

Ransom wakes to a temperate sea beneath the island where he had slept (151). In the night, Ransom had spoken with Maleldil who instructed him to kill the Unman. Resolute and conscious of the task ahead, Ransom initiates the battle by seeking out the Unman on the island and throwing the first punch against the Unman’s jaw (152). Reluctant to fight (or perhaps merely ready to taunt), the Unman makes it clear that he does not fear Ransom but that his only concern would be the help of God which he is confident will not come (153). Similarly in the *Aeneid*, Aeneas instigates his battle with Turnus:

*Aeneas instat contra telumque coruscat  
ingens arboreum, et saevo sic pectore fatur:  
'quae nunc deinde mora est? aut quid iam, Turne retractas?  
non cursu, saevis certandum est comminus armis.  
verte omnis tete in facies et contrahe quidquid  
sive animis sive arte vales; opta ardua pennis  
astra sequi clausumque cava te condere terra.  
'ille caput quassans: 'non me tua fervida terrent  
dicta, ferox; di me terrent et Iuppiter hostis.'* (12.887-895)



Aeneas approached and brandished his massive spear like a tree, and said these things with anger in his chest: “Why now yet another delay? Why, Turnus, do you continue to retreat? Not by running must we battle, but rather hand to hand with fearsome arms. Fashion yourself into every shape and call upon whatever strength you have of either spirit or skill; wish to seek the deep heavens by wings or to hide yourself in the earth’s enclosed caves.” Turnus said shaking his head, “Your fervid words frighten me not, arrogant one; I fear only the gods and the enemy, Jupiter.”

A clear similarity links this interaction and Ransom’s confrontation with the Unman.<sup>8</sup> “And you think, little one...that you can fight with me?” asks the Unman, clearly unafraid of Ransom, “You think He will help you, perhaps? ...Could He help Himself? ...*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*” (153). The Unman (like Turnus) sees God as his enemy, however he does not fear Him. Because he rejects the Creator, his perception of reality includes only the powers of decay and the threat of rot after death (168). In the *Aeneid*’s culminating lines, Aeneas sends the reluctant spirit of Turnus to the gloomy Underworld, when it becomes clear that the spirit of Lewis’ Unman is already trapped unhappily in Hell. More striking than this similarity, however, are the lines spoken by Aeneas before Turnus’ response: *wish to seek the deep heavens by wings or to hide*

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<sup>8</sup> Ransom finds the Unman strangling a bird. Before the battle of Aeneas and Turnus in *Aeneid* XII, Turnus is attacked by one of the *Dirae* in the form of a bird. This attack on Turnus by a spirit of vengeance signals the Italian’s imminent death, and his sister Juturna despairs as she sees the portent and knows Jupiter’s will. With Weston, there is an interesting reversal in the victim and the aggressor, though it is consistent with the Unman’s corruption of nature. The proximity of the mention of the bird and the battle in *Perelandra* nevertheless may be portentous in light of the Virgilian precedent and the similar end for Weston.

*yourself in the earth's enclosed caves*. Of course, Weston reaches both of these places mentioned: both Venus itself in deep heaven, and the caves of the planet where he meets his end by Ransom's hand. The Unman has no place to hide from Ransom because it is Maleldil's will that he die. Ransom's divine mission fuels his fury against the Unman in their initial battle, and from his jabs the hero, "found himself raining punches about the region of its heart" (153). Like the great Entellus in Book V of the *Aeneid*, Ransom proves the superior boxer in an even match with his contender (*Perelandra* 155; *Aen.* V.425; V.460). Despite their power, both Entellus and Ransom are old (*Perelandra* 155; *Aen.* V.395). Both grow tired and lose their footing as their knees give way (*Perelandra* 154; *Aen.* V.443-449). However, their resurgence holds for both men the fury of the victor. Ransom rains down punches in such a fit of *furor* that he does not even realize the Unman has fled; he is unable to stop himself before this realization (156). Similar images such as "storm" and "spectacle" suggest Lewis borrowed imagery from the match of Book V: Entellus' blows land like unrelenting hail on his opponent—the cocky Dares—and his fury is such that Aeneas must put an end to the spectacle. However, the Perelandran match has, "no rules, no umpire, no spectators," only round after round of the fight (155-164).

Ransom pursues the Unman over the sea, and the confrontation unnerves Ransom. Whatever scrap of Weston that remains in his body (or else the demon in Weston's body imitating him) speaks to Ransom and attempts to win his pity. Refusing to succumb to the morose attempts to win him over, Ransom instructs Weston to fortify himself and face his impending death courageously. However, Weston lunges at Ransom and drags him

far below the surface to drown him. Here the tradition of Aeneas' two potential fates comes into play. It stands to reason that if Lewis modeled his protagonist after Virgil's hero, the two would share a common fate. If Aeneas' fate is either *apotheosis* or death by drowning, the near drowning of Ransom by his enemy stands out as a connection. The reader learns in *That Hideous Strength* that Ransom will not die. The Director's time in Perelandra's paradise vivifies him, and Ransom returns to the planet to live indefinitely because Venus is a truer home to him than his native Tellus. This is certainly the clearest picture of *apotheosis* that Lewis could have presented, but it is interesting that he includes a near drowning before the deification. One reason for this inclusion may be a nod to the Classical tradition and a wink to the attentive reader. Lewis does not claim outright that his inspiration for Ransom is Aeneas; however, there is far too much evidence supporting the connection to ignore.<sup>9</sup> The possible fates of Aeneas perfectly align with the fate (and near fate) of Ransom.

Another reason for including the near-death of Ransom lies in its extreme contrast with the vivification to come. Held in the cold deep of the ocean, Ransom decides to drown as he gives up hope of reaching the surface. Had he successfully drowned himself, his failure to carry out Maleldil's orders would have meant the spread of Thulc's corruption to Perelandra's paradise. Of course, all would not have been lost—Ransom understands Maleldil would have a way to redeem the planet—however it would mean the introduction of a suffering he is able to prevent. And by preventing the Unman from

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<sup>9</sup> The only explicit reference to the *Aeneid* in the book occurs in Chapter 14 where Ransom recites all that he remembers from the poem (and other works) to pass the time before the dawn he expects.

unleashing this corruption, Ransom secures for the planet and its inhabitants the infinite joy of living forever in a naturally ordered goodness: a pleasure that far surpasses any of Weston's temptations. As Michael Ward writes regarding this, "Nothing on earth, no appetite of flesh and blood, could satisfy the longing for the beauty symbolised by Venus." (Ward 168). The *apotheosis* of Ransom mirrors his protection of Perelandra in service of Maleldil. The pains of his vocation and the tempering of his desires *perfect* his soul in the most compelling sense, and Ransom tastes the sweetness of eternal life without experiencing physical death. His battle with the Unman and the trials before the fight are merely the realignment of his own desires toward the will of God; the pains endured to protect the proper pleasure.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, the struggle with the Unman continues. Ransom finds himself followed by Weston in the caverns despite thinking he had successfully drowned the Unman. At last—as Ransom has crawled painfully in ascent through the darkness of the caves (in a journey which in some regards resembles Dante's *Purgatorio*)—the Unman emerges from the cavern floor. Upon seeing the enemy, Ransom is filled with a pure, perfect rage. Like Turnus with Aeneas, Weston begs for his life one last time; however Ransom finishes him with the hurl of a jagged stone and throws the body into the abyss.<sup>11</sup> At last, the world of Perelandra is rid of Weston's evil forever. The sheer persistence of

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<sup>10</sup> This theme of temperance, pain, and perfection is present in Dante's *Purgatorio*: "Reader, I would not have you turn dismayed/From good resolves, for having heard me say/How God ordains our debt should be repaid;/Heed not the form of the affliction—nay,/Think of what follows; pray you, think, this woe/Cannot, at worst, outlast the Judgement Day." (Dante, *Purg.* 10.106-111).

<sup>11</sup> Turnus tries to kill Aeneas by hurling a great boulder; however his fate and divine intervention cause it to miss its mark. Ransom's stone, on the other hand, lands with the force of his rage and the will of Maleldil.

the corrupting Weston with whom Ransom struggles showcases the testing of Ransom's resolve to set aside his own desires and carry out his agency on behalf of Maleldil. By framing Ransom's war within the context of Aeneas', Lewis applies the broader consideration of the soul's vocation to the episode. Ransom, like Aeneas, "suffers and obeys," setting aside his self-interest and immediate happiness to do so. But through this sacrifice, Ransom gains more than he had to lose. The self-control that Ransom practices by serving as the ransom for keeping paradise intact enables him to become a man who exemplifies both perfect courage and perfect temperance. He benefits from his sacrifice, as Aristotle writes, because, "by abstaining from pleasures we become self-controlled, and once we are self-controlled we are best able to abstain from pleasures" (*Aristot. Nic. Eth.* 1104a.33).

There is one final aspect of the *Hesperian* Perelandra to consider in this chapter because it furthers the transition from Troy to Britain as described for example in the opening lines of *Gawain and the Green Knight*. The paradise of Perelandra unites the paradises of mythology and legend such as Eden and Avalon. As Ward points out in *Planet Narnia*, Lewis presents images common to legendary paradises: western gardens with sacred trees beyond the ocean (167). Lewis' poem, "Death in Battle", characterizes the paradise as a sweet end hoped for by the soldier:

Open the gates for me,  
Open the gates of the peaceful castle, rosy in the West,  
In the sweet dim Isle of Apples over the wide sea's breast,  
Open the gates for me!

Sorely pressed have I been  
And driven and hurt beyond bearing this summer day,  
But the heat and the pain together suddenly fall away,  
All's cool and green.

His poem “Hesperus” likewise characterizes the longing for the paradise:

Where, beyond the waters  
Of the outer sea,  
Thy triple crown of daughters  
That guards the golden tree  
Sing out across the lonely tide  
A welcome home to thee.

This “golden tree” is “undoubtedly” an apple tree, and the poetry—like *Perelandra*—marks the synthesis of Heaven, the Hesperides, and Avalon (Ward 167). *Perelandra*’s connection with the apple-laden Avalon to some degree prepares the reader for Ransom’s transition from an Aeneas figure to an Arthur figure, from Roman warrior to pendragon.<sup>12</sup> Of course, the connection with Avalon is important here; after his battle with Mordred, Arthur is taken to Avalon to recover from his wounds. Although Ransom does not leave behind his similarities to Aeneas, his role does evolve toward a type of kingship in Britain. What Ransom learned in his journeys and battles, the Pendragon shares with

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<sup>12</sup> Avalon—called the Isle of Apples—produces naturally the fruits of the earth and is surrounded by the sea near the west.

those at St. Anne's. Because Virgil's reader never experiences Aeneas as king of Latium—only as victor—there is a natural progression from classical to medieval king which Lewis develops by returning his hero to the clash of Earth. Having battled his way out of the allegorical cave, Ransom must return to lead out of the darkness those souls who are willing to obey. Thus he plunges back to the dark age of Thulc in *That Hideous Strength* with a new name and a new title before he returns to his final home on Perelandra.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *That Hideous Strength*

For the Hideous Strength confronts us and it is as in the days when  
Nimrod built a tower to reach heaven (*That Hideous Strength* 285)

Let us turn our attention to the conclusion of the *Ransom Trilogy*. In the final book, the opening lines of *Gawain and the Green Knight* become especially pertinent to the development of Ransom and his mission:

After the siege and the assault of Troy, when that burg was destroyed and  
burnt to ashes, and the traitor tried for his treason, the noble Aeneas and  
his kin sailed forth to become princes and patrons of well-nigh all the  
Western Isles. Thus Romulus built Rome (and gave to the city his own  
name, which it bears even to this day); and Ticius turned him to Tuscany;  
and Langobard raised him up dwellings in Lombardy; and Felix Brutus  
sailed far over the French flood, and founded the kingdom of Britain,



wherein have been war and waste and wonder, and bliss and bale, oft-times since. (Weston 1)

This introduction which traces a line from Troy to Britain provides an unbroken narrative of historical lineage. Lewis taps into this history in his trilogy through the development of Ransom and his mythical connections. Ransom's initial resemblance to the fugitive, Aeneas, develops into his role as Aeneas, the Roman warrior. This much has been argued already in this project. However, *That Hideous Strength* marks another change in Lewis' hero. For as Ransom returns to Britain from his journeys in Deep Heaven, he begins to take on mythical similarities to figures from Arthurian legend. This chapter will argue why this development takes place.

The sweeping magnificence of Malacandra and the golden ebb of Perelandra are gone, and only the dusky grimness of Earth remains. At least, this is how it appears to readers who do not recognize or appreciate the transition from *Perelandra* to *That Hideous Strength* and the implications therein. There is undeniably a change, and the reader may be puzzled as to what defines the transition and why the change is necessary. Between Ransom's Perelandran travels and his return to Earth, there is a shift in the narrative from a basis in the classical *mythos* of Virgil to a medieval sphere in which Merlin awakes and a new pendragon is appointed. The purpose of this chapter is first to make a case for the evolution of Ransom's character from the Virgilian hero of the previous books into the explicitly Christian (and Arthurian) hero of the final entry and second to show that Lewis esteems Arthur as the Christian fulfillment of the classical Aeneas. Therefore, this chapter aims to define the function of Ransom in *That Hideous*

*Strength* as it unites two Arthurian roles elementally similar to (nevertheless developed differently from) the Virgilian one thus far observed: the pendragon, and the fisher-king.

According to the characters in Lewis' novel, the legendary Arthur is a transitional figure from the Romans to the Britons. When Jane asks Dr. Dimble to postulate what kind of figure Arthur would have been amidst the mix of Britons and courtly Romans, he replies, "One can imagine a man of the old British line, but also a Christian and a fully-trained general with Roman technique, trying to pull this whole society together and almost succeeding" (Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* 29). Already there are similarities to Ransom in this assessment that the reader will continue to find in the remainder of the book. Ransom also comes from an earthly English line, and if his war on Perelandra counts toward his Roman martial experience he is also trained in the Roman technique. For Ransom tells Merlin, "In the sphere of Venus I learned war...I am the Pendragon" (271). Of course, Dr. Dimble's assessment of Arthur is limited with respect to the similarities between Arthur and Ransom. The warring factions in Britain are no longer Christian and Druidical, or Saxon and Briton. Dr. Dimble explains to his wife after a conference with Merlin, "And then we had to break it to him that we weren't the British at all, but the English—what he'd call Saxons. It took him some time to get over that" (279). Likewise, Ransom is not himself Arthur; Arthur, we learn, lives on Perelandra, "with Enoch and Elias and Moses and Melchisedec the King," presumably healed from his wounds and enjoying the beauty of the Perelandran Avalon with the other souls who have tasted immortality without the sting of death (271). All of these connections between Aeneas and Arthur reveal Arthur Pendragon as a Christian Aeneas: through his

journeys and his struggles, he strives to found and protect his divinely-willed city.

Further deepening the connection between the classical and the medieval heroes, neither Aeneas nor Arthur die in Lewis' estimation: for both, the legends claim the kings remain unburied. Rather than death, both enjoy a type of *apotheosis*; a fate which Ransom, too, will enjoy when he returns to Perelandra. Ransom will soon join the ancient kings in this paradise, but in the meantime he inherits Arthur's role as pendragon.

In Arthurian legend, "the pendragon is the head of all armies in times of war" (Downing 76).<sup>13</sup> Ransom takes on this title from the former pendragon, and the line stretches uninterrupted back to Arthur and his father, Uther Pendragon. Having "learned war" in the sphere of Venus, Ransom takes up the role of Director at St. Anne's to fulfill his duties as pendragon. Naturally, the virtue of courage Ransom gained in Malacandra and his Virgilian battle in Perelandra prepare him to be the perfect pendragon of Logres. Jane is immediately impressed by the Director and his countenance, so unlike what she had expected. In addition to his strength and glory, the Director also appears to be framed by his environment in a way that suggests his position. When Jane meets him for the first time, the Director sits on a sofa raised from the rest of the room on a dais. All of the light in the room seems to Jane to be drawn to the golden-bearded Director, who looks both youthful and mature all at once. The screen behind Ransom gives the impression of blue hangings, and, "the effect was that of a throne room" (140). By nature of having lived on Perelandra, Ransom's kingliness is magnified, and he impresses on those around him the

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<sup>13</sup> From the Welsh meaning "head of the dragon", a reference to the Welsh battle standards.

otherworldly qualities he gained before his appointment as Director. However, Ransom makes it clear to his acquaintances and Merlin that he does not seek power through his position. This attitude is expressed by Dimble in sum of his meeting with Ransom and Merlin: “We’d the dickens of a job to make him understand that Ransom isn’t the king of this country or trying to become king” (*That Hideous Strength* 279). For Ransom, the role of Pendragon is separate from the role of king—at least the role that would resemble the kingship of Arthur. Ransom does not seek political or monetary benefit of any kind, and his interest in the land rests only in preserving it from Thulc’s ill (most prominently but not exclusively in the form of the N.I.C.E.) by trying to restore humanity’s reverence for the true King, Maleldil.

The connection between Arthur and Ransom as figures who unite Rome with Britain have been observed here, but another prominent connection between these men further cements the connection of Aeneas with Arthur and Ransom with both of these two. In addition to tying political powers historically, Arthur also experiences the confluence of worlds, including the clash and mix of Christianity and pagan influences. Mixed in with the knights pursuing the Holy Grail are sorcerers and monsters: figures with divine powers bestowed (Tomaselli 62). Overall, although the mixture is diverse and peculiar, Arthur nevertheless pushes forward as the Christian king of Britain to defend his land and people from the Saxons, from civil war, and from forces of evil. This amalgam is somewhat explained by Dr. Dimble in his musings on Merlin to Jane at their first meeting in *That Hideous Strength*:

“I often wonder,” said Dr. Dimble, “whether Merlin doesn’t represent the last trace of something the later tradition has quite forgotten about—something that became impossible when the only people in touch with the supernatural were either white or black, either priests or sorcerers” (Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* 30).

According to Dimble (and Lewis through him) in the current age there is a rigidity which was previously flexible. So much of *That Hideous Strength* shows the conflict of two opposite factions that call upon ancient forces from a less rigid age in order to prevail. Most members of the N.I.C.E. reject the spirited element of humanity, and the organization’s “head” is the vessel for a demon. Those at St. Anne’s are in touch with the priestly element of the supernatural but their linchpin proves an ancient sorcerer. Dimble elaborates on his initial assessment of Merlin and the old tradition after the perplexing sorcerer came to St. Anne’s. Speaking with his wife, he claims that the universe has been sharpening more and more since its earliest days, leaving less room for “apparent neutrality” as “good” and “bad” grow more different all the time (281). Of course, the reader may remember observing this very process with the Green Lady in *Perelandra*; with each truth she discovers and every decision she makes, the world begins to grow more clearly black and white (even with her limited understanding of evil).

Dimble continues: “Merlinus is withered. He’s quite pious and humble and all that, but something has been taken out of him...It’s the result of having laid his mind open to something that broadens the environment just a little too much” (282). This assessment is consistent with what the reader may observe in Belbury. The Deputy

Director of the N.I.C.E. is named aptly “Wither”; in his final stages of spiritual decay he haunts the Belbury campus like a wraith (210).<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, Belbury’s evils are of a sort opposite to Merlin’s sorcery. For Merlin, matter and spirit are “confused” (282). However, the folks at Belbury view the two as completely separate, but they desire to increase their strength with the spiritual forces they perceive (282). For there are many forces and figures at play in the universe that both those at St. Anne’s and those at the N.I.C.E. struggle to categorize: the *eldila*, the *Oyeresu*, Jane’s clairvoyance, and the wraiths among them. Without the wisdom and direction of Ransom, St. Anne’s would not have the ability or knowledge to take down the N.I.C.E. As the new Pendragon and protector of Logres, Ransom guides the small band. For whereas Arthur marks the confluence of earthly powers, Ransom sees the mix of heavenly ones, as well.

In addition to Ransom’s new role as pendragon, St. Anne’s director proves similar to another figure from Arthurian legend: the fisher-king. Lewis explicitly makes this connection in Jane’s conversation with the Dennistons when it is revealed that Ransom has recently taken the name at her request of his late sister: a Mrs. Fisher-King. The fisher-king of Arthurian lore is charged with protecting the Holy Grail; he is godlike, and he suffers from a wound which will not heal (Downing 104). In one of the legends, the fertility of the land and the health of the king depend on Percival to ask about the bleeding lance and the golden cup he sees at dinner (Edwards 65). His silence proves

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<sup>14</sup> Lewis’ decision to name two of the most prominent members of the N.I.C.E. “Wither” and “Frost” proves interesting in light of the lines taken from J.R.R. Tolkien’s poem, “All that is gold does not glitter” from *The Lord of the Rings*: “The old that is strong does not wither, Deep roots are not reached by the frost”. Their names suggest the damage their work has done to their souls.

disastrous for the health of the king and the land, but Percival's encounter with the king leads to his conversion to Christianity and spurs his quest for the grail. Clearly there is a connection between Ransom and the fisher-king beyond just the name. Like the fisher-king, Ransom is wounded, he is godlike in many respects, and he is the protector of the sacred in the impending battle with evil. Like Percival, Jane is vital to the recovery of the land and the king's health, and her inquisitiveness helps to carry out this end insofar as it leads her to St. Anne's and more significantly to Christ. Ransom's connection with the fisher-king (who is often a Christ figure in legends) further illustrates his similarities to Christ as one who is both sacrifice and king. But one may ask how these two roles—pendragon and fisher-king—develop from the Virgilian hero observed in the first two books. The answer lies in the nature of Ransom as it has changed throughout his journeys. Having learned courage on Malacandra and practiced the virtue in battle, Ransom has the courage needed to be the "head of all armies" as pendragon. His temperance on Perelandra to suffer and obey likewise fortifies him to serve as fisher-king. But beyond his practice of perfect virtue, there is another spiritual change which marks Ransom's shift from Virgilian hero to Arthurian one.

Clearly Ransom's interplanetary experiences have changed him from the ambulatory professor in the beginning of *Out of the Silent Planet* to the magnificent pendragon of *That Hideous Strength*, but there is a particularly significant change that occurs between the second book and the third. As the narrator of Ransom's story writes in *Perelandra*, "One thing is certain, that he came back from Venus more changed than he had come back from Mars" (30). This change may rightly be attributed to Ransom's

view of the “Great Dance” of the heavens which he glimpses in his conversation with Tor, Tinidril, and the *Oyeresu* on Perelandra (217). A physical and spiritual change occurred in Ransom as a result of breathing in the sweet air of paradise; however, he gained celestial wisdom through his divine vision, as well. In the truest way a mortal can be, Ransom was enlightened. His vision of the cosmos recalls Dante’s beatific vision from the end of *Paradiso*:

High phantasy lost power and here broke off;  
Yet, as a wheel moves smoothly, free from jars,  
My will and my desire were turned by love,  
The love that moves the sun and other stars. (33.142-145)

Like Dante, Ransom views the glory of divine love as it holds together the universe. It seems as if Ransom, too, finds his, “instinct and intellect balanced equally”: any doubts he had faced in his work on Malacandra or Perelandra fell away in his beatific vision, and he leaves a changed man. Perhaps this lack of doubt is the reason for Ransom’s change from Virgilian hero to Arthurian hero: the hero who saves Logres must have seen the glory of God. Arthur—as a Christian Aeneas—has seen the glory of God; Ransom inherits the role of the medieval king because he has transversed the barriers which had kept him from divine wisdom when he yet resembled the classical Aeneas. For Aeneas carries out the will of Jupiter with diligence; however he never gains the divine purview as a mortal. In fact, he often bewails the anger of Juno and the divine elusiveness of his own mother:



“*Quid natum totiens, crudelis tu quoque, falsis/ludis imaginibus?  
Cur dextrae iungere dextram/non datur, ac veras audire et reddere  
voces?’*” (Verg. A. 1.407-9)

““Why do you so often mock your son—you are so cruel-hearted—  
with deceptive likenesses? Why is it not permissible to join my  
right hand with yours, or to speak and hear true voices?””

This is a relationship between the hero and the divine very different from that of Ransom and Maleldil. But Virgil’s hero cannot offer that what lies beyond the scope of Virgil’s own understanding (though he comes perhaps as close as any hero before Christ ever could). Aeneas, though obedient, follows the divine will without ever glimpsing it himself. The closest any classical hero could come to seeing the will of the gods was in becoming a god himself by *apotheosis*. This paper has already argued that in Lewis’ view Aeneas enjoyed this fate of *apotheosis* instead of drowning. Ransom, however, could never fulfill his role on Earth without developing further into the immortal hero, not the half-mortal warrior alone. The Ransom who has seen the love of God and heard the music of Deep Heaven could never be constricted to the pre-Christian hero he resembled before his beatific vision. To borrow Dimble’s words, the possibilities for Ransom of even apparent neutrality have diminished, for he sees the universe as it obeys God and may therefore recognize all forms of disobedience (281). He has gained divine wisdom, and he can never look again with clouded eyes.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, Lewis’ epic narrative does,

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<sup>15</sup> Upon her first meeting with the Director, Jane considers Ransom to embody the regality of Solomon.

indeed, “go on from Virgil” as he said any new epic must, however, the introduction of Arthurian figures seems to be Lewis’ attempt at “epic development beyond Virgil” (Lewis, *Preface* 38). It also serves the purpose of narrowing the scope of the third book to a battle in a larger war. Whereas Venus depends on Ransom’s actions in *Perelandra*, the imminent threat of *That Hideous Strength* primarily extends to Logres, the, “spiritual side of England” (Downing 76). Because the Virgilian hero must undergo development beyond the classical scope, Lewis takes the opportunity of *That Hideous Strength*’s setting to show his hero’s development into a warrior in a Christian battle. There is indeed a progression in Ransom from Troy to Britain, as the author of *Gawain and the Green Knight* writes. And this development arises from the wisdom Ransom gains when he sees the divine vision in paradise.

The previous two chapters have considered the virtues of courage and temperance as they pertain to Ransom’s journeys. This chapter will examine the final virtue needed to complete the Quaternion to achieve justice: wisdom.<sup>16</sup> Where *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra* hinged on the two virtues of character as defined by Aristotle and Plato (courage and temperance), *That Hideous Strength* is concerned primarily with the intellectual virtue of wisdom. In many ways, it is a book about the dangers of substituting merely calculative reason for wisdom. Adam’s and Eve’s original desire to gain God’s knowledge without obeying His commands still plagues the earth. This sin is embodied by the N.I.C.E. which abandons wisdom in pursuit of reason alone, the rational element

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<sup>16</sup> Lewis writes about the Quaternion of virtue on page 68 of *The Discarded Image*.

stripped of its moral component. The N.I.C.E. pursues science and champions reason in an attempt to sterilize the natural world and invoke the powers they perceive for their own advancement. This is precisely the predicament which Lewis outlines in *The Abolition of Man* when he describes the folly of those who attempt to separate reason from the other aspects of humanity; those who champion rational calculation without regard for the good. But Lewis repeatedly points out that this separation cannot occur without the expense of the whole person. Let us revisit Lewis' expression that "the head rules the belly through the chest". All of these components—head, belly, and chest—make up a rightly ordered person when properly aligned. However, taking away the chest, the head and the belly will wreck the organism; as Lewis writes, the chest is what distinguishes human beings from mere animals or spirits. And rather than giving power to the individual who attempts to strip himself of an emotional response, the denial proves destructive: "Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism" (Lewis, *Abolition* 24). This is what the readers sees at the N.I.C.E. Without the organ of virtue, the members of the organization disintegrate into mere spirit (Wither) or animal brutality (Fairy Hardcastle). "In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function," Lewis writes, "We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise" (26). Thus the "head" of the N.I.C.E. becomes the organization's emblem: literally a man without a chest. Their treatment of nature as something to be conquered, sterilized, and conditioned for their own purposes brings about their end by nature itself when most of the dinner party is trampled and mauled by the animals on which they had been conducting tests. By trying to reach the heavens

through the subjugation of nature, they bring on their own death. How apt that Belbury's end is steeped in the chaos of Babel in its final moments.

On the other hand, St. Anne's revolves around order and hierarchy. The Director guides the house in his great wisdom and the others carry out their work to care for the house and its inhabitants. Likewise, those at St. Anne's revere nature and its creatures; the house is surrounded by a garden that reminds Jane of gardens from story and legend, and the creatures of the house fit into the assembly as well. The mice eat the crumbs that fall from the table, and Mr. Bultitude—the bumbling bear who lives in the house—eventually crushes the head and mauls the directors of Belbury. Those at St. Anne's treat nature not as something to be conquered but as a part of creation that falls under humankind's domain of stewardship. Tor's words in *Perelandra* seem to categorize Ransom's domain over the beasts of his household: "We will make the nobler of the beasts so wise that they will become *hnau* and speak: their lives shall awake to a new life in us as we awake in Maleldil" (Lewis, *Perelandra* 211). To a lesser extent, Ransom makes wise the beasts in his house even as he makes wise its humans. Ransom recaptures the dominion over nature that Adam lost in the Fall, and the order he impresses upon St. Anne's balances its inhabitants with regard to the natural order both in relation to oneself and in relation to the others in the house. This ability—at its core—is a picture of justice on earth.

And here the entire trilogy begins to come into focus with regard to the order of the soul and the Quaternion of virtues. All of Ransom's toils and strivings together shape him into a leader whose entire being reflects the love of God. When Ransom lives among

the *hrossa* in Malacandra, he grows in the virtue of courage as he observes it in the native *hnau*. The fortification of Ransom by the *hnau* and the *Oyarsa* of Malacandra become necessary in his protection of Perelandra. Multiple times in Perelandra Ransom faces death but never with fear. He even attempts to fortify whatever scrap may be left of Weston before they are washed into the caverns. Ransom's practice of temperance in paradise further strengthens his spirit to endure the pains of his task until Maleldil's command is fulfilled, and the beatific vision gives him the wisdom and the divine inspiration to return to earth and lead St. Anne's through the trials of Logres. To examine how wisdom corresponds to his ability to impress justice on those around him, virtue as it is defined by Aristotle deserves consideration. The philosopher writes:

It is, therefore, clear, that wisdom must be the most precise and perfect form of knowledge. Consequently, a wise man must not only know what follows from fundamental principles, but he must also have true knowledge of the fundamental principles themselves. Accordingly, theoretical wisdom must comprise both intelligence and scientific knowledge. It is science in its consummation, as it were, the science of the things that are valued most highly. (*Aristot. Nic. Eth.* 1141a.15).

Ransom has right reasoning both with respect to the contemplative intellect and with regard to the practical intellect. Having seen the "Great Dance" of the universe and having spoken with the *Oyeresu*, Ransom gains a, "profound understanding of the eternal truths of the universe." Through his experiences, Ransom's practical wisdom develops

and guides his actions and instruction. The two types of reason unite to balance his thoughts and his actions with perfect wisdom. And this wisdom—together with fortitude and temperance—allow him to embody and enact justice. Plato writes in his *Republic*:

And in truth justice is, it seems, something of this sort. However, it isn't concerned with someone's doing his own externally, but with what is inside him, with what is truly himself and his own...he regulates well what is really his own and rules himself...He puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes in a musical scale—high, low, and middle. He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious. Only then does he act...And he believes that the action that destroys this harmony is unjust, and calls it so, and regards the belief that oversees it as ignorance. (*Plat. Rep.* 443d-444)

This is the state of Ransom; through his obedience and the tempering of his soul toward Maleldil, he is rewarded with divine wisdom and a perfected soul. In him the two moral virtues and the intellectual one balance his ability to act justly and to instruct those who will obey in a just community. Perhaps this perfection is the fulfillment of his Virgilian duty to, “rule the peoples with your power... to impress the custom of peace, to spare the conquered, and battle down the proud” (6.850-3). For the reader may observe Ransom fulfilling this instruction. First, his pendragonship is a position of power,

however he uses his authority to bring peace to St. Anne's and eventually—though through war—to Belbury. That war is the means of bringing peace to Belbury should not be troubling but obvious, because the title of “pendragon” was bestowed to one man who alone must call together the armies to fight whatever adversary approached. The battle is from the beginning inevitable, and Ransom's title reflects this. Second, Ransom does indeed spare the conquered in his directorship. The most obvious example of the conquered spared by the Director is Mark Studdock. Mark finds himself (though not innocently) unable to escape the N.I.C.E., imprisoned by the group after he hesitated to leave them when he had the opportunity. Mark is truly a conquered man: he trades his virtues for privilege, he casts aside his convictions for power, and he uses his marriage merely for status and personal convenience. Despite the many evils Mark commits and allows to continue, the Director nevertheless spares him as he lies amidst the carnage of the Belbury dinner party. With the Director's knowledge, Merlin hands Mark a note from Arthur Denniston bidding him to the Manor at St. Anne's where he will find his wife. Knowing the change in Mark and in his wife, the Director sends Jane to meet her husband as Venus herself descends. Presumably, their reunion will produce the next pendragon—the baby for which Merlin rebuffed Jane for having not yet conceived by her own will. Thus by sparing Mark, Ransom perhaps secures the future of Logres, as well. For this Venus descending is not the earthly wraith but the real and perfect Venus—both mother and mother-maker—and she brings to the Studdocks the joy of married love and genesis. Third and finally, the Director battles down the proud both in Belbury and in his own company. The pride of the N.I.C.E. in their attempts to reach immortality outside

Maleldil results in Belbury's obliteration. But Ransom also addresses the pride of those in his own group. He rebukes MacPhee in his moments of pride, but he also addresses Jane's pride and primness that becomes a stumbling-block in her interactions with Mark, with Ivy Maggs, and with Margaret Dimble. His virtue of wisdom and its alignment with courage and temperance produces in him a sense of justice; through this sense, he obeys the will of Maleldil perfectly and guides his assembly closer to their own perfection, as well.

Finally, consider how Ransom's role in *That Hideous Strength* concludes the events of *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*. Although Ransom himself does not complete most of the action in the third and final installment of his trilogy, his directorship of St. Anne's proves vital for the preservation of Logres. That the operation's success depends on him and yet he himself carries out so little of the action is indicative of his dual role as pendragon and fisher-king. Ransom cannot himself fight hand to hand as he did in *Perelandra* because he is injured; therefore his role as the pendragon must be one largely of direction and not action. However his connection with the fisher-king becomes important here. Like the protector of the grail, Ransom finds his own condition tied to the production of the land. Unlike the original fisher-king, however, the fate of the land rests on his spiritual health, not merely on the state of his wound. Because Ransom is spiritually well and he rules with the wisdom of a healed soul, his people are successful in their mission. Socrates himself remarks on the role of wisdom in leadership in his *Republic*:



Then, a whole city established according to nature would be wise because of the smallest class and part in it, namely, the governing or ruling one. And to this class, which seems to be by nature the smallest, belongs a share of the knowledge that alone among all the other kinds of knowledge is to be called wisdom. (*Plat. Rep.* 428e)

Ransom's effect on the Manor is like that which Plato's ruling class has on the *polis*. Because Ransom is wise, those around him are wise; Ransom instructs them to be more righteous members of the kingdom of God. On the other hand, the Belbury directors reject wisdom and therefore folly and obscurity plague the whole organization. The N.I.C.E.'s separation of reason from virtue wrecks the humanity of those who further its aims (effecting the abolition of man). Plato's *polis* stands on its head as the ruling few of the organization use their power to subjugate humanity instead of to elevate it. By sending the corruption of Thulc into the heavens and attempting to conquer the realms of the unfallen *Oyeresu*, Belbury brings the wrath of the planets onto their heads. However, the *polis* is righted again and Logres is secure when the gods descend and cross the translunary barrier which has separated Earth from Deep Heaven since the fall of the Tellurian archon.

Ransom returns justice to Logres through his model of divine virtue, sharing with the St. Anne's assembly what he learned in his vision of the dance of the universe. As the point of contact between Earth and the worlds beyond, he watches as the gods descend into the world cut off from Deep Heaven. He facilitates Merlin's role in the undoing of Belbury. He teaches Old Solar to Dimble so that the universal language may be known on

earth. And he preserves the marriage of the Studdocks for the sake of their future and the future of Logres. All of his interactions—with the *Oyeresu*, with Merlin, with the people and the beasts of St. Anne's—unite the factions of Logres into a just society. With the guidance of Ransom, those protectors of Logres face death without fear, they reject false pleasures for the true ones, and they employ their reason to gain divine understanding. This society could help eradicate the evil of Belbury only because of its order and obedience with respect to each individual and the greater whole. With his direction of St. Anne's complete, Ransom prepares to join Arthur in his true home of Avalon where his wound will be healed. And just as Ransom is healed by the glory of the present Venusian paradise, so will the earth one day be healed by the future paradise that Maleldil will bring to Earth.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the trilogy, Ransom develops from voyager to sacrificial warrior to king: the very route of Aeneas in Virgil's epic. Though there are significant differences between the stories, the development of Lewis' fully Christian hero has obvious roots in the classical epic. Lewis answers the very question he himself posed—whether any epic development beyond Virgil is possible—with resounding “yes” (Lewis, *Preface* 38). However to be successful, he had to begin with Virgil. For Lewis, no other pre-Christian poet captures the pains and the glory of the Christian story like the Roman poet who almost tastes the Christian pilgrimage even as a pagan. Nevertheless, Ransom must develop beyond Aeneas' state in the final lines of the *Aeneid*. Without a transfiguration, Ransom would not be able to reflect a complete picture of justice and the virtues it requires. This reason necessitates a change for Ransom that draws him into the Incarnation. For the lamp Virgil holds behind him brightens the world, but the Incarnation sets the universe ablaze.

The *Ransom Trilogy*—beyond being a superb piece of literature and an illuminating *didache*—allows the reader to study the Christian faith as it intersects with the many layers of the human experience and intellect. It instructs on virtue, draws the mind to consider the Incarnation from new angles, and engages the imaginative element which readers crave from legend, myth, and fable. However, understanding the *Ransom*

*Trilogy* illumines a piece of Lewis' own mind. A study of the trilogy as it relates to Virgil's *Aeneid* proves valuable to Lewis scholarship. Fleshing out the connections and cementing allusions in the texts not only show how Lewis draws from Virgil, but also how he interprets specific passages from the *Aeneid*. As the poem was one of his most beloved works, this seems a connection that could give scholars a glimpse into the great Lewis' mind—a rare experience as those who knew him best would attest.

Nevertheless, there is a vital impulse that Lewis receives from his poetic forbearer that lends itself beautifully to the *Ransom Trilogy*. In claiming that no writer of secondary epic may draw only from a time before Virgil, Lewis asserts an idea that is consistent with Dimble's view of the universe. For as the universe grows sharper and comes more clearly into focus for those paying attention, it would be folly to ignore the "destiny of Man" (Lewis, *Preface* 38). Since Virgil completed his epic, the world has grown clearer because of the Incarnation. But rather than disparage the ancients for their more obscured vision, Lewis incorporates one of the most influential classical stories into his Christian works. Not to be dismissed are the strivings of the ancients—such as Virgil—to find truth beyond their limited understanding of God. For Lewis' purpose is not to foster syncretism or idolatry, but rather to show that the pains and obedience of the ancients (not just their heroes) provided the directions and dim lights to guide others toward the greatest light of the Incarnation. No other light would ever suffice after the glory of Christ, however that does not mean that the lamps of the pre-Christian sojourners were for naught. This is what Lewis means when he writes that it would be anachronistic for poets to return to a time before Virgil: the enlightened must march forward, not back. Thus *Ransom* (despite

being English) begins the narrative as the Roman fugitive to a strange land. But his journeys, his battles, and his obedience forge him into the divine protector of Logres, and the true emblem of the “destiny of Man.”

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