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Abstract

Scholar Guest of Honor speech from Mythcon 35. Insightful study of the pattern of references to sea-voyages and the earthly paradise in Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams traces the influence of Arthurian, Celtic, and Greek legends in their writing.

Additional Keywords

Arthurian myth; Cosmology; Earthly paradise; Garden of the Hesperides; Lewis, C.S.—Symbolism; Lewis, C.S. The Last Battle; Lewis, C.S. Perelandra; Lewis, C.S. That Hideous Strength; Lewis, C.S. The Voyage of the Dawn Treader; Sea voyage; Sea-longing; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Symbolism; Tolkien, J.R.R. “Imram” (poem); Tolkien, J.R.R. The Lord of the Rings; Tolkien, J.R.R. The Silmarillion; Williams, Charles—Symbolism; Williams, Charles. Arthuriad

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“DEEP LIES THE SEA-LONGING”: INKLINGS OF HOME¹

CHARLES A. HUTTAR

WHEN ELUIN RANSOCD takes the name Fisher-King and the office of Pendragon, when England becomes Logres and a remote part of Venus becomes Avalon, we realize that the Arthurian myth has come to resonate more deeply in C.S. Lewis's creative work than it had before. The first two novels of the Ransom trilogy contain nothing of this sort. Some attribute the change to Lewis's closer association with Charles Williams, and they could be right. It may have been around the same time that Lewis requested from Williams, and received, the explanatory notes that are quoted so extensively in his commentary on Williams's Arthurian poems. Yet having identified the Arthurian element in *That Hideous Strength*, we still have only half the background.

For the Avalon-Venus connection, at any rate, has roots much farther back in Lewis's imaginative life. Let me quote the opening lines of a poem he encountered early and long admired, Milton's *Comus*.

Before the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live ensphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
Which men call earth [...].

(lines 1-6)

That last part “always reminds me,” Lewis wrote to Arthur Greeves, “of our walks over the clean hills when we look down into the Nibelheim below” (*They Stand Together* [TST] 198). Twenty-eight years later, the same pair of lines was the subject of two letters from Lewis to the *Times Literary Supplement* (“Above the Smoke”). Here in *Comus* it is the Attendant Spirit speaking, and at the end of the masque when his labors are finished he reveals more about his dwelling place:

¹ Based on the Scholar Guest of Honor address given at Mythcon XXXV, 31 July 2004.

To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky:
[...]
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree [...].
(lines 975–82)

This passage Lewis called “the best thing of all [...] so beautifully lonely and romantic” (*TST* 198).² Those golden apples (if we may follow ancient tradition in saying “apples” for oranges) lodged in Lewis’s mind, from other reading no doubt before he ever encountered Milton, and they turn up regularly in his writings. Before this letter, in fact, he had written several poems using vaguely Hesperian imagery and one that is more explicit: “I would follow, follow / Hesperus the bright, / To seek beyond the western wave / His garden of delight” (*Collected Poems* [CP] 217–18 [“Hesperus”]).³ In a somewhat later poem, reflecting Lewis’s wartime experience, the speaker longs for “the sweet dim Isle of Apples over the wide sea[']s breast” (CP 223 [“Death in Battle”]). A similar romantic longing is depicted in John’s Island vision in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, and Lewis the scholar writes of its appeal in his discussion of the garden of medieval allegory (*Allegory of Love* 74–76, 119–20). As late as 1948, when his poem “The Landing” appeared in *Punch*, Lewis could still empathize with that Faustian feeling of “Joy,” drawing one on to a satisfaction never quite to be attained. He has the speaker of the poem tell of a voyage to the Hesperides, glimpsed far off in a telescope, only to find, on reaching the island, not a golden tree but another

² The same letter reminds us, in passing, that Lewis was already familiar with the Arthurian legends (*TST* 199), and later he’s slogging through Geoffrey of Monmouth (263), but it’s myth—not history, even pseudo-history—that captivates him.

³ First published in *Spirits in Bondage* (1919). From the same collection, see also “Prologue” (CP 163); “Song of the Pilgrims” (203–5), where the longed-for gardens, however, are in the North; and “The Roads” (216: “the call of the roads is upon me, a desire [...] for the lands no foot has trod and the seas no sail has known: [...] lands to the west of the evening and east of the morning’s birth, / Where the gods unseen in their valleys green are glad at the ends of earth”). In addition, note these early poems: “Laus Mortis” (CP 236–37 [not previously published]); “Cut thy shallop from the shores asunder [...] and drift towards the West”); and two written in 1915, which have only recently come to light, “My Western Garden” and “Sonnet—to John Keats,” in Don King, “Lost but Found” 167–68, 172–73. For the dating of these poems, see King 166. King also quotes (193–94n9) Lewis’s own account, in his preface to the 1950 reissue of *Dymer*, of his Hesperian fascination, “mainly derived from Euripides, Milton, Morris, and the early Yeats.”

telescope showing yet another enticing island (CP 41–42). Later still, in *Till We Have Faces* (9), Lewis has the Fox, the epitome of rationalism, feel uncharacteristically moved by the passage from Euripides' *Hippolytus* that begins, "Take me to the apple-laden land."⁴

In all of this Lewis gives expression to that longing which made up one part of his own divided inner life during his early years.⁵ Eventually he would understand it as a hunger for one's true home beyond this life: "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world" (*Mere Christianity* 121). This outlook is one that Lewis shared with his friends J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Williams, and for them also it took the symbolic form of a fascination with the sea ("the sea-longing," in Tolkien's phrase) and unknown lands beyond it. I am not here concerned with investigating any supposed "derivation" of ideas from one man to another, or even "influence" per se (though that may come in). My theme is simply the remarkable commonality both in the way these writers worked with myths, as mythologers and not mere mythographers, and in the meanings to which their myths point; and, finally, what lessons all this may have for us.

Tolkien refers to the caldron of story, but for what happened in Lewis's mind to such Hesperidean images, picked up largely in his reading (though not exclusively literary in origin), I prefer the metaphor of a crucible or alembic. It may seem to be much the same thing, but the result is more a distillation than a soup. In classical myth the golden apples are guarded, with the help of a dragon,⁶ by the daughters of Hesperus (which is what the Greek *Hesperides* means), who dwell on an island at the farthest western reaches of the world

⁴ Myers provides the identification for this line (16), translated by Kovacs as "To the apple-bearing shore of the melodious Hesperides would I go my way" (Euripides 197).

⁵ "Such, then was my position: to care for almost nothing but the gods and heroes, the garden of the Hesperides, Launcelot and the Grail, and to believe in nothing but atoms and evolution and military service" (*Surprised* 174). In one notable instance in the early poems, in the opening section of *Spirits in Bondage* ("The Prison House"), these two sides of Lewis strove and the romantic side lost: the idea that one might "flee away / Into some other country beyond the rosy West" and thus escape "the rankling hate of God and the outworn world's decay" is dismissed as a "cheat" (CP 175 ["Ode for New Year's Day"]). A similar mood is present in "The Hills of Down" (1915): "Though / This world is drear and wan, / I dare not go / To dreaming Avalon, / Nor look what lands / May lie beyond the last / Strange sunset strands / That gleam when day is past / I' the yearning west"; but here the reason for rejection is different—such a journey would entail losing "the goodliness / Of the green hills of Down" (CP 229–30), themselves a locus for "Joy": the "clean hills" that contrast with "Nibbelheim" (*TST* 198).

⁶ In *Comus* 393–96 (Milton 196), the need for a dragon guard symbolizes the vulnerability of beauty to ravishment; cf. Lewis's commentary in *Spenser's Images of Life* 23–24.

where, in Euripides' words, a "sacred boundary" is "fixe[d]" by "the pillar held up by Atlas" (197); or rather, according to Hesiod, just outside the Ocean that surrounds the world. Hesperus, of course, whose name in Greek also means the West, is the evening star, distinct in mythology from the morning star, Phosphorus or Lucifer, though ancient astronomers recognized that they were the same;⁷ and not a star but a planet, Venus. No great leap was required, then, for Lewis in describing Venus or Perelandra to locate the golden apples there: Ransom "opened his eyes and saw a strange heraldically coloured tree loaded with yellow fruits and silver leaves. Round the base [...] was coiled a small dragon covered with scales of red gold. He recognized the garden of the Hesperides at once" (*Perelandra* 41). Having had an education much like Lewis's own, he would. Lewis was not the first to place the garden in the heavens instead of the far edge of a flat earth. Plutarch thought it was on the unseen side of the moon, even though the myths said Hercules could get there by ordinary traveling. It depends on how accessible you think the Isles of the Blest, the Elysian Fields, ought to be—for there was that identification as well, in the ancient lore. So Tennyson has Ulysses think that, by traveling west out past Gibraltar and over the open sea, "it may be we shall touch the Happy Isles" (89 ["Ulysses"]); and Dante did indeed bring him to the Earthly Paradise—but that was only the island of those not yet, but to be, blest. It is the connection with Paradise, of course, that brings us, by way of Milton's depiction of Eden where "Hesperian fables [are] true" (*Paradise Lost* 4.247-50), to the golden fruit in a hilltop garden in the newly created Narnia.⁸

But what have classical myths to do with Avalon and Elwin Ransom? Avalon and the Pendragon spring out of Celtic legend, not Greek. Still, the Irish and the Welsh have their own stories of the Happy Isles and of westward voyages in search of them. Avalon was an earthly paradise in the western seas—akin to the Greek Hesperides—before its final transformation as the place of Arthur's healing. The twelfth-century Welsh bishop and historian Geoffrey of Monmouth, whom Lewis was reading as an undergraduate at University College (*TST* 249, 263), called Avalon "Insula Pomorum," the Isle of Apples, apparently deriving the name, not unreasonably, from the Welsh *afal* 'apple'; and Geoffrey added that the island is called "Fortunate" (qtd. in Williams, "Figure" 35). Some of this may have been in Tennyson's mind when he had Arthur speak of the

island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly, but it lies,

⁷ According to Klibansky et al. (136), the earliest Greeks did not, but later they learned it from the Babylonians.

⁸ Lewis, *Magician's Nephew*, ch. 13. Cf. Christopher 68–71.

Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns,
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.
(67 ["Morte d'Arthur," lines 310–15])

True, the more immediate verbal echoes here are of Homer's *Odyssey* (4.561–68) or later Greek and Latin writings in a similar vein. In fact, the whole question of just how the Celts imaged their Other Worlds is complicated by the probability that Geoffrey was here showing off his classical learning. Nevertheless, as historian Geoffrey Ashe reminds us, the Celts "had ideas of the paradisaical west going far beyond anything Greece could offer" (262).

There is this important difference: Homer writes of the Elysian Fields, the place of the happy dead, but Avalon and other versions of the *locus amoenus* in Celtic tradition are not associated with the dead but with the deathless.⁹ At any rate, this brings us back to the Attendant Spirit's closing speech in *Comus* which describes the Hesperian Garden as one where "eternal summer dwells, / And west winds, with musky wing," and where on beds "drenche[d] with Elysian dew [...] young Adonis oft reposes," attended "sadly" by Venus, "waxing well of his deep wound" (lines 987–1001). With all this variety of literary material before us (not to mention Spenser's garden of Adonis on which Lewis the scholar had so much to say), who can possibly list whatever ingredients may have been transformed by Lewis's alchemy into "the cup-shaped land of Abhalljin, beyond the seas of Lur in Perelandra" (*That Hideous Strength* 322)?

But there is another piece of the legend we haven't yet mentioned. Ransom goes on to explain that the Pendragon Arthur sits there in the hall of King Melchisedec, along with Enoch, Elias, and Moses; "for Arthur did not die; but Our Lord took him" (322).¹⁰ The once and future king, *Rex quondam et futurus*. Let me set this in the context of Lewis's early paraphrase from Layamon's *Brut*, an expansion in Middle English verse of Geoffrey's Latin prose history. Lewis is commenting to Arthur Greeves on his current reading. In Layamon "the passing of Arthur is really more romantic than in Malory, who [...] makes Avalon a really

⁹ McCulloch 2:692. To a lesser extent, Tennyson's description also echoes a non-Elysian scene in Homer, the garden of Alcinoüs (*Odyssey* 7.110ff.). To be sure, the dead also, in some Celtic tales, went west, but their destination and the Happy Isles are distinct. Cf. Charles Williams's allusions to these tales in "Figure" 80 and "The Coming of Palomides," lines 24–27 (*Taliessin* 33).

¹⁰ Why this group? The first three of Arthur's companions are stated not to have died (Gen. 5:24; 2 Ki. 2:11; Heb. 7:3; 11:5). Although Moses' death is recorded, there are problems associated with it (Deut. 34:5–6; Jude 9), and in apocryphal tradition he too was taken to Paradise (Charlesworth 1:725, 927n1j), whence with Elias he took part in the Transfiguration (Luke 9:30–31).

existing valley where the great king is buried." (The monks of Glastonbury, we recall, claimed that theirs was the very spot [Williams, "Figure" 45]; a different etymology associates the name Avalon with glass.) Lewis continues: "Brut, however, knows better[.] 'They say he abideth in Avalon with Argante [a variant of "Morgan"] the fairest of all elves: but ever the Britons think that he will come again to help them at their need.'" This passage sparked Lewis's imagination; "a great deal" of it, he tells Greeves, he "copied in a poem rejected by Heinemann" (*TST* 248). That poem is now lost,¹¹ and we cannot know whether it included Arthur's healing in Avalon, which appears in the *Brut* a few lines before the passage that Lewis paraphrased (Layamon 254) and to which Tennyson gave such prominence. Arthur's continued life and promised return may be matters of legend—what "the Britons think"—but they are imaginatively real to Lewis. For him, as in *Brut* and the Irish legends, Avalon is not the kingdom of dead heroes, the Greek Elysium, but, like Milton's Hesperides, the abode of those who are no longer in the world we know but have not died.

Lewis adds another twist, merging not only Celtic and classical mythology (and from that reference to "Nibbelheim" we know that the Norse was in his mind, too) but also Hebrew: the names of those mysteriously "translated" without death. Exactly where they are only two or three know, presumably instructed by the Oyarses,¹² for Perelandra is large and "Aphallin" is a "distant island which the descendants of Tor and Tinidril will not find for a hundred centuries" (*That Hideous Strength* 441).

Two phrases in Ransom's description invite further exploration, "beyond the seas" and "Our Lord took him." For the first we will turn now to our other two writers. One thing that Tolkien and Williams have in common is a great interest in symbolic geography. Williams's anthropomorphic map of Europe is well known.¹³ The map Tolkien imagined is less allegorical but more extensive.¹⁴ In both, the most highly privileged direction is west. The symbolic significance of the setting sun is deeply wrought in our culture. To the west the sun still shines, when it has set for us. The defeated Trojans went west to found a new nation; the Greeks called Italy Hesperia, and the Romans gave the same

¹¹ None of the recently discovered early poems, from a manuscript of c. 1917 (King, "Lost but Found" 195–96n15), fits Lewis's description. The letter to Greeves that mentions this poem was written in 1919, only weeks before *Spirits in Bondage* was published. Perhaps the poem was one that Lewis submitted at the publisher's request to replace others being dropped from the collection (Hooper 141; Lewis, Letters 92).

¹² Merlin: "In my college it was thought that only two men in the world knew this" (*That Hideous Strength* 322).

¹³ *Taliessin*, end papers. Reprinted in King, *Pattern* 27.

¹⁴ Lobdell devotes a chapter to exploring the significance of all the directions in Tolkien's geography (71–93).

name to Spain. Bishop Berkeley foresaw "empire" taking its course westward; Horace Greeley echoed him in his advice to ambitious youth. West is the direction that Gondorians face in "a moment of silence" before a meal, looking "towards Númenor that was, and beyond to Elvenhome that is, and to that which is beyond Elvenhome and will ever be" (*Lord of the Rings* [LotR] IV:5 661). The West is where "the true hope of the Noldor" lies, promised to come "from the Sea" (*Silmarillion* [Sil] 125, 240).

But for Tolkien (and, as we shall see, for Williams too), the western sea has an ambiguous meaning, inviting but potentially sinister. When Legolas, born and raised in the forest, first hears seagulls crying, the effect takes him by surprise, yet he finds it natural. He suddenly recognizes, perhaps for the first time, where his true home is. "[D]eep in the hearts of all my kindred lies the sea-longing" (LotR V:9 855), the reason being that the sea is the path to Elvenhome.¹⁵ Early in the fourth millennium of the Third Age, Shire-dwellers begin to notice Elves passing westward toward the Grey Havens. "'They are sailing, sailing, sailing over the Sea, they are going into the West and leaving us,' said Sam, half chanting the words, shaking his head sadly and solemnly" (LotR I:2 44); but others "sought the Havens long ago" (II:3 276). Frodo is surprised to encounter Gildor Inglorion and his companions, because "not many now remain in Middle-earth, east of the Great Sea"; the Elf explains that they are at last going home from "Exile" (I:3 78-79). Soon after, Frodo dreams, as he has before, of hearing "the Sea far-off; a sound he had never heard in waking life," and he is not, as before, "troubled," but filled with "a great desire" (I:5 106). A similar desire long before impelled Bilbo as a poet, singing (though without mentioning the sea) of "the hidden paths that run / Towards the Moon or to the Sun" (I:3 76).¹⁶ All these

¹⁵ Tolkien is here refashioning motifs that had been part of his myth from its earliest stages. In a manuscript dating c. 1917 he tells how Tuor encounters seagulls and then becomes "the first of Men to reach the Sea and look upon it and know the desire it brings" (*Book of Lost Tales* 2:151). The passage is repeated with only minor changes in a 1951 retelling of the story (*Unfinished Tales* 24–25); see also *Sil* 238.

¹⁶ Moon and Sun are a significant part of this symbolism. Tuor's first sight of the sea (see n. 15) occurs just at sunset, and in succeeding days "on quiet evenings when the sun went down beyond the edge of the sea [his longing] grew to a fierce desire" (*Book of Lost Tales* 2:152). Tuor's son Eärendil inherited his "insatiable sea-longing" (Tolkien, *Letters* 386) and, in the earliest form of his adventures, a poem written in 1914 or earlier, sets forth on his journey from the western shores of Middle-earth "down the sunlit breath of Day's fiery Death" (*Book of Lost Tales* 2:268n).

In the revision of the tale of Tuor, the wording is a little different: "beyond the rim of the world" (*Unfinished Tales* 24–25). The implications are fleshed out in a story Tolkien made up for his sons while on a seaside holiday in 1925 (on the east coast of England, however, not the west; hence the shift from sunset to moonrise). In the story, from a "house that looked right out over the waves to nowhere" one can see, at moonrise, "the silver path across the

quotations are from *The Fellowship of the Ring*; in this way Tolkien, early in his tale, points forward to the end when two Ring-bearers will join Gandalf and Elves in sailing from the Havens.

The sea may be a path but it is also a barrier: Galadriel's voice is both "sad and sweet" when, parting from the Nine Walkers, she sings of the "Sundering Seas" that divide her from the longed-for land "beyond the Sun, beyond the Moon" (*LotR* II:8 363). "Darkness lies on the foaming waves," and she feels the way is "lost" (II:8 368-69). It is a barrier that betokens, in Tolkien's myth, something akin to the Expulsion from Eden. True, in the Third Age only a minority of the elder race remain exiled in Middle-earth. Most of the Elves have been taken long since to Valinor or Tol Eressëa. Yet when they first came down to the sea, long after their "awakening," it filled them with fear until, by the music of the god Ulmo, their fear was transformed to desire (*Sil* 54, 57). Even the Ainur could be troubled with "great unquiet" because of "the roaring of the sea"; yet, to underscore the ambiguity, "it is said by the Eldar that in water there lives yet the echo of the Music of the Ainur more than in any substance else" (19). So desire is uppermost; but to fulfill it is not within one's own power. Valinor has become "hidden" and Eressëa is guarded by Enchanted Isles and Shadowy Seas which defeat even Eärendil without the Silmaril's protection (246-48).

Tol Eressëa is the Lonely Isle, so called because it is rooted in the sea within sight of the Blessed Realm, Valinor, but can never come there. Nothing fades or withers in Valinor (*Sil* 38), but Eressëa too is a place of blessing: itself the object of longing for Legolas, who in verse hears "sweet [...] voices in the Lost Isle calling, / [...] / Where the leaves fall not" (*LotR* VI:4 935), an indication for Tolkien of timelessness. Its chief city, on the shore facing west toward Valinor, is called Avallónë (*Sil* 260), a name having the same root as Valar, but on the printed page inevitably striking the reader first as a variant on Avalon.¹⁷ And it is here that, by Arwen's gift, Frodo is sent "until all [his] wounds and weariness are

waters that is the way to places at the edge of the world and beyond, for those that can walk on it" (*Roverandom* 8). An enchanted toy dog is carried by a seagull "along the moon's path [...] straight from the shore to the dark edge of nowhere" (19) and then past the flat world's edge, "where waterfalls [...] dropped straight into space" (21), and on to the moon. It is pure whimsy, nursery stuff, and yet recognizably cut from the same cloth as the Middle-earth cosmology about which Tolkien took so much greater pains. In fact, he finds a place even in this tale for a glimpse of the "Mountains of Elvenhome" (74). He also tells of a valley where golden apples grow (49).

¹⁷ In versions of Tolkien's myth that did not find their way into print during his lifetime, Avallón (which is a common spelling found in Irish legends) is also a name given to Eressëa itself (Tolkien, *Peoples* 144). On the derivation from Valar: Tolkien, *Morgoth's Ring* 175n. Tolkien also at one time played with using Avallón as a name for Númenor, but rejected it (*Return of the Shadow* 215).

healed" (*LotR* VI:6 953). Nor is this the only association of healing with the Undying Lands. The *Akallabêth* relates how Isildur was grievously wounded in rescuing a fruit from the tree Nimloth that had come from Eressëa, lay for months near death, and was quickly healed once the seed sprouted and came into leaf (*Sil* 273). Several times in *The Lord of the Rings* we encounter the healing herb *athelas*. Of its origin we are told only that "the Men of the West brought [it] to Middle-earth" (*LotR* I:12 193). It seems reasonable to suppose, however, that it came originally from Valinor,¹⁸ and this guess is supported, I believe, by the account given of its use in the Houses of Healing in Minas Tirith. When Aragorn "cast the leaves into the bowls of steaming water [...] the fragrance [...] was like a memory of dewy mornings of unshadowed sun in some land of which the fair world in Spring is itself but a fleeting memory" (*LotR* V:8 847). I am reminded of lines by a great Catholic poet that may well have come to Tolkien's attention in the early years of his mythmaking. He returned to Oxford after the war in the same year, 1918, that the university press there—his employer—issued the first edition of Gerard Manley Hopkins's poetry, in which the use of Old English verse rhythms, in particular, could have aroused Tolkien's interest. "Nothing is so beautiful as Spring," Hopkins writes, and after seven more lines of luscious description he asks, "What is all this juice and all this joy? / A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning / In Eden garden" (142 ["Spring"]). Valinor is in this respect (though not, of course, in relation to humankind) Tolkien's version of the Earthly Paradise.

To return to Frodo's journey to Eressëa: he is one of only a few mortals who, by special dispensation, were ever permitted to set foot in the blessed lands. One other did so without permission, the renegade king Ar-Pharazôn the Golden, in prideful folly breaking the Ban that the Valar had explicitly pronounced. To summarize how that came about:¹⁹ after the First Age a new home was raised up in the great western ocean to reward the races of Men who had remained faithful, the Edain. It was called variously Númenor, the Land of Gift, and Westernesse. They became great mariners, masters of the ocean, and on a clear day those with keen eyes might see Eressëa, "easternmost of the Undying Lands" (*Sil* 263). They were forbidden by the Ban, however, to sail west to within sight of Valinor, which "in those days [...] still remained in the world visible" (262). Númenor flourished for more than thirty centuries but finally, dreaming of an even greater prosperity beyond the scope of mortals, arrogantly defied the Ban. The king's trespass brought about a massive upheaval of the sea that overwhelmed Númenor, from which only a faithful few escaped to found the

¹⁸ Westernesse came into being only at the beginning of the Second Age, and Elves from Eressëa "brought to [it] [...] herbs of great virtue" (*Sil* 263).

¹⁹ See the "Akallabêth: The Downfall of Númenor," in *Sil* 259–82.

line of Western kings in Middle-earth. The sea thus demonstrated that, for those whose *desires* were flawed, the more appropriate response toward it would be, indeed, *fear*. An even greater effect of this cataclysm was that the world itself, originally flat in Tolkien's mythical cosmogony, was turned into a globe and the Blessed Realm made no longer accessible by any ordinary journeying. Unless specially favored by the Valar, those who sailed west far enough simply came back to Middle-earth.

Now some details about the names. In "The Notion Club Papers," composed around 1946, Tolkien gives an etymology for Númenor: "It means Westernesse and is composed of *nūme* 'west' and *nōre* 'folk' or 'country'"; and he explains further that "the ancient English was *Westfolde*, *Hesperia*" (*Sauron Defeated* 305, 303). It is clear from this that Tolkien, like Lewis, was very much alive to the resonances between his created myth and those of other cultures. The drowned Númenor came to be called, by those who escaped, *Atalantë*, meaning 'the Ruin'—derived, Tolkien explains, from one of his invented languages and only "by chance" (his phrase) resembling the name in Greek legend for the drowned civilization that gives the Atlantic Ocean its name (*Peoples* 158).²⁰ Yet as he acknowledges elsewhere, the legend of Atlantis is firmly implanted in racial memory and has "profoundly affected the imagination of peoples of Europe with westward-shores" (*Letters* 303).

All this leads us to examine another bit of Tolkien's writing, one entirely outside the Middle-earth history yet reflecting its cosmology. In 1955 he published a poem of 132 lines entitled "Imram" (rpt. in *Sauron Defeated* 296–99). But this was a reworking of something he had composed nearly ten years before, and at that time it was embedded in a book, quickly written but never finished, in which Tolkien was working his way toward the account of the destruction of Númenor that was published in *The Silmarillion*. The book is "The Notion Club Papers," and the poem was called, in its first version, "The Ballad of St. Brendan's Death" (*Sauron Defeated* 261–64, 295).

The immram (the word means 'voyage') is one of the classic types of Old Irish story, narrating a marvelous ocean journey to wondrous islands such as Tír na nÓg, the Land of Youth. Most of the extant examples reflect a combination of pagan and Christian ideas. The most famous is one that takes motifs from earlier immrama and attaches them to the figure of St. Brendan, a sixth-century Irish abbot already known for his travels. The Latin *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* achieved great popularity, being circulated and translated all over Europe and surviving today in well over 100 manuscripts. This story, instead of giving an

²⁰ For translation "the Ruin": Tolkien, *Lost Road* 14. For etymology and alternative translations, all by Tolkien, see *Lost Road* 8, 354, 390.

account of Brendan's actual journeys, does what is not uncommon in medieval hagiography: it creates a fantastic legend. Brendan and seventeen companions journey by ship for seven years, miraculously sustained through many perils and visiting on the way sites ranging from the Island of Delights to the environs of Hell, until finally they pass through a dense darkness to reach the Land of Promise of the Saints. After forty days there, they are told to return home and live out their lives faithfully.

The island of St. Brendan became a standard feature for medieval cartographers. A globe made in 1492 (so much for the popular notion that before Columbus everyone was a flat-worlder) shows a land mass stretching from the western tip of Africa eastward to China, with various islands offshore on either end. Separating those two ends is a large ocean, and in the middle of that—much like Dante's Mount Purgatory—is an island labeled "Insula de Santi Branden."²¹ It rises in splendid isolation just as, in some accounts, the highest bit of Atlantis or the holy mountain of Númenor, Meneltarma (*Sil* 281), might be seen protruding above the waves.²²

Adventures of this sort helped to shape the story of Eärendil in its early development, when the emphasis was still wholly on the Quenya meaning of his name, 'sea-lover.' Tolkien's own love for the sea is evident in his drawings and paintings.²³ Although his first piece of writing about Eärendil was a poem entitled "The Voyage of Éarendel the Evening Star" (*Book of Lost Tales* 2:267), a title that reflects the Old English source for the name, he used the astronomical reference as a metaphor.²⁴ Almost at once, however, he made it literal: in quite early notes for the story, after reaching "the lip of the world" the hero "sets sail upon the sky" (2:261). In *The Silmarillion* he appears in the heavens at both morning and evening (*Sil* 250), "a herald star," explicitly Venus (*Letters* 385)—that is, Hesperus. The earlier sketch deals mainly with Eärendil's sea journeys, which include fantastic adventures not unlike those of St. Brendan and specific geographical references ranging from Greenland to the Mediterranean.

Thirty years later, Tolkien returns to Brendan's story and writes his own "Imram," but much briefer than the medieval tale, and cast in verse. He uses a few of the details in the *Navigatio* but omits much and, most significantly, adapts the story to his larger interests. Instead of proceeding in chronological order from

²¹ See the illustration in Delumeau 69.

²² See the drawing by Bonnie GoodKnight on the cover of *Mythlore* 4.2 (Dec. 1976) and the description of its scenes on p. 2.

²³ See Hammond and Scull 24–25, 46–47 and Carpenter 70.

²⁴ Other Eärendil poems that reflect Tolkien's love of the sea but do not introduce the fantastic element are the two found in his talk "A Secret Vice" 216–17. They are descriptive, not narrative. The second ends with "the road going on for ever [...] to havens in the West." On the name's etymology see Tolkien, *Letters* 150n.

the voyage's inception to its end, Tolkien begins with Brendan's return to Ireland, where he is asked to tell (I quote from the early version on pages 261-264 of *Sauron Defeated*)

of islands by deep spells beguiled
where dwell the Elven-kind:
in seven long years the road to Heaven
or the Living Land did you find?²⁵
(lines 17–20)

In reply he tells not of all his wanderings but of the only three things he remembers: a cloud, a tree, and a star. Under the cloud rises "a shoreless mountain" (34) on which is a "Tower of Doom."

Tall as a column in High Heaven's hall,
its feet were deep as Hell;
grounded in chasms the waters drowned
and buried long ago,
it stands, I ween, in forgotten lands
where the kings of kings lie low.
(44, 47–52)

The travelers arrive next at a "hollow isle" (89) resembling a "green cup" (69), in which stands

a tree more fair than ever I deemed
might climb in Paradise:
its foot was like a great tower's root,
its height beyond men's eyes;
(73–76)

There are resonances here of the Tree of Life of Judeo-Christian tradition and the world-tree of Norse myth, Yggdrasil. Brendan mistakenly supposes this is the end of the voyaging, "for no return / we hoped, but there to stay" (87–88). Then Brendan hears a musical voice, neither human nor angelic, and thinks,

²⁵ Worth noticing in this and subsequent quotations is the internal rhyming in the first and last feet of the longer lines.

maybe [...] a third
fair kindred in the world yet lingers
beyond the foundered land.
Yet steep are the seas and the waters deep
beyond the White-tree Strand.
(100–04)

If we recall Tolkien's myth in which the Elves are a "kindred" between Valar and Men, these lines clearly suggest Elvenhome. Of the third memory, the star, Brendan says, "I saw it, high and far, / at the parting of the ways, / a light on the edge of the Outer Night" (109–11)—Christopher Tolkien sees here an allusion to the apotheosis of Eärendil (*Sauron Defeated* 292n80)—

where the round world plunges steeply down,
but on the old road goes,
as an unseen bridge that on arches runs
to coasts that no man knows.
(lines 113–16)

Brendan remembers "the breath as sweet and keen as death / that was borne upon the breeze" from those coasts (123–24), but his knowledge ends there. The poem closes with Brendan's death, his final "journey" (in stark contrast to the one reported) "whence no ship returns" (139).

Tolkien here sets in a framework drawn from the Primary World (though admittedly that world's legends) ideas that we find also in his Secondary World writings: after the fall of Númenor "those that sailed furthest set but a girdle about the Earth and returned [saying]: 'All roads are now bent.' [...] [Y]et the Eldar were permitted still to depart and to come to the Ancient West and to Avallónë, if they would. Therefore [...] a Straight Road must still be, for those that were permitted to find it [...] a mighty bridge invisible" (*Sil* 281–82).²⁶ He thus stakes a larger claim for the universality of these ideas. I will explore this further, but three things come first: two brief digressions, and then we must consider the sea motif in the work of Charles Williams.

1) Tolkien not only employed the immrama for narrative purposes but clearly felt a kinship with the heroes of those adventures; in his poem "Mythopoeia" he takes them as a model for his own aspirations as a "legend-maker" (line 91). First he praises their vision and courage:

²⁶ See the upper right medallion in the cover art referred to in n. 22.

Blessed are the men of Noah's race that build
their little arks, though frail and poorly filled,
and steer through winds contrary towards a wraith,
a rumour of a harbour guessed by faith.

(87–90)

Then he aligns himself with them:

I would be with the mariners of the deep
That cut their slender planks on mountains steep
and voyage upon a vague and wandering quest,
for some have passed beyond the fabled West.

(109–12)

2) I find an interesting parallel in Tolkien's and Lewis's way of using inherited myths. In the Notion Club meeting at which the Brendan poem was read there follow explicit remarks on how this differs from the *Navigatio*, which Tolkien has one of his characters find "dull and disappointing," having a "magnificent theme" but no "glimmer of a perception" of its import (*Sauron Defeated* 265). Tolkien has taken it as his task to reveal the deeper meaning in what for his eleventh-century predecessor was only shallowly didactic entertainment. This seems to me very similar to what Lewis thought of Apuleius's telling of the Cupid and Psyche myth, and his own reworking in *Till We Have Faces*. To take up into this digression the third of our triumvirate, Charles Williams, we remember his comment about the Victorian poets who told the Grail story, that none of them "had the full capacity of the mythical imagination" (Williams, "Malory" 187). As for the early Arthurian romances, in them "the greater interpretations were not imagined" (191). Indeed, only Malory presented "the whole grand Myth—or at least much of it," and even he "does not seem altogether to have understood" all the meaning that he suggests (187).²⁷ And we can see Williams, in his poetry, altering his predecessors so as to improve, according to his lights, on the myth.²⁸

We turn now to the symbolic meaning of the sea and the West for Williams. Like Tolkien, he found symbolic meaning in geography, across the whole sweep of Europe from east to west and beyond. For him, it was a Europe of several centuries ago; for Tolkien, many centuries. We may start with his own

²⁷ There is a hint of this view in Merlin's warning to Taliessin: "[F]ortunate the poet who endures / to measure in his mind the distance even to Carbonek" ("The Calling of Taliessin," in *Region* 12).

²⁸ For example, in the immediate onset of Lancelot's madness: see Williams, "Malory" 190, and Lewis, "Williams" 158–61.

succinct statement in the unfinished book on Arthur that Lewis called a *Torso*: "eastward from Logres" (i.e., Arthur's Britain) is the Christian world of the Empire; "westward from Logres [...] is the mythical [...] the mysterious forest of Broceliande" and "the seas on which the ship of Solomon is to sail; beyond them is Sarras" (Williams, "Figure," 80–81). The first of these westward places can be located on a real map. In Arthur's time, if we may put it that way, Brocéliande was a vast forest in the northwest corner of France. In legend, it was famous for being enchanted. Most of it has been cleared, and what is left today is called something else; the name "Brocéliande" survives mainly, judging by the Internet, in the efforts of the tourist industry in Brittany to impart a different sort of enchantment. We can understand why Tolkien changed from that name to Beleriand for a northwest region looking out on the great western ocean:²⁹ as with Avalon, he moved in the direction of making his borrowing less obvious (and as we have seen, in the case of Atlantis, he denied any borrowing at all). But to return to Williams: for him the enchanted medieval forest represented the archetypal dark wood found in Dante, Spenser, Milton's *Comus*, and elsewhere, so he took the name Broceliande and greatly expanded its reference.

Broceliande is somewhere round Cornwall and Devon, to the west of Logres. It is regarded both as a forest and as a sea—a sea-wood; in this sense it joins the sea of the antipodes which lies among its roots. Carbonek is beyond it: or at least beyond a certain part of it; [then comes] the full open sea, beyond which is Sarras. (Williams, "Notes" 179)³⁰

Byzantium, the capital and center of the Empire, is the place of order; Broceliande, the "unpathed" (*Taliessin* 24 ["Bors to Elayne: The Fish of Broceliande"]) western forest, the place of potentiality, energy, and creativity. Logres, to thrive, needs both;³¹ indeed, a major theme in Williams's cycle is the coinherence of these two principles. But Broceliande is by no means a safe place; its potentiality is for both good and evil. Entering it or even going alongside it is a risky thing: "Dangerous to men is the wood of Broceliande" (*Region* 9 ["The Calling of Taliessin"]). It holds the possibility of enrichment, but also of loss; of salvation—but also of perdition (Lewis, "Williams" 172–73). "[T]hrough Broceliande runs the road from earth to heaven"—but also the road to P'o-Lu and hell (99). Carbonek, where the Grail and other sacred objects are kept, is

²⁹ *Lays* 160, 169. All this was long before Tolkien and Williams became acquainted.

³⁰ Lewis included a condensed version of this passage in his commentary ("Williams" 99).

³¹ Cf. Merlin's prediction "that soon / the Empire and Broceliande shall meet in Logres" (*Region* 12 ["The Calling of Taliessin"]).

beyond a certain part of it,"³² but equally Broceliande merges into the ocean which wraps around the earth and which, for Williams as for Tolkien, carries ambivalent significance. On the negative side, the sea is occupied far in the East by the headless emperor and the octopods' grasping tentacles (Williams, *Region* 3–4 ["Prelude"]), and Taliessin, traveling even alongside the western forest, can see through the woods "the antipodean ocean [...] thrusting" into nearby "inlets" under "a dark rose of sunset" (9 ["The Calling of Taliessin"]). Yet in the same poem Taliessin has a glimpse of Merlin's hopeful vision of a time when "the largesse of exchange" is victorious "and the sea of Broceliande enfolds the Empire" (17). This is not a certain prophecy, however; "purpose" may "fail" (as, in the event, it does, through the Dolorous Stroke, Mordred's treachery, and so on) and Galahad and his companions will be left to take "*spiritual* roads / [...]" westward through the trees / of Broceliande" (19, my emphasis).

For as in Tolkien, the roads become bent and there is no longer a straight path to Valinor—and here we pick up the thread that I left hanging three paragraphs back—and as in Lewis "Arthur did not die; but Our Lord took him" to Avalon in Perelandra, so in Williams Sarra has been taken out of this world and can be reached only by supernatural means. It is across the western ocean—here Williams again is perfecting the myth, for in medieval tradition Sarra was a city "on the borders of Egypt" (*Figure* 81); in Malory, ruled by a tyrant who maltreats the Grail-seekers (2:1033). Williams reshapes it into an inaccessible island of granite, located not only beyond the sea but "beyond the sun" (*Region* 15), also called "the land of the Trinity" and "the land of the perichoresis [i.e., the Coinherence]" (39 ["The Founding of the Company"]). At one stage he pondered furnishing it with the world-tree of Norse myth, Yggdrasil (qtd. by Ridler 170). From its "unseen shores" blows a wind, perhaps to be interpreted as the Holy Spirit, and to it against the wind are carried (in "The Last Voyage") the three lords, Galahad, Percivale, and Bors, and the body of Blanchefleur, in a ship driven not by sail or rowers but by an "infinite flight of doves," perhaps also the Holy Spirit; at any rate, "a new-ghosted power" (Williams, *Taliessin* 85 ["The Last Voyage"]).³³ Lewis comments: "we are witnessing apotheosis" ("Williams" 179).³⁴

³² In notes from c. 1930, Williams identifies "Avilion" as "the orchards of Carbonek" ("Notes" 178).

³³ Lewis quotes the poet's own note identifying the doves as "all that was [left of] Logres and the Empire" ("Williams" 178).

³⁴ In a 1942 book review Williams contrasts the "pagan" fate of Tristan and Isolde, at "rest" in the "light and sound and darkness of the sea" (Swinburne's phrase), with the riding of Galahad in "the ship that runs over the sea" ("Chances" 185). A similar contrast may be present in Williams's mind in his earliest novel, *Shadows of Ecstasy*. Here snatches of poetry about the sea's mysterious transformative power combine in the penultimate paragraph of the book, in a chapter entitled "Sea-change." One is from *The Tempest*, the other from

Another poem, "The Prayers of the Pope," tells how they reach Sarras, "the land of the Trinity [...] beyond the summer stars" in "deep heaven" (*Region* 58 ["The Prayers of the Pope"]), and lie entranced for "a year and a day," during which the tentacles become more aggressive until, caught and held by the roots of Broceliande, they and the headless emperor are made "helpless" (59). But "the deep impassable Trinity in the land of the Trinity" "utter[s] unsearchable bliss" (60); hell is harrowed, even hell must confess and praise God,³⁵ and "the Empire / revive[s] in a live hope of the Sacred City" (61). Williams's myth ends, then, on a note reminiscent of the Book of Revelation.

What is there parallel to this in Tolkien and Lewis? I will attempt here only a partial answer, addressing not the larger issue of a providential end to history but only that of the fate of individuals. In the Arthurian myth as Williams inherited it, Galahad and Percivale die in Sarras and are buried there, and Bors returns to his family life in Logres. Having altered the conception of Sarras, Williams wisely ignores this part of the story except to speak of Galahad's "hiding" (*Region* 61). Arthur, tradition says, will return to Britain when he is healed, and when he is needed. There is no idea that Ransom, who is without family, will return: he has come to his true home. Frodo's time in Eressëa is only a "sojourn" (Tolkien, *Letters* 386n), and he will "'die' [...] and leave the world," though he "cannot [like Arthur] return to mortal earth" (198–99). Valinor is a place for other created beings but not for the second Children of Ilúvatar. They (and let us not forget that the human race includes hobbits) have a different destiny, linked to their gift of mortality: they "are not bound to [this world], and depart soon whither the Elves know not" (*Sil* 42). The purpose of Ilúvatar's gift was "that the hearts of Men should seek beyond the world and should find no rest therein" (41).³⁶ But the mystery that surrounds their destiny becomes an

Lycidas, and they express sentiments corresponding roughly to the fates of Tristan and Galahad, respectively. But these patterns of imagery deserve fuller attention in another study.

³⁵ "[L]et hell also confess thee, / bless thee, praise thee, and magnify thee for ever." This liturgical formula almost at the end of *The Region of the Summer Stars* (60) nicely (but more affirmatively) balances one near the beginning of *Taliessin through Logres* (13, in "The Vision of the Empire"):

if there be wit in the rolling mass of waters,
if any regimen in marshes beyond P'o-lu,
if any measurement among the headless places,
bless him, praise him, magnify him for ever.

³⁶ Cf. George Herbert, "The Pulley" (Herbert 159–60), and the famous prayer that opens Augustine's *Confessions*, "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they can find peace in you." It is quite a different explanation for the "gift of death" from that offered by William Morris: "lest we weary of life" (385).

occasion of temptation. The kings of Númenor, unwilling to live by trust rather than control, “murmur[ed] [...] against the doom of Men” to “die and go we know not whither” (264).³⁷ Death, however, is not the end for the Atani, humankind;³⁸ they are to have a part to play in the “Second Music” (42). This element in Tolkien’s mythology hints at the Christian doctrine of resurrection. To say it more explicitly would have been an anachronism in his pre-Christian Secondary World.

I have saved Reepicheep for last. I am a little puzzled by the map imagined in Lewis’s immram—a journey to the utter East, not West. One guess might be that all through his boyhood in the environs of Belfast, the sea was in the direction of the rising, not the setting, sun, and this became so fixed in his imagination that when he first devised the geography of Narnia he gave it that orientation;³⁹ by the time the *Dawn Treader* set sail, it was too late to change. On a sphere, of course, it may amount to the same thing (as John learned in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*); but Lewis’s map is not a globe, and his mariners worry about falling over the edge if they go too far.

The sea that is crossed in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, like those of Tolkien and Williams, is full of dangers.⁴⁰ These are past, however, when we reach the final quarter of the book, the last four of sixteen chapters. It begins with the sailors’ awareness of “new constellations which no one had ever seen in Narnia” or “perhaps [...] no living eye had seen at all” (173); already they have gone beyond the known world. The last island that they reach, they learn, is “the beginning of the end” of the world (184). The sea grows calm, there is no wind, yet they are carried along as if by magic (though there is a “natural” explanation, a rapid current only forty feet wide [211]). For a time they can watch undersea people (a common feature in the Irish otherworld journeys—and one that Tolkien also makes use of [*Roverandom* 59–62]). The seawater, they discover, is sweet, rich, and nourishing—indeed, a fountain of youth (*Voyage* 210). Years before, Lewis had recorded the excitement he felt on starting to read William Morris’s romance *The Well at the World’s End* (*TST* 87), though eventually he found it disappointing and wondered whether one could possibly invent a narrative that would do full justice to the suggestiveness of Morris’s title (“On Stories” 103–4). Perhaps this

³⁷ Note the echoes of Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* 3.1.118.

³⁸ Gwentyth Hood finds in Aragorn’s last words to Arwen—that beyond “the circles of the world [...] is more than memory” (*LotR* App.A 1038)—a hint of “something greater” in store for humans (139–40).

³⁹ Despite the fact that *Cair*, as in Cair Paravel, is of Welsh origin and Wales looks west. Furthermore, the almost universal symbolism of the westward odyssey was likewise embedded in Lewis’s imagination, as we have seen from his early poetry.

⁴⁰ See Khoddam 47–48. Also noted here (42), as well as in Christopher (74–76), is the garden in chapter 7 of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (101) where Eustace is healed.

chapter of the *Voyage* is his attempt. The water, moreover, seems to them "drinkable light" (206), and though the sun itself keeps growing many times brighter, the drink enables them to look directly into it. Lewis here borrows a motif from Dante's journey through Paradise.⁴¹ Finally, after many days passing through this idyllic region, they come near the edge of the world. Here they are able to look "behind the sun"⁴² and see a range of unearthly mountains, high yet "warm and green" and sending a breeze laden with fragrance and music (218). They are "seeing beyond the End of the World into Aslan's country." Reepicheep gets into his coracle, is carried up over a wave by a power clearly not his own, comes "safe to Aslan's country and is alive there to this day" (219). He has been, like Enoch and Elias, "translated" without dying (Downing 137).

In *The Last Battle* Lewis resolves the difficulty about directions by having "Aslan's country" turn out to be "a great chain of mountains which ringed round the whole world" (181).⁴³ At the close of his Ring narrative, Tolkien takes a more radical step. Frodo sails on "the High Sea [...] into the West" until, as for Brendan, "sweet fragrance" and music are borne "over the water," and then he catches sight of "white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise" (*LotR* VI:9 1007, my emphasis).⁴⁴ Apparently once one has come, by traveling west, to the "Straight Road" and the "bridge invisible," the directional symbolism of our Primary World with all its resonances of life and death is superseded.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Lewis acknowledges a debt also to descriptions in the Grail romances (Downing 137).

⁴² This phrase echoes the words of one of the three lords found sleeping in chapter 13 (178, 182). The idea of locating a paradisaical world behind the sun goes back to ancient times: see, for example, Charlesworth 1:168 (2 Enoch 42:4 and note). It is used also by Williams (*Region* 15) and Tolkien (*LotR* II:8 363; see also n.45 below).

⁴³ Joe R. Christopher examines this issue in detail (76–79) and speculates whether Lewis's "imaginative picture [has] shifted" (77) or is simply "inconsistent[t]" (78).

⁴⁴ My thanks to Alison Baird for calling this to my attention, in a conversation following the presentation at Mythcon.

⁴⁵ When Frodo is about to leave for the Havens he again sings Bilbo's song; this time the "hidden paths" run not "towards the Moon or to the Sun" (*LotR* I:3 76) but "West of the Moon, East of the Sun" (VI:9 1005)—another fanciful derangement of earthbound directional language. (Tolkien is playing here with the title of a well-known Norwegian folktale. He had used the phrase similarly in a 1915 poem describing Valinor [*Book of Lost Tales* 2:271–72]. Cf. n. 42 above.) Shippey has observed how other phrases in the same stanza, "new road" and "secret gate," take on special meaning in the light of Frodo's imminent sea journey (191). The "new road" is new to Frodo, but it is really the "old road" (to use the phrase from "Imram," line 111), which has become inaccessible to ordinary mariners. Immediately after Frodo's singing, another song is heard, "A! Elbereth Gilthoniel," and Gildor and his Elf companions arrive. This sequence parallels the previous song scene in Book I (*LotR* I:3 78).

Perhaps the imagery of “utter East” is best after all, for sunset and evening star (to borrow Tennyson’s phrase) speak of death but the sunrise (as John Donne once pointed out) images the resurrection.⁴⁶ The idea of resurrection is certainly present in the next scene in the *Voyage*, when the children meet Aslan as a lamb (see the last chapter of John’s gospel) and he assures them that “there is a way into [his] country” from their world, too; one that “lies across a river.⁴⁷ But do not fear that, for I am the great Bridge Builder” (221). And in *The Last Battle*, when the children having crossed that symbolic river go farther into the “real world” of which “our own world [...] is only a shadow or copy” (170), the Unicorn speaks for them all: “I have come home at last!” (172).

It was Tolkien who identified as a key ingredient in fairy-tales “the Consolation of the Happy Ending [...] a fleeting glimpse of Joy [...] beyond the walls of the world” (“On Fairy-Stories” 81). But then he proceeded to the next question one naturally asks: “Is it true?” (83). Can resurrection happen? Can one reach Paradise? He promptly answered that “such joy has the very taste of primary truth” (84). And that, which he called *evangelium*, he believed to be the best news of all.

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⁴⁶ “Crossing the Bar” (Tennyson 753); “A Hymne to God my God, in My Sicknesse” (Donne 67). See also Khoddam, 47, linking the imagery of glass in this scene with that in Revelation.

⁴⁷ Compare the imagery in the final chapter of Lewis’s *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, and the long tradition in hymnody and devotional writing of spiritualizing the story of Israel crossing the Jordan.

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