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## Utopia in Deep Heaven: Thomas More and C.S. Lewis's Cosmic Trilogy

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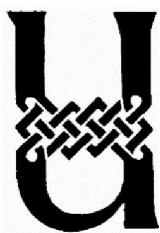
## Utopia in Deep Heaven: Thomas More and C.S. Lewis's Cosmic Trilogy

### Abstract

Teases out parallels to Thomas More's *Utopia* the solar system of Lewis's Cosmic Trilogy, to show how Lewis's scholarly engagement with this text informs his depictions of Malacandra, Perelandra, and the smaller world of the N.I.C.E. Particularly emphasized are the similarities in the overall structures and the narrators and protagonists.

### Additional Keywords

Lewis, C.S.—Sources, Lewis, C.S. English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama; Lewis, C.S. Space Trilogy—Sources; More, Thomas. Utopia; Utopias and dystopias



## UTOPIA IN DEEP HEAVEN: THOMAS MORE AND C.S. LEWIS'S COSMIC TRILOGY

BENJAMIN C. PARKER

SCHOLARS OF C.S. LEWIS, NOTING HIS ACADEMIC CAREER as professor of Medieval and Renaissance literature and especially his authorship of *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, frequently cite the influence of Milton and *Paradise Lost* on Lewis's writings (Lobdell, *Scientifiction* 19, 92-96; Hilder 9; Honda 88; Shippey 239, 242; Walls 252-55; Guite 298). However, references to Thomas More and *Utopia* in these same critical texts with a view to his influence on Lewis's fiction are rare to nonexistent. Nevertheless, the utopian societies of Malacandra and Perelandra and the dystopia of *That Hideous Strength* in Lewis's Cosmic Trilogy corroborate Lewis's response in his literary criticism to the plausibility of utopias as presented in More's *Utopia*. Similarly, Lewis's use of dialogue in *Perelandra* alludes to More's use of dialogue in the debate between More, Peter Giles, and Hythloday in Book I of *Utopia*. More's influence on the Cosmic Trilogy adds to the extant scholarship on Milton's influence on Lewis in demonstrating the interconnectedness of Lewis's literary scholarship and his authorship of fantasy and science fiction.

Lewis's critical response in his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* to *Utopia* describes More's text as "a book whose real place is not in the history of political thought so much as in that of fiction and satire," and Lewis cautions modern readers against taking *Utopia* too seriously as a blueprint for revolution (167). Lewis argues that in *Utopia* "invention [...] is quite as important as the merits of the polity described [...] on very different levels of seriousness. Not to recognize this is to do More grave injustice" (169). Lewis contends that the narrative structure of Book I in particular "has no place in the history of political philosophy" (170). Lewis's caution against a literal reading of *Utopia* as political manual particularly concerns the abolition of private property in Utopia, for which More earned commemoration at the Kremlin after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Although Lewis does not explicitly mention Marxism in his analysis of *Utopia*, Communist revolutions in particular were at the forefront of the geopolitical milieu in which Lewis published *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* in 1954. Furthermore, elsewhere in his writings Lewis castigates the Communist state as a diabolical invention, arguing that the

bourgeoisie can and often did give up power and wealth as a result of social pressures and their own consciences without the necessity of any proletarian revolution, and Lewis particularly opposes the Marxist tenets of punitive taxation and compulsory state education (*Screwtape* 195-96, 205).

The motivations of the antagonists in *Out of the Silent Planet* in particular deconstruct More's equivocation on the roles of private property and pride in perpetuating evil within western society and suggest that collectivist Marxism is an inadequate response to this evil. In *Utopia*, Raphael Hythloday argues that "as long as you have private property, and as long as money is the measure of all things, it is scarcely ever possible for a commonwealth to be just or happy. [...] [T]here can be no fair or just distribution of goods, nor can the business of mortals be happily conducted" (35-36). Accordingly, Hythloday describes Utopia as having "nothing private anywhere" and relegating domestic use of gold and silver to making chamber pots, chains to bind slaves, and ornaments to disgrace criminals (42, 55). However, elsewhere Hythloday allows for private property, or at least advocates caution in making the state the agent of redistribution, in noting that among the "not badly governed" Polylerites, "whoever is found guilty of theft must make restitution to the owner, not (as elsewhere) to the prince; they think that the prince has no more right to the stolen goods than the thief" (23). Ultimately, More offers another explanation of the impediment to justice: "one single monster, the prime plague and begetter of others [...] Pride." According to More, pride "measures her advantage not by what she has but by what others lack" (96); therefore, pride underlies many evils that at first glance may be attributed to private property.

Of the two antagonists in *Silent Planet*, the physicist Weston epitomizes pride and his accomplice Devine epitomizes greed, and these characters and their fates address the tension between greed and pride as culprits for societal ills. The motivations of Devine in undertaking the voyages to Malacandra are strictly financial, and Ransom observes that Devine's conversation "ran on the things he would do when he got back to Earth: ocean-going yachts, the most expensive women and a big place on the Riviera figured largely in his plans" (32-33). Ransom later learns that gold is plentiful on Malacandra and that Devine and Weston had already made one voyage there to collect gold (70, 120-21). For Weston, on the other hand, space travel represents the ability of humanity to "jump off the speck of matter on which our species began; infinity, and therefore perhaps eternity, is being put into the hands of the human race"; with a notably collectivist attitude, he dismisses any counterargument that "the rights or the life of an individual or of a million individuals are of the slightest importance in comparison" (29).

The responses of Malacandra's natives to the difference in attitudes between Devine's greed and Weston's grandeur demonstrates the significance

of these attitudes as impediments or threats to a utopia. These responses are particularly evident in the climax of *Silent Planet* when Weston and Devine answer for their presence and actions on Malacandra before Oyarsa, the ruler of Malacandra, at the planet's capital city of Meldilorn. Just as in Utopia gems are considered a plaything for infants (56-57), in Malacandra the humans' lust for gold leads the natives to "treat them like cubs" (*Silent* 121) and to laugh at the humans' attempt to bribe them with jewelry (126-28). Oyarsa dismisses Devine as "only a talking animal" and concludes that the rational being within him is "already dead" (138), notably even using the pronoun *it* to refer to Devine (Hilder 30). Weston, on the other hand, represents a graver threat to Malacandra in that he seeks to eliminate its native population and claim the planet for humanity (*Silent* 133), so that humans can outlive Earth and travel from planet to planet and from star to star as each world becomes uninhabitable (135-36). Weston views even his own life as insignificant in this context, assuming that he will be killed but refusing to abandon his goal (133-36). Weston here epitomizes "the belief that the supreme moral end is the perpetuation of our own species [...] even if, in the process [...] our species has to be stripped of all those things for which we value it—of pity, of happiness, and of freedom" (qtd. in Hilder 25). As such, Weston and his fellow "idealists" represent a far graver threat than the avarice of people like Devine to Malacandra—and, in *That Hideous Strength*, also to Earth (Shippey 241). In Malacandra, however, all rational natives accept that "a world is not made to last for ever, much less a race" and that all worlds will eventually die: Malacandra in particular is nearing the end of its lifespan (*Silent* 100, 138). In resisting this wisdom, Weston therefore selflessly risks his life on behalf of a collective hubris of humanity that refuses to accept any limits on its territory or longevity. The natives of Malacandra, by contrast, reject such hubris and have "left behind [...] fear, murder and rebellion" in favor of peace, no longer fearing death even on an individual level (*Silent* 138-39; 76-77).

The contrast in *Silent Planet* between the human hubris of cosmic imperialism and Malacandrian peace and contentment also responds to another facet of More's *Utopia*: that of the tendencies of Utopia toward imperialism. More depicts Utopia as establishing mainland colonies on at least a semi-regular basis, making war when a native population resists (49), and enslaving prisoners of war (70), despite ostensibly believing that nature binds all human beings together (76-77). Although this colonialism on one level represents a natural corollary of the Utopians' belief that they possess superior social, political, and economic systems, it becomes particularly problematic for twentieth century readers: as Lewis published *Silent Planet* in 1938, Marxists advocated exporting revolution and fascist regimes engaged in warfare and geopolitical bullying to gain territory. In *Silent Planet*, when the residents of Malacandra were faced with the death of their planet, they were technologically capable of interplanetary

travel and could potentially have colonized Earth; instead, with the help of Oyarsa, they transcended the fear of their planet's mortality (138).

The refusal of Malacandra to invade Earth in the trilogy also responds to a closely related feature of *Utopia*, namely the question of the intrinsic value of rational life. Utopia's conduct of war involves numerous practices "mischievously devised to flout the chivalric code" (Lewis, *English* 29), implying that the Utopians cheaply esteem the life of a non-Utopian. These practices include suborning assassinations and political kidnappings as well as employing mercenaries in a manner that constitutes indirect ethnic cleansing (More 79, 81). On Malacandra, however, the life of a rational being, or *hnau*, whether that of one of the three native species or a human life, is not to be taken by another *hnau* but only by Oyarsa: even after Weston and Devine kill a *hross*, one of the *hnau*, in pursuit of Weston, the others refuse to kill Ransom and capture the other humans alive at the cost of two more of their own lives (*Silent* 83, 125). Even after Weston and Devine have killed three *hrossa* and threatened the rest of the population of Malacandra and one of their own kind, Oyarsa expresses reluctance to execute them (133), threatening to do so only if they refuse to leave Malacandra, because the humans are "out of [Oyarsa's] world" (139).

While *Silent Planet* depicts an extraterrestrial utopia, in the third volume of Lewis's Cosmic Trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*, human effort at establishing utopia leads instead to the brink of dystopia due to collective human hubris. The very title of *That Hideous Strength* invokes collective hubris, referring to the description of the Tower of Babel in sixteenth-century poet David Lyndsay's *Ane Dialog* (Hilder 85). Central to the attempt at utopia in *That Hideous Strength* is the National Institute of Coordinated Experiments, representing "that constructive fusion between the state and the laboratory on which so many thoughtful people base their hopes of a better world [...] free from almost all the tiresome restraints" of law and economics (*Hideous* 21). Describing itself as "strictly non-political" (97) and as a "peace-effort" (129), the Institute aims "to get science applied to social problems [...] backed by the whole force of the state" (37). Devine, who in the interim has used his riches to gain a lordship and political power, notes that Weston was on the side of the Institute and that Weston's "interplanetary problem" is one of the Institute's main objectives (16, 39), while Filostrato, an Institute scientist, expresses optimism that the Institute will "reconstruct" Weston's ship from his manuscripts (175). He further suggests that the Institute can use science to "take over the human race and re-condition it: make man a really efficient animal," condemning any opposition as reactionary (39). For instance, the Institute's police force emphasizes "remedial treatment" to supplant "the old notion of 'retributive' or 'vindictive' punishment" as a "rescuer" of the criminal (67, 129).

The Institute offers "a solution of the unemployment problem, the cancer problem, the housing problem, the problems of currency, of war, of education" (130), promising "more trade [...] more public amenities, a larger population, a burst of undreamed-of prosperity" (131). Deputy Director Wither describes the Institute as "so many brothers and [...] sisters" (203), recalling the *fraternité* of Robespierre and the French Revolution as well as Lenin's call for "an international workers' brotherhood" ("Workers"), and the Institute presents itself as "the people's Institute" (218). Like Filostrato, Wither equates opposition to the Institute as "the cause of reaction" (272).

Still more utopian among the Institute's goals is immortality itself, again defying in pride any limit on human longevity. Filostrato hails "the conquest of death [...] the New Man, the man who will not die [...] free from Nature" (173-74). To that end, the Institute reanimates the head of François Alcasan, a guillotined murderer, as the Head of the Institute (174), further defying limits on human intelligence by experimentally enlarging his brain in hopes of augmenting his intellect (178, 193).

Despite its seemingly noble aims, the Institute promotes totalitarian hierarchy. As Devine puts it, "Man has got to take charge of Man. That means [...] that some men have got to take charge of the rest." Moreover, the Institute's agenda of "sterilization of the unfit [and] liquidation of backward races" recalls the eugenics programs of fascist regimes (40), while its plan for "re-education of the maladjusted" invokes totalitarian repression of dissent (41). Like the World State of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, the Institute seeks to induce humanity to "reproduce [...] without copulation," making humanity more "governable" (170), and like Oceania and its rival states in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the Institute plans near-constant warfare to perpetuate its political control (256).

The practices of the Institute, furthermore, amply befit its totalitarian aims. Through politics and force, the Institute moves to "suspend the laws of England" (195). The Institute's police, superseding the "ordinary police" (215), plant evidence to frame the innocent and to use its law enforcement to protect its own members while keeping them under control (203-09). The Institute's police, consisting in part of criminals and of veterans of such organizations as the British Fascists and the Black and Tans (67, 154), brandish truncheons and discharge firearms to terrorize the citizens and conduct mass arrests, prompting one woman to complain, "[I]t's almost as if we'd lost the war" against the Axis (74, 104, 212). When these police arrest Jane Studdock during an engineered riot, Miss Hardcastle subjects her to torture and simulated rape (152-53). The Institute takes control of the press to spread disinformation and condition the population, suppressing any paper that refuses to print its propaganda (218). Even the experiment with Alcasan's head is an instrument of totalitarianism, as

Filostrato envisions government reduced to “one [...] immortal man” and the Institute prepares to use the technique to disburse “eternal punishment” and “make the dead live whether they wish it or not” (175-76). As Ransom suggests, the experiment portends further stratification of humanity rather than egalitarian utopia: “henceforward, all the creatures that you and I call human are mere candidates for admission to the new species or else its slaves” (194). Moreover, the ultimate goal of the Institute thus becomes a Promethean achievement of “the old dream of Man as God,” for humanity to “shake off [...] limitation of his powers” (200); accordingly, the symbol for the Institute is “a muscular male [...] grasping a thunderbolt” (212).

Within the Institute, totalitarian realpolitik prevails. The upper echelons of the Institute eliminate or sacrifice individuals and entire departments when they outlive their usefulness (96, 167). Miss Hardcastle threatens her subordinates with the same “humane remedial treatment” the Institute practices on criminals (154), and the threat of reanimation keeps Mark Studdock in line through terror for most of his involvement with the Institute (182). Meanwhile, the Institute requires unlimited subservience from its members (117, 172), demanding even that Studdock trample a crucifix as part of his initiation (331-34), while the Institute routinely places its members in no-win scenarios (158). Backbiting and paranoia prevail even among the highest leaders of the Institute (262, 333). Furthermore, leaving the Institute is impossible (78, 122). When a disgruntled colleague named Hingest expresses intent to depart (56), objecting to its “political conspiracy” and its agenda of redistribution (69), his murdered body surfaces hours later (79). The members who stay in the Institute and survive lie to each other (169) and “know that at any moment they may be demoted, dismissed, have their careers ruined, be charged with murder, executed, or handed over to the torture chambers of the [...] institutional police” (Shippey 246). In short, the Institute is a “world of plot within plot, crossing and double-crossing, of lies and graft and stabbing in the back, of murder and a contemptuous guffaw for the fool who lost the game” (*Hideous* 242).

Like the ruling party of Oceania in Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the Institute manipulates the press to distort the truth and manipulate the populace. Whereas Winston Smith invents and eulogizes a fictional Comrade Ogilvy to salvage a “doubleplusgood” article in the *Times* (Orwell 44-48), Mark Studdock, under duress from the Institute, writes a series of articles rehabilitating the reputation of Alcasan, the executed murderer, into that of a martyr and questioning the justice of the execution (*Hideous* 96). Later, when the Institute engineers a riot to acquire emergency powers for itself, Studdock, again under duress, writes a pair of propaganda-laden analyses of the riot before it has even taken place, one each for the highbrow and lowbrow newspapers (126-32). In the latter article, Studdock dismisses any comparisons of the Institute



police to the Gestapo and the Secret Police of the Stalin-era purges and the gulags, equating "the liberties of England" with "the liberties of the obscurantists [...] the Bishops, and the capitalists" (131).

The totalitarian dystopia of the Institute in *That Hideous Strength* represents the dark side of the utopian impulse as Lewis describes it in his analysis of More's *Utopia*, and Lewis notes that Utopia has its own totalitarian leanings. Lewis argues that *Utopia* "has its serious, even its tragic, elements" and that

[There] is nothing in the book on which the later More, the heretic-hunter, need have turned his back. There is no freedom of speech in Utopia. There is nothing liberal in Utopia. From it [...] liberty is more successfully banished than the real world, even at its worst, allows. [...] It is not love of liberty that makes men write Utopias. (*English* 168)

Edward James notes that as a Catholic More "believed that original sin had to be restrained by strict laws" and that "More's utopian society, not accidentally, is like a Benedictine monastery [...] All watch each other closely for signs of disobedience" (220). James's assessment corroborates that of Lewis: "More was from the very first [...] an ascetic with a hankering for the monastic life" (*English* 170). The surveillance James describes prefaces that of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in which even children regularly denounce their parents to the Thought Police (24-25).

The presence of an Oyarsa for each planet in Lewis's trilogy and their role in stopping the Institute in *That Hideous Strength* represent the trilogy's greatest departure from More's *Utopia*, which eschews direct supernatural intervention. However, the role of these characters in governing Malacandra lies at the heart of Lewis's response to the utopia and what stands in the way of its establishment. Oyarsa and other similar incorporeal beings known as *eldila* are the ruling authorities of Malacandra (*Silent* 69-70), and when an *eldil* orders that Ransom should be sent to Oyarsa, the *hrossa* unquestioningly obey, preparing to abandon their hunt to teach Ransom the way to Oyarsa (80-81). When Ransom delays the journey to Oyarsa so that the hunt can continue and one *hross* is killed by Weston and Devine, the *hrossa* blame the death not on Ransom, nor even on Weston and Devine, but on failure to obey the *eldil* (83). On the journey to Oyarsa, when the *sorns*, one of the other two intelligent species on Malacandra, question Ransom about human history, some of the *sorns* attribute humanity's propensity for warfare and slavery to having no Oyarsa or *eldila*, while others attribute it to everyone on Earth wishing to be his or her own Oyarsa (102). At Meldilorn, Ransom learns that the Oyarsa of Earth became "bent" and attempted to destroy the ecosystem and all the *hnau* of Malacandra before being sealed within Earth's atmosphere (120). The Oyarsa of Malacandra describes his

counterpart from Earth as having similarly “bent” Weston to obsession with perpetuating humanity and “broken” Devine into nothing but avarice (137-38) and as having attempted to corrupt the *hnau* of Malacandra with fear of their planet’s death (138). On Earth, according to Oyarsa, the Bent One “wastes your [humans’] lives and befouls them with flying from what you know will overtake you in the end” (138-39). On Malacandra, however, peace prevails because Oyarsa and the other *eldila* are ruled by Maleldil (102), whom the natives of Malacandra describe as the creator and ruler of the world, living with the Old One, and “a spirit without body, parts or passions” (69). The natives of Malacandra likewise describe Maleldil as the maker of all *hnau*, including humans (137), and as being behind Oyarsa’s actions (133, 138). They also credit Maleldil with allowing the plants to grow and enabling an environment without scarcity that precludes warfare between *hnau* on Malacandra (73). This lack of scarcity is a key ingredient to a utopia even in More’s *Utopia* (46-47; 95). Oyarsa argues that humanity could achieve peace by subjecting itself to Maleldil, though Weston, reluctant even to acknowledge Oyarsa’s existence (*Silent Planet* 125-29), prefers to “fight, jump, live” with the Bent One (139). In Perelandra, no *eldila* are active, but Tindiril and Tor, the two native inhabitants, receive direct guidance from Maleldil (*Perelandra* 71). When they reunite, the Oyarsa of Perelandra tells them, “My word henceforth is nothing” (177), suggesting that the Oyarsa of that world had previously guided them.

The presence of Oyarsa and *eldila* and the prominence of Maleldil and the Bent One within the Cosmic Trilogy place the role of the supernatural in Lewis’s work starkly at odds with that of More’s *Utopia*. Although the Utopians consider atheists potentially subversive to societal order (86), religious pluralism otherwise prevails on the island (84), and in public worship, “nothing is seen or heard [...] that does not square with all the creeds” of the various Utopian religions, so that each individual “may be free to form his own image of God [...] in any shape he pleases” (91). Although miracles occur occasionally (88), supernatural interference from any specific deity is rare to nonexistent. In the Cosmic Trilogy, the immanence of Oyarsa and *eldila* precludes such pluralism, but it also precludes any organized religion. Neither Malacandra nor Perelandra has any temple or priests. The *hrossa* conduct funeral of sorts for the dead, led by Oyarsa and consisting of a song and the disintegration of the bodies (*Silent* 130-31), but this procession is all that Ransom encounters of any Malacandrian religion.

Lewis’s invocation of the fallen nature of humanity as impediment to utopia on Earth and his recourse to the supernatural in maintaining utopia on other planets follows More’s objection in Book I of *Utopia*: “it is impossible to make everything good unless you make all men good, and that I don’t expect to see for a long time to come” (34). Ransom describes human history in the Cosmic

Trilogy as “the terrible slavery of appetite and hate and economics and government” (*Perelandra* 114), and in discussing human history in his theological writings, Lewis blames Satan and his influence on humanity for societal ills: “Terrific energy is expended—civilisations are built up—excellent institutions devised; but each time something goes wrong. Some fatal flaw always brings the selfish and cruel people to the top and it all slides back into misery and ruin [...] That is what Satan has done to us humans” (*Mere Christianity* 54). Accordingly, any attempt to establish a utopia on Earth, according to Lewis, entails the danger of instead creating injustice, misery, and dystopia. Lewis expands upon this point in *That Hideous Strength*, where the National Institute of Coordinated Experiments seeks to “take control of birth, breeding and death” (Meilaender 126), and where “men together do very bad things before they are individually very bad men” (Lobdell, *World* 99). Furthermore, Lewis argues that direct divine intervention in history will mean the end of history: “When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over” (*Mere* 66).

However, an ahistorical or post-historical environment is common to fictional utopias, including both More's *Utopia* and Lewis's *Silent Planet*. In *Utopia*, for instance, little of the history of Utopia appears, with two exceptions: the establishment of Utopia following the conquest of Abraxa by Utopus (39; 85) and the influx of western learning and introduction of Christianity brought about by Hythloday and his party (67; 85). Similarly, on Malacandra, although an individual may be memorialized in song (*Silent* 75; 97), the recorded history of the planet concludes with the corruption and imprisonment of the Bent Oyarsa of Earth and the construction of artificial lowlands by the Oyarsa and natives of Malacandra (110); thereafter, the planet is “a static, or largely static, world” (Lobdell, *Scientifiction* 38). Moreover, just as the arrival of Hythloday's party is historically noteworthy for Utopia, the arrival of Ransom, Weston, and Devine likewise is a noteworthy point in Malacandrian history, which the natives record in sculpture (111-13).

Another way in which the Cosmic Trilogy demonstrates More's influence on Lewis involves Lewis's use of early Renaissance humanist tropes and literary techniques in the trilogy. For instance, Lewis juxtaposes dual literary avatars in a manner reminiscent of More's dual protagonists and avatars within *Utopia*. More writes himself into Book I of *Utopia*, using the framing device of a diplomatic mission to Bruges to set up a meeting between his fictionalized self and Raphael Hythloday in which Hythloday describes his travels to Utopia and elsewhere (9-13). While the two characters spend much of Book I at odds over More's attempt to persuade Hythloday to enter the service of a king or prince (14), they converse sympathetically and even find shared past connections such as both having shared the company of Cardinal Morton (15-

16). Accordingly, scholars of More view Hythloday as “More’s humanistic other self” (Guy 9). While Book I consists primarily of dialogue between More and Hythloday, most of Book II takes the form of a treatise on the practices of the Utopians, and More reveals himself as a character only in his response to learning of these practices (More 96-97).

Lewis, like More in *Utopia*, writes himself into his work in the Cosmic Trilogy, introducing himself as a scholar of medieval Platonism and Latin (*Silent* 150-51). Lewis describes himself as “Oxford-bred and very fond of Cambridge” (*Hideous* 15), paralleling his real-life career path as fellow at Magdalen College at Oxford and professor of medieval literature at Cambridge (Lazo 221). Like More, Lewis gives his own name to the avatar presented as a foil for the traveler: Ransom addresses the narrator as “Lewis” in an epistolary postscript in *Silent Planet* and in dialogue in *Perelandra* (*Silent* 154; *Perelandra* 20, 22). Lewis also composes a traveler to utopia, like More’s Hythloday, in the character of Elwin Ransom. Lewis describes Ransom early in *Silent Planet* as “fellow of a Cambridge college” and as a don (10, 19). Devine, who has an academic fellowship of his own (18), even introduces Ransom to Weston as “*The Ransom, you know*” (15). Devine’s corresponding introduction of Weston to Ransom as “*The Weston [...]* [the] great physicist. Has Einstein on toast and drinks a pint of Schrodinger’s blood for breakfast” suggests that Devine is in both instances indirectly self-aggrandizing by emphasizing his connections (15), posturing in a manner well befitting a future lord, politician, and would-be university administrator (*Hideous* 16-17). However, other characters within the trilogy express more sincere admiration for Ransom: Jane Studdock, a doctoral candidate studying Donne (12), recognizes Ransom as a leading philologist whose *Dialect and Semantics* is a seminal text in that field (187). Lewis’s eponymous avatar, for his part, had consulted with Ransom on philological and literary matters; when Lewis wrote Ransom asking about the word *Oyarses* in a text by Bernardus Silvestris, Ransom shared the story of his travel to Malacandra with Lewis (*Silent* 151).

However, just as More differentiates himself from Hythloday, Lewis differentiates himself from Ransom. While Ransom and Lewis share an academic background and many other traits, such as the hobby of walking tours (Lobdell, *Scientifiction* 34), Ransom differs from Lewis in having a background in philology that fortuitously allows him to learn the language of Malacandra (Sammons 157). In fact, Ransom’s first thoughts upon learning that such a language exists are to contemplate the project of a grammar of Malacandra and the various titles he might affix to such a text, along with the lessons on the structure of language that could be learned from a non-human language (*Silent* 56). Lewis, though also author of a book titled *Studies on Words*, emphatically “was not a philologist and did not think or write like one” (Lobdell, *World* 42),

and he relates elsewhere that as a fellow of Magdalen College, he distrusted philologists, though this distrust abated as he began and maintained a decades-long friendship with philologist J.R.R. Tolkien (*Surprised* 215-16; Whittingham 21), even dedicating *Screwtape Letters* to Tolkien (*Screwtape* v). Lewis wrote the Cosmic Trilogy "during the time of Tolkien's maximum influence on Lewis" (Lobdell, *World* 44), and the trilogy represents part of an effort by both authors to "self-consciously [...] rehabilitate the fairy story, including the enormous task of restoring it as a medium for grown-ups" (Duriez 18). Lewis read both *Silent Planet* and *Perelandra* aloud to Tolkien and the other Inklings prior to the books' publication (Lazo 213-14), and Tolkien wrote that Lewis made revisions of the philological material "to [Tolkien's] satisfaction" in *Silent Planet* (*Letters* 33). Accordingly, Tolkien also wrote that he recognized "some of [his] opinions and ideas Lewisified" in Ransom (89).

Lewis's use of dual protagonists is relatively subtle throughout most of *Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*, but the similarity nonetheless demonstrates the influence of More's fiction on that of Lewis. Most of the material in the two novels is written in the third person and follows Ransom's point of view; however, a few brief phrases in first person demonstrate a separate narrator behind Ransom as the protagonist. For example, when Ransom first hears the speech of a *hross*, the narrator interjects, "If you are not yourself a philologist, I am afraid you must take on trust the prodigious emotional consequences [...] in Ransom's mind" (*Silent* 56). Later, when Ransom is privately questioned by Oyarsa, the narrator shows his hand in admitting that he is "not allowed to record this conversation" (141). These instances of first-person interjection are relatively subtle: Peter J. Schakel, for instance, omits them in claiming that *Silent Planet* sticks to Ransom's point of view until chapter 22 (70). However, to dismiss the "I am afraid" clause above as a meaningless colloquialism risks impoverishing the text, as seemingly innocuous phrases in the trilogy occasionally reveal additional depth within the text. Michael Ward, for example, notes that Ransom's first words to Lewis in *Perelandra* are "By Jove, I'm glad to see you" and argues that the phrase "by Jove" indicates the involvement of Jove, or the Oyarsa of Jupiter, in sustaining Lewis through an encounter with hostile *eldila* (48). That the Oyarsa of Jupiter exerts further influence on Ransom's company in *That Hideous Strength* corroborates Ward's argument.

In *Perelandra*, although Lewis initially foregrounds his eponymous character, the focus quickly returns to Ransom, with subtle secondhand narration. At the outset of *Perelandra*, Ransom cryptically summons Lewis for assistance (10), and Lewis learns that Ransom is being sent to the planet Perelandra (20). After Lewis narrates Ransom's departure and subsequent return to Earth, the point of view shifts back to Ransom, and while the narrator, as before in *Silent Planet*, reveals his hand occasionally with phrases like "I take

it" (*Perelandra* 30) and "he must have been" (31), his role quickly fades to the background to shift focus to Ransom's experiences. Similarly, in *That Hideous Strength*, although most of the narrative follows the alternating points of view of Jane and Mark Studdock, Lewis the narrator occasionally shows his hand early on, most obviously in describing Bracton College, the setting for much of the first part of the book, but also notably in relating subtext and analysis of a meeting at the college. When the meeting reaches an agenda item concerning the salaries of junior fellows, Lewis as narrator interjects, "I would not like to say what the most junior Fellows of Bracton were getting at this time, but I believe it hardly covered the expenses of their residence in College" (24). These first-person remarks, into which Lewis as author "put twenty years' experience of 'office politics'" and his own "unforced, but donnish, sense of humor" (Shippey 244; Lobdell, *Scientifiction* 115), fit the persona Lewis has established for himself while explaining the proceedings within the chapter as though to readers outside or new to academia, recalling his earlier academic explanation of Ransom's interest in the speech of the *hross* in *Silent Planet*. However, as in *Perelandra*, Lewis as narrator again quickly gets out of the way to shift focus to the narrative.

A significant corollary of Lewis's use of dual protagonists is the reliance of the text on secondhand narrative, further demonstrating the influence of More and *Utopia*. Since everything to be learned about Utopia and the other exotic lands described in *Utopia* comes from Hythloday's description, acceptance of the conditions in Utopia and elsewhere stands or falls with Hythloday's credibility. Hythloday himself tells More, "[You] should have been with me in Utopia, and seen with your own eyes their manners and customs as I did [...] If you had seen them, you would frankly confess that you had never seen a people well governed anywhere but there" (37), and Hythloday anticipates disbelief over the Utopians' ignoble use of gold and silver (54-55). Lewis and Ransom similarly anticipate popular incredulity over Ransom's voyages, and even Ransom himself expresses doubts about his own experiences shortly after his trip to Malacandra (*Silent* 150-51); accordingly, the strategy of Ransom and Lewis is to "publish in the form of *fiction* what would certainly not be listened to as *fact*" (152, italics Lewis's). Additionally, early in *Perelandra* Lewis's narrator briefly expresses skepticism about Ransom's experience, particularly in the "Dark Lord, this depraved Oyarsa of [Earth]" and his role in threatening utopia on Malacandra and preventing it on Earth; however, Lewis feels "ashamed" of having doubted (20). That the only chapter from Lewis's point of view, with Ransom absent, is the most unbelievable passage within *Silent Planet* or *Perelandra* further bolsters Ransom's credibility. Throughout this chapter, which Lobdell describes as "not [...] purely realistic" (*Scientifiction* 96), Lewis relates his own struggles with fear of visiting Ransom and of

encountering the *eldila* with whom Ransom had interacted on Malacandra. Lewis notes that he doubts his own sanity, believing himself to be experiencing "the beginning of a nervous breakdown" (*Perelandra* 12). Amidst this battle to preserve his own rationality, Lewis reaffirms Ransom's credibility: "The reader, not knowing Ransom, will not understand how contrary to all reason this idea was. The rational part of my mind, even at that moment, knew perfectly well that even if the whole universe were crazy and hostile, Ransom was sane and wholesome and honest" (*Perelandra* 13). This implicit trust in Ransom is not limited to Lewis's avatar: in *That Hideous Strength*, Jane Studdock immediately trusts Ransom's account of his trip to Mars, even though the account is told to her secondhand by Ransom's most skeptical colleague (187).

Lewis further bolsters Ransom's authority in an epistolary postscript of *Silent Planet* in much the same way that More adds to Hythloday's credibility in an introductory letter to Giles at the beginning of *Utopia*, further demonstrating the influence of *Utopia* on the Cosmic Trilogy. More, who in Book I of *Utopia* credits Giles with introducing him to Hythloday (10) and helping him attempt to persuade Hythloday to enter a king's service (14), writes Giles, asking him to consult with Hythloday on a few points related to the rest of the forthcoming book (7-8). Lewis's postscript, by contrast, takes the form of an excerpt from an epistle directly from Ransom to Lewis in which Ransom addresses a few perceived inadequacies of the manuscript, ranging from what Ransom as a philologist perceives as inadequate attention to the language of Malacandra to minor plot points to scenes Ransom wishes could have been incorporated into the narrative (*Silent* 153-58).

In addition to the dual protagonist motif, *Perelandra* in particular also employs Renaissance-style dialogue, demonstrating More's influence in reflecting the dialogue between More, Giles, and Hythloday in *Utopia*. A key trait of Renaissance dialogue is the absence of an immediate authority to speak on and thereby resolve a topic, short-circuiting any debate on the issue. Brian Vickers argues that "the dominant form of Renaissance dialogue was not the Platonic, in which a privileged and dominant speaker exposes the limitations of his partners' thinking"; instead, "distinct characters or *personae* espouse distinct attitudes" (qtd. in Hart 110). Thus, Peter Burke suggests, Renaissance dialogue represents an "'open' or sceptical dialogue" rather than a "'closed' or didactic form" (3). The necessity of this feature for such dialogue takes center stage in Book I of *Utopia* during Hythloday's description of a dialogue in the court of Cardinal Morton. In this dialogue, Hythloday criticizes the justice system of England and the propensity of English capitalist society to reduce many individuals to poverty and crime, inciting a debate with a lawyer at Morton's court (More 16-21). While Morton acts as a moderator to the dialogue (21), his presence and expression of his opinion cuts short the dialogue in the Platonic

manner Vickers describes. When Hythloday describes to Morton's court the justice of the Polylerites and suggests that it be implemented in England, everyone present reacts with incredulity. However, when the cardinal expresses willingness to see it experimented, the opinion of the room reverses abruptly (25).

In part to prevent the dialogue between More, Giles, and Hythloday from being similarly short-circuited, the three men converse as equals throughout Book I of *Utopia*, and Hythloday is free to evaluate his friends' proposal that he enter civil service strictly on its own merits. According to Lewis, it remains unclear throughout the debate "which of the speakers, if any, represents [the author] More's considered opinion" (*English* 169). A similarly even dialogue in *Perelandra* occurs between Ransom and Weston, apparently possessed by the Bent Oyarsa from Earth (82-83; 102), before Tinidril, the Green Lady native to Perelandra. Although the motif of temptation in an Eden-like setting incurs obvious debts to Milton and *Paradise Lost*, this dialogue, which forms "the core of the work" (Shippey 242), further demonstrates More's literary influence on Lewis. Central to the dialogue between Ransom and Weston is a commandment by Maleldil that the natives of Perelandra not sleep or dwell on a fixed land but remain on the floating islands that comprise most of the planet (*Perelandra* 63-65). Weston attempts to convince Tinidril to disobey this edict (89), thereby offering her "settled life, all command of [her] own days" (101), while Ransom attempts to persuade her to continue to obey Maleldil and to allow Maleldil to enlighten her instead (101; 99). Although Tinidril on other occasions receives wisdom directly from Maleldil (53), Maleldil does not intervene during the dialogue (90), no *eldila* are at work on Perelandra (71), and Tor, the only other member of her species, whom she calls the King (56-57), is absent throughout. Accordingly, with no higher authority figures to cut short the debate, Tinidril moderates the dialogue, seeking to make both Weston and Ransom wiser (72; 98), bidding each man speak in turn (101), adjourning each session of the dialogue as she pleases (103; 109-10), and chastising Ransom for interrupting Weston and trying to prevent him from being heard (97), a violation of Erasmus's call for respect and civility in dialogue (Remer 307).

Although Ransom's position as the point of view character casts Weston as the antagonist, Weston is certainly no straw opponent for Ransom in this dialogue. Weston offers compelling incentives for Tinidril to disobey Maleldil, asking her whether Maleldil "does not really, in his heart, mean her to show independence by going against his will, and not just accepting whatever he sends" (Shippey 243). Hilder suggests that Weston "challenges her to self-reliance [...] to supremacy [, and] to self-will [...] to leave her current apparent insignificance to become exceedingly 'great,' 'wise,' and 'courageous'"; meanwhile, he characterizes Ransom's counsel to obey Maleldil as reactionary,



"to limit [woman], disregarding the great purpose which the divine had intended for her" (56). Weston, in arguing to Tinidril, invokes the "classical feminine heroic image—that of a self-reliant, pioneering, tragedy queen superior to weaker and would-be domineering males" (72). As the dialogue progresses, Tinidril "with full intellectual capacity negotiates knowledge that is conveyed by fallen human beings" and "demonstrates significant acumen as she counters both men" (67), showing herself to be "a significant intellect" in that she "sustains the concept of multiple reasons and forms of knowledge and ignorance with ease" (68). The series of dialogues continues inconclusively (*Perelandra* 120), and an internal dialogue within Ransom as he ponders how to stop Weston parallels the external dialogue between the men (120-27). Ultimately, just as no clear "winner" emerges from More's dialogue, the dialogue between Ransom and Weston is not "won" by either man; at the prompting of Maleldil, Ransom resolves upon a physical altercation with Weston (126-27). Although Shippey decries the inconclusive outcome of the dialogue as evasive on Lewis's part (243), it preserves the controversial nature of the dialogue by refusing to hand victory in the debate to the side with which Lewis sympathizes.

Lewis was "a voracious and retentive reader" (Lobdell, *Scientifiction* 44), and "his knowledge of literature was prodigious" (White 31): his allusions in the Cosmic Trilogy span from Homer to the history of the Roman Empire to H.G. Wells. Lewis's knowledge of Renaissance literature in particular was even more thorough: Lewis was able to quote Milton's *Paradise Lost* from memory (Downing xiii). Lewis's adaptation of More's utopian ideals and literary devices in particular makes use of a thorough knowledge of early Renaissance fiction. Ultimately, the influence on Lewis of medieval and Renaissance authors such as Thomas More demonstrates that the synthesis between Lewis's literary criticism and his own fiction is not limited to incorporating Milton and *Paradise Lost*. Rather, Lewis's analysis in *English Literature* and elsewhere of numerous medieval and Renaissance authors may continue to provide further insight into his fiction.

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