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The Thematic Organization Of Spirits in Bondage

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The Thematic Organization Of *Spirits in Bondage*

**Abstract**
Detailed examination of each poem in *Spirits in Bondage*, using the young poet’s “Matter = Nature = Satan” equation (as expressed in letters to his friend Arthur Greeves) to explore the underlying themes of Lewis’s not just pre-conversion, but pre-theism “cycle of lyrics.” The contrast between beauty and evil, irreconcilable in this stage of Lewis’s theological development, is shown to be a major concern in this work, heavily influenced by his World War I experiences. An appendix details the matter of the poems rejected and replaced before publication.

**Additional Keywords**
Lewis, C.S.—Religion and philosophy; Lewis, C.S. *Spirits in Bondage*—Themes
The Thematic Organization of Spirits in Bondage

Joe R. Christopher

I. The Background

On 20 March 1919, C.S. Lewis’s first book was published: Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics, under the pseudonym of Clive Hamilton (Hooper xxxviii). The previous year, on 18 September 1918, Lewis had written his father about the subtitle:

[...] the book is not a collection of really independent pieces, but the working out, loosely of course and with digressions, of a general idea.

(Lewis, Collected Letters [hereafter CL], Vol. 1, 400)

The general structure is given by Lewis himself with the section titles in the book: “Part I: The Prison House,” containing twenty-one poems; “Part II: Hesitation,” containing three poems; and “Part III: The Escape,” containing sixteen poems. Lewis did not explain the purpose of these sections to his father, but obviously “The Prison House” and “The Escape” imply a movement of thought and/or action.

However, it will be a thesis of this paper that the first section of twenty-one poems splits into two sections, of eleven and ten poems. Further, although the third section is not organized into sub-sections, the thematic material does not often achieve the escape announced in the title. Probably no system of analysis will be perfect, since, first, Lewis called the organization loose and digressive. Second, earlier, when he was organizing his poems, on [17? July 1918], he wrote to his friend Arthur Greeves: “The arrangement I find particularly difficult and besides I am beginning to grow nervy and distrust my own judgment” (Lewis, They Stand Together [hereafter TST] 225-26; CL 1.389). As this statement implies, Lewis was putting previously written poems into his organization. Even if he did some rewriting, they might not fit perfectly into his thematic presentation. A third and final reason for expecting some looseness in the order is that William Heinemann, the publisher, asked for substitutions for some poems—so those poems are not Lewis’s first choices for the book. The
matter of the five—it turned out to be five—substituted poems is complicated, and thus it has been put in an appendix to this paper. The basic point is that, despite Walter Hooper’s listing of five candidates, the evidence is lacking—and so no specific emphasis will be placed on any poems as substitutes affecting the original order.

But if reasons exist to believe in irregularities in the structure, one support for an overall organization exists. The particular importance of the verse “Prologue” to Spirits in Bondage for the present approach is that it sets up “The Prison House” and “The Escape” as two poles. The poem describes a Phoenician ship being sailed (in one line) and rowed (in another) to Britain to gain tin. Then, by analogy, Lewis says that his poetic ship shall leave “the scarlet city” ruled by a pitiless Lord for a green Hidden Country (Lewis’s capitals). The analogy is not perfect. The Phoenicians may move their ship out of the Mediterranean to Britain, but they plan to load a cargo of tin and head back into the Mediterranean. Lewis plans, as his third section says, an Escape (usually from the horrors of the present world); in this “Prologue” he does not suggest a return trip. He wants to escape the wartime world ruled by a vicious god. Despite the faulty analogy, the general idea of the two sections is clear—“the scarlet city” vs. the green island. One detail of this prologue needs note: it ends, saying that he will sing about this Hidden Country while “[s]ailing over seas uncharted to a port that none has seen.” Obviously this port is not one near tin mines in England. The poem does not say he will achieve escape, simply that he will journey toward it as a goal. This may explain why a majority of the poems in the third section do not actually accomplish the escape. However, “Attempted Escapes” does not have the resonance of “Escape” as a section title.

In the essay that follows, after the topic for each section is established, a brief survey of each poem will be made to tie it to the theme. This treatment of the poems is in terms of content, not of artistry. But some of the poems are ambiguous in their meaning, and these take some focus on the precise wording.

II. Matter = Nature = Satan

Lewis’s letters to Arthur Greeves clarify the Lord of the scarlet city of his Prologue. While he was in a hospital in France, suffering from war wounds, Lewis writes Greeves on [23 May 1918], “out here, where I see spirit continually dodging matter (shells, bullets, animal fears, animal pains) I have formulated my equation Matter = Nature = Satan” (TST 214; CL 1.371). Spirit in Lewis’s letter is not capitalized; it seems to mean what distinguishes men from animals—presumably intelligence, conscience, higher aspirations, and a sense of the beautiful. But the basic point of Lewis’s letter is the equation, Matter = Nature = Satan. In a later letter ([12 September 1918]), Lewis writes Greeves about his book: “It is mainly strung round the idea that I mentioned to you before—that
nature is wholly diabolical & malevolent [...]” (TST 230; CL 1.397) That sentence has been truncated, but it will be quoted in full later. It is fair to state that this analysis will not find the book “mainly” based on a diabolical nature. That, it will be suggested, is true mainly of the first half of the first section.

With the equation in mind, one may consider the first eleven poems. The first is titled “Satan Speaks.” This is equivalent of saying Matter or Nature speaks. The poem begins:

I am Nature, the Mighty Mother,
I am the law: ye have none other.

I am the flower and the dewdrop fresh,
I am the lust in your itching flesh.

The third line, with its flower and drop of dew, is the only positive example given. The lust is the first of eight negative earthly examples. Presumably this poem says that one-ninth of experience is pleasant; eight-ninths are unpleasant. Certainly this is a monotheistic poem with Satan or capitalized Nature bringing both good and evil, but mainly evil. It is a more extreme statement than A. E. Housman’s

[...] the world has still
Much good, but much less good than ill. (43-44)

Lewis is saying the world has little good and a very great amount of evil.

The second poem, “French Nocturne,” is a description of the front lines during World War I. Lewis mentions the “sacked village,” the trenches, an airplane that crosses the moon. The speaker rejects a daydream about the airplane landing on Luna and finding a peaceful harbor, for he (as a soldier) is a wolf, not a man—he cannot have pleasant daydreams. This poem presents the reduction of values in war—down to the animal level.

The third poem, “The Satyr,” says much the same thing through its use of myth. The satyr is half man, half beast. His temples have horns; his shanks are animal legs; and his feet, hooves. The poem probably ties to the “lust in the itching flesh” of the first poem, for “fairie maidens”—presumably wholly human shaped—start to flee the satyr but stop because of his sad eyes. (He is given brown eyes, the same color as Lewis’s.) Symbolically, this seems to be a poem out of the Victorian culture, with the men half bestial in their sexual desire, while the purer women are attracted to their human aspects. (Cf. Christopher 13-14.)

The fourth poem, “Victory,” is the first instance of the looseness of organization mentioned by Lewis to his father. In this poem “[t]he yearning, high, rebellious spirit of man” is set against “red Nature.” The present age is one of cultural decay (in the first three stanzas) and of “the filth of war.” But, the
poem asserts, this spirit of man will lift its head “[h]igher […] and higher” until “the beast become a god.” This final assertion seems to be a touch of the cultural belief in evolution as a process of improvement, here spiritual improvement. No more satyrs. As Tennyson put it in In Memoriam, “Move upward, working out the beast, / And let the ape and tiger die” (lyric no. 118).

The emphasis on spirit in this poem is worth pausing over, since it has already appeared in Lewis’s letter about his equation. During the time he was working on his manuscript of poems, on [3 June 1918], he explained to Greeves,

[...] I do believe that I have in me a spirit, a chip, shall we say, of universal spirit; and that, since all good & joyful things are spiritual & non-material, I must be careful not to let matter (= nature = Satan, remember) get too great a hold on me, & dull the one spark I have. (TST 221; CL 1.379)

The letter does not speak of “a chip” of a or the “universal spirit,” but simply “of universal spirit,” whatever that implies in theological terms. At the least, this poem seems to establish a dualism of the physical and the spiritual; it is not the monotheism of “Satan Speaks.” The idealism about the “spiritual” side of man, meaning the moral and “joyful” side, will reappear in such poems as “De Profundis” and “Oxford.” But this poem seems to come early in the sequence so far as the overall organization is concerned.

The fifth poem, “Irish Nocturne,” takes a reader back, in a different way, to the evilness of nature. The Irish landscape is covered with “grey mist,” with “never a wind to blow the mists apart”; the land is thus covered with a “dreary shroud / Unwholesome.” The effect on the people is to give them “[l]onely desire and many words and brooding and never a deed.” Thus, the Irish people are under the influence of nature, not of spirit.

Historically speaking, this poem, saying that the Irish people do not do deeds, seems odd. As John Bremer has pointed out (in an as-yet-unpublished book manuscript), the Easter Rising of 1916 occurred three years before Lewis’s book was published. In addition, the Irish Republic was proclaimed in January of the year of publication, and the war between Ireland and Great Britain began at that point. All one can say is that neither Lewis nor his publisher seems to have considered the actions in Dublin as having any application to poetry. (William Butler Yeats, in “Easter 1916,” thought otherwise.) Although Lewis said, “if [he] ever g[ot] interested in politics,” he should probably be an Irish nationalist (24 July 1917, TST 196, CL 1.330), still—later the same year—when he was training for the army, he wrote to Greeves on [28 October 1917], with what seems to be complacency, that he and his fellow trainees may be “going to Ireland the quell the Sinn Feiner in a day or two” (TST 201; CL 1.340). Probably Lewis, as with much of Britain at the time, associated the Sinn Féin with the Easter rebellion—and the later declaration of independence. Whatever Lewis meant by the Irish
doing “never a deed,” he was aware of the rebellion. Perhaps in the poem Lewis was thinking, in part, of the political grumbling he heard in his father’s house while growing up (W. H. Lewis 6).

The sixth poem, “Spooks,” is poorly titled, since only one ghost or “wraith” appears. He is outside of his “true love’s house,” unable to enter the realm of the living. He had been killed sometime before—presumably, although it is not stated, he is a World War I soldier killed in battle. The poem seems an oddity at first, but it does set up a duality: the wraith in “drenching rain,” on a “winter night”; the woman’s house given the opposite attributes—“warmth and light,” and, more specifically, “a rosy light” from a lamp. The rain and cold suggests the realm of nature; the house is not a normal symbol for the spirit, but the emphasis on light and a lamp may hint at some type of enlightenment, so to speak. Perhaps women (as in “The Satyr,” although there they were faeries) are inherently outside of the equation. Perhaps also the phrase about the ghost’s division from “true love” may be more than a cliché. The plural title might be argued to mean that the true love is also, in some sense, dead; but nothing else in the poem suggests this—this is not James Joyce’s “The Dead.” Or the title could be argued to suggest the ghost’s experience is typical of those who died in the war. But it seems a humorously toned title anyway—“Spooks,” not “Ghosts” or “Wraiths.”

The seventh poem, “Apology,” uses apology in the sense of apologia. This is the basic defense of Lewis’s poetic approach in the first part of the first section, emphasizing the evil of the world and rejecting all heroic stories and emphasis on the green, pleasant world as merely dreams. When Lewis writes, “Can it be good / To think of glory now[?]” the word glory reminds the reader of World War I poetry of Wilfred Owen’s “Dulce et Decorum Est” in which the children are “ardent for some desperate glory”—and Owen is saying not to encourage them. This does not mean that Lewis imitated Owen; it means the word glory was common parlance at the first of the war.

The eighth poem, “Ode for New Year’s Day,” is a basic statement of the equation. It begins,

Woe unto you, ye sons of pain that are this day in earth,
Now cry for all your torment: now curse your hour of birth
And the father who begat you to a portion nothing worth.

The poem uses the word God, not Satan or Nature, but this monotheistic God is Satan-like. The poem refers to “God’s hate”; it says, “He has not left one valley, one isle of fresh and green[,]” He is causing the decline of the world and the wiping out of beauty. He is not concerned with mankind in any way—its prayers, its morality, its emotions. The speaker also asserts the concept of the good is just mankind’s mental “phantom.” Nevertheless, the poem ends with a fanciful wish
that man could escape and flee to a pleasant land beyond the west—something
that will be proposed (in variant forms) more fully in the third section, most
specifically in “Death in Battle.” This “Ode for New Year’s Day” is thus both a
statement of the opening position and a hint of the third section of the book.

The ninth poem, “Night,” and the tenth poem, “To Sleep,” are—in Don
W. King’s phrase—“a pair [...] to be read together” (79). Certainly Lewis places
them side by side. The first of the two sounds very peaceful as the poet addresses
“Mother Night” and “Lady Night,” and praises the dreams she brings. What ties
this to the other poems in the first part of the first section is that she, dwelling
“beyond the Milky Way” during the daytime, comes to earth after leaving her
“bower” through “ivory gates.” In Vergil’s Hades, true dreams leave by a gate of
horn but false dreams by a gate of ivory. Lewis’s praise is ironic because he has
implied the falsity of these dreams. He also ends the poem with a request for
Night to bind the dreamers “[i]n slumber blind.” The blindness to the truth while
dreaming is the point.

The other poem, “To Sleep,” basically repeats these ideas. The poet
plans to offer sacrifices to Sleep in the third and fourth stanzas so that Sleep will
send him “dreams of dear delight / And draughts of cool oblivion, quenching
pain[.]” The oblivion is needed because of the pain of this world. The last stanza
shifts from sleep per se to death, a traditional association. The poet requested that
Sleep will be friendly when they meet for death “[a]nd wear no frightful mask.”
In other words, may Sleep not be like the horrors of wakefulness.

The title of this poem, “To Sleep,” is tied to the opening two stanzas that
directly address Sleep, but—as John Bremer has suggested—it also may be an
allusion to Hamlet’s “To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there’s the rub” (3.1.65).
Both the soliloquy and the lyric worry about the dangers of horrific dreams.
The soldiers in World War I (as in other wars) often ended up with nightmares
based on their war experiences. Lewis, after he was discharged at the end of the
war, wrote to his father, on [17? November 1918], about the effect of the war on
him: “[...] nightmares—or rather the same nightmare over and over again” (CL
1.417).

The eleventh poem, “In Prison,” certainly shifts in tone. It begins with
“the pain of man” and “the hopeless life”—the type of complaint stated in the
earlier poems. But this time the poet gains a perspective on earthly problems by
seeing the earth surrounded by stars (the Milky Way galaxy, although that term
is not used). The poet assumes that these stars are “[d]ead things” that are not
concerned about Earth and are not aware of their own loveliness. They are
examples of mere matter, in other words, but not in the exact sense used in the
equation. Therefore, the power of an “evil God” on this world has no cosmic
meaning. This poem does not deny the evils reflected in the equation so far as
this earth is concerned, so it fits with the early poems; but it denies their scope. (It
seems odd that Lewis—a science-fiction reader, or in those days a reader of scientific romances—does not raise the question of planets around the other suns with intelligent life-forms and whether their Matter, their extraterrestrial Natures, also = Satan. But perhaps that is more of an intellectual discussion than the basis of a poem.) At any rate, with the denial of the scope of human suffering begins a shift in the topics of the poems in the first section—and the emphasis on the beauty of the starscape is related to this shift.

III. Beauty and (Twice Only) Justice

The twelfth poem, “De Profundis,” begins with this tercet:

Come let us curse our Master ere we die,
For all our hopes in endless ruin lie.
The good is dead. Let us curse God most high.

After ten more tercets, the last three lines end with an affirmation that men—capitalized in the last line—live by ideals despite all God can do to torment them. Although the word *spirit* is not used, this poem is one with “Victory” and the letter that says men have some touch of spirit, of ideals perhaps mainly, that cause them to withstand the evils of the world. This poem ends, speaking to God, “Thou art not Lord while there are Men on earth.”

If this were all there was in the poem, it would have nothing new in it. But earlier a change was promised to take place with the twelfth poem. Here are the sixth, seventh, and eighth tercets:

Even if it be not all a dream in vain
—The ancient hope that still will rise again—
Of a just God that cares for earthly pain,

Yet far away beyond our laboring night,
He wanders in the depths of endless light,
Singing alone his musics of delight;

Only the far, spent echo of his song
Our dungeons and deep cells can smite along,
And Thou [Satan] art nearer. Thou art very strong.

One finds two positive attributes of this possible other God—he is just, and he is associated with delightful music. And a neutral attribute also appears—he is far away. Some sort of distant influence reaches men from him. Perhaps he is, in part, that “universal spirit” of Lewis’s letter, of which individual men—some of them at least—have a chip. Some connection exists.
The music is important here. Two quotations will follow this up. The first is the full quotation from the [12 September 1918] letter given in part earlier. Lewis writes that his book

is mainly strung round the idea that [Lewis] mentioned to [Greeves] before—that nature is wholly diabolic & malevolent and [beginning the new material] that God, if he exists, is outside of and in opposition to the cosmic arrangements. (TST 230; CL 1.397)

Certainly in “De Profundis” God is outside of the “cosmic arrangements”—that is, the area that Satan rules—and he is opposed to it in the sense his song seems to spread the idea of justice against Satan’s rule by force. (This concept of the two gods, with the evil one ruling this world, sounds Gnostic; but Lewis seems to have developed it from his warfare experiences and a residue of Christianity. He does not mention any Gnostic readings to Greeves.)

The other quotation is the extension of Lewis’s first setting forth of his equation, in the letter of [23 May 1918]. “Matter = Nature = Satan”—and then Lewis adds, “on the other side[,] Beauty, the only spiritual & not-natural thing I have yet found” (TST 214; CL 1.371).

Lewis’s emphasis on the ideas of a just God communicated at a distance seems to be his first step toward his Natural Law philosophy which will reach its greatest expression in The Abolition of Man (1943). But, with the exception of the following poem, the concept of beauty is more important in the rest of the first section than that of justice. In “De Profundis” the two notions are combined: the singing is presumably beautiful, and the words of the “musics” inspire men toward the idea of justice.

The thirteenth poem, “Satan Speaks,” is the second poem of that title. Rather than announcing himself as Nature, this time he begins, “I am the Lord your God [...].” The language is no doubt deliberately provocative, Satan speaking of men not obeying his “holy laws” and that “their sin shall slay them.” But the equation holds, for this God—Satan—“made/Material things.” He speaks of how mankind has “a spiritual fire” and “[a] thirst for good” that it “shall not attain.” So the conflict appears—partly this Satan is a deliberate blasphemous parody of the Judeo-Christian God and partly he is the traditional devil, being opposed to the good. The new theme is also present:

Then let that other God
Come from the outer spaces glory-shod,
And from this castle I have built on Night
Steal forth my own thought’s children into light,
If such an one there be. But far away
He walks the airy fields of endless day,
And my rebellious sons have called Him long
And vainly called.

Whether Satan's "own thought's children" are men or (perhaps more likely) demons is obscure. Perhaps an influence of Paradise Lost appears in which Satan's castle is the re-imagined equivalent of Pandemonium, with the equivalent of the fallen angels in it (cf. 1.756). But the parallel to the moral God separated from this world continues from the previous poem. Perhaps Lewis borrows this image from the De Rerum Natura of Lucretius, where the Roman gods are said to exist but not to be involved with mankind (2.167-181, 2.1090-1104, 5.156-234).

The fourteenth poem, "The Witch," is interesting because of its shifting tone. The setting is vaguely medieval or early Renaissance; a young, red-headed witch has been captured in the wood, and is to be burnt at the stake. The first part of the poem seems to be largely on the side of society—she is a deadly "sorceress" who has prayed "godless prayer [...] before a Druid stone." She is "deeply damned." But then the tone shifts: she has seen "wonders [...] in the wildwood green / With holiness." At death she will be "sent / Alone into the great alone, / Where all is loved and all is known." At the end of the poem, the fire is lit, and the bishop's court, the "city oafs," and the "full-fed burghers" watch, the latter crying out, "Alas! [...] / That evil loveliness must die!" The use of loveliness in the last line suggests the proper reading. The people of the city—including the bishop—are evil, following the rules of Satan, probably without knowing it. The young maiden witch, in her beauty, is tied to the distant God—she is, of course, defeated by the evil powers of this world, but that does not invalidate her side of the conflict.

The fifteenth poem, "Dungeon Grates," is a straight contrast of materialism vs. beauty. The former is described as "the long, material chain / From cause to cause, too merciless for hate," which weighs on mankind heavily. The contrast is "the strange power / Of unsought Beauty in some casual hour," which takes a person out of the problems of the material world. Such a vision lasts only briefly, but that is enough to sustain a person through all subsequent worldly "trials." This, then, is a poem of momentary escape. One can see that its placement in the book with its dual statements would be a problem for Lewis. Does it belong best among the first eleven because of its depiction of nature and matter, or is it properly placed in the next ten for its glimpse of loveliness? This momentary inspiration from Beauty seems to be a description of Sehnsucht, such as Lewis would later, with a modified understanding, find religious in nature.

The sixteenth poem, "The Philosopher," begins with the question of who shall be the "prophet" (philosopher is not used in the text of the poem) to guide mankind through this world's "turmoil," its "shifting veil of bittersweet," "which we greet / With such a wasted wealth of tears?" After this point, the
poem is no longer concerned directly with the evil world. It goes on to contrast the old scholar, bent over his books, and the young “seer.” A hint exists, in the description of the young man, that age acclimatizes one too much to this world: let the young man become the prophet (the poem says)

Ere the gnawing, peasant reason  
School him over-deep in treason  
To the ancient high estate  
Of his fancy’s principate [...].

This is not Lewis at his most lucid, but it seems to suggest that the fancy—probably in the sense of imagination—may be corrupted as one gets older. (Lewis probably did not know Coleridge’s distinction between fancy and imagination at this point in his life; at least he does not mention the distinction in his letters to Greeves before his book’s publication.) The description of the old scholar emphasizes his loss of connection to nature. By means of fancy, Lewis suggests, the prophet’s or seer’s (or, in the title, the philosopher’s) great goal is to find a way out of the world

And cross at last the shadowy bar  
To where the ever-living are.

To become one of the ever-living is to escape the tortured world. In Lewis’s later “The Queen of Drum,” the queen escapes the world for the fairy realm. Presumably this means the same thing (without the Queen’s percentaged chance of damnation). Still later, from a scholarly perspective, Lewis describes the ever-living, or at least the long-time-living, in his chapter on the Longevity in *The Discarded Image*.

The seventeenth poem, “The Ocean Strand,” is even more a digression than the previous poem, in terms of Lewis’s comments to his father—that is, it has no statements about the evil of this world, of society, of matter and nature. Indeed, in “The Philosopher,” the old scholar is rejected as prophet because he does not turn to the ocean, the sun and the moon, the forest, the meadows at dawn, or springtime: his “fancy” is frozen. That is, if the previous reading is correct, his imagination is dead. Here, in “The Ocean Strand,” the proper turn to nature is illustrated. But the poem, in addition, does not reject society—it says that the streets and markets of the town have “their proper rhythm” and “delight / The friendly ear.” What has happened to Satan? All matter no longer seems to be evil. The rest of the poem traces a trip to an ocean strand and to a place where the sea-god and his flocks have visited, a place where a nereid has been seen sleeping (Lewis uses a small *n* for *Nereid*). The sea-gods are evidently specific examples of the “ever-living” that the prophet sought to join.
What has happened at this point is that Lewis is turning to the romantic vision of nature, typical of the early nineteenth century. Or, if one wishes to be biographical, "The Ocean Strand" was written in the Christmas period of 1916 and "The Philosopher," in the Easter period of 1917 (Greaves 309); Lewis did not announce that Nature was Satanic until May 1918, when he was recovering from his war wounds. Of course, the biographical explanation does not help the unity of the book. The best argument for unity that one can offer is that, having introduced beauty in contrast to the evil of the world, the theme of beauty needed some "objective correlative" (in T. S. Eliot's term) to illustrate it. For Lewis, despite his equation, external nature is the basic image he has of beauty. The landscape in "French Nocturne" was that of the ruined earth of the front lines of trench warfare. That nature was Satanic, but it turns out not all nature is. Further, the poet suggests that supernatural beings can be reached through this nature. This is a variant on the God far away whose song can reach some men. At least something beyond this world can be connected with through beauty. (More will be suggested in the later discussion of "Song.")

The eighteenth poem, "Noon," is a simpler variant on "The Ocean Strand." Instead of the ocean's edge, "Noon" has a garden with a little lake. In "The Ocean Strand," the season was summer; the weather is hot in "Noon." The time in both poems is noon. "The Ocean Strand" ended with mortal eyes having seen

A lonely nereid drowsing half a-swoon
Buried beneath her dark and dripping locks.

"Noon" ends with a parallel scene with a human woman:

[...] beneath the pleasant shade
Of the darkling boughs a maiden
—Milky limb and fiery tress,
All at sweetest random laid—
Slumbers, drunken with the excess
Of the noontide's loveliness.

Here again the "loveliness" or beauty through nature is emphasized—spelled out in the last line. But the final vision of the red-headed maiden, while adding to the beauty of the scene for most male readers at least, does not lead to a supernatural origin of beauty. Indeed, one would assume that the maiden is part of nature and the natural world—and hence, at the first of the section, would have been Satanic. Unless Lewis is counting on the old superstition about the uncanny and usually evil nature of red-heads, this poem does not have anything to do with the equation. The woman is presumably (in the new scheme) part of admirable beauty.
However, were it not for the word *maiden*, suggesting within a Victorian context a degree of innocence, a different sort of case could be made. No clothing is mentioned on the woman, nor is there any indication of whether the “milky limb” is an arm or a leg. The hot day could suggest that this is a post-coitum langour, and the rhyme word *laid* might not be as innocent as a reader might originally assume it to be. If one may borrow from Lewis’s later scholarship, the naked woman, combined with the pool, might well be named either Cissie or Flossie (*The Allegory of Love* 331). The witch, earlier, was a red-head also, so one could make a case, if ignoring the tonal shift in the earlier poem, that both these bewitching women are witching women. Probably no one else has read this poem in these ways. Certainly Don W. King does not seem to—he finds the garden “an apt spot for delightful retirement” (82), and he does not seem to be ironic.

So far this reading is suggested as either/or—either innocent or sexually loaded. But it might well be both/and. “Maiden” allows Lewis a deniability for sexual suggestiveness, while the description itself can be furtively enhanced. Lewis would not be the first young man to play this game.

The nineteenth poem, “Milton Read Again,” may be discussed in terms of Lewis calling Milton “Master”—before Lewis turned to George MacDonald as his master. It is odd that the semi-atheistic Lewis would pick Milton as his literary model, but no doubt Lewis at the time had hopes of creating a great, long poem. And the work by Milton—“your joyful tale”—that Lewis is re-reading seems to be the epic since, according to the first two lines, the re-reading took him three months. Further, this poem about re-reading *Paradise Lost* comes appropriately after “Noon,” for Milton’s poem is also about a woman in a garden (not that Eve is mentioned in Lewis’s poem). “Milton Read Again” also fits into Lewis’s emphasis on beauty in this latter part of the first section. First, Lewis says he has found new “treasures” in his re-reading, things he was blind to on his earlier reading. Second, he uses an interesting comparison: Lewis says he is like one wandering a field and copse, only to have a “weird spirit” fall upon him, giving extra “grace” to the setting. The last quatrain is a prayer—or, for the atheistic Lewis, perhaps a wishful request—that the spirit will come to him, to give him a greater experience of Surrey’s woods and lanes. (Lewis uses *spirit* twice in this poem: once it is Milton’s Spirit, guiding his reading; the second time it is, with feminine pronouns, a spirit that guides the lover of nature. These uses do not seem to be strongly related to the chip of universal spirit that Lewis said he had—that was more a giver of morality in an immoral universe.) This poem ends in a related but inverted way to where others of the Beauty subsection have: they have beauty leading to a spirit; this one has a spirit—some sort of supernatural power—that aids or focuses the experience of beauty.
The twentieth poem, "Sonnet," sketches a beautiful night followed by dreamless sleep ("sleep [...] / With magic sponge can wipe away an hour / Or twelve and make them naught")—perhaps followed by death. So this poem combines the beauty-in-nature motif with the escape-from-life motif. But it omits the reason for the escape into sleep—this painful life—of the earlier "Night." If taken by itself "Sonnet" seems to move from beauty of this world to death—rather like Keats' "Bright Star" sonnet or the sixth stanza (omitting the last two lines) of "Ode to a Nightingale." Within the context of this book, perhaps the painful life can be taken as implied. Either that or this is (as Lewis said in his letter to his father) a disgression.

And the twenty-first poem, the last of the "Prison House" section, "The Autumn Morning," is another celebration of natural beauty—"the pale autumn dawn" with mist. In this scene, the poet says he "has honoured well / The mystic spell / Of earth's most solemn hours" in which he has seen "dryad, elf, or faun, / Or leprechaun [...]." Thus, the beauty of nature leads to a vision of the supernatural, as in "The Ocean Strand." But here the poem does not end with the vision; instead, the poet is strengthened to continue:

Wherefore I will not fear
To walk the woodlands sere
Into this autumn day
Far, far away.

The literal level of this last stanza provides no difficulty—as in "Dungeon Grate," the momentary visions give one power to go on—but the overtones are perhaps those of death: the woodlands are sere, the time of year is autumn, and the journey is "Far, far away." Although the poem certainly ties to the emphasis on the romantic beauty in nature of the second half of "The Prison House," it may also be said to foreshadow the "Escape" section, since the escape there is three times by means of death. (A good contrast of the first half of "The Prison House" and the second is shown by the treatment of mist in "Irish Nocturne" and in this poem.)

Why does Lewis put so much emphasis on death in his poems—in "Spooks," "To Sleep," "The Witch," "Sonnet," and this poem, with more to come? Partly it may be fairly common adolescent melancholy; partly it may be a fear of the likelihood of dying in the war—or, if a particular poem was written after Lewis’s wounding, the awareness of the death of many others, including some standing next to him. Either way—or both—the emphasis does not seem morbid in the tradition of, for example, Poe. The times were such that a young man’s awareness of death in England was inevitable.
IV. He Who Hesitates . . .

"Part II: Hesitation" in *Spirits in Bondage* consists of three poems. In all three, the speaker is tempted to make or tries to make a commitment—although the imagery is different in all three. In none of the three does he make the commitment.

Lewis writes later, in *Surprised by Joy*, that during this period he was split into two halves:

The two hemispheres of my mind were in the sharpest contrast. One the one side a many-islanded sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow “rationalism”. Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless. [One exception was] nature herself. That is, nature as she appeared to the senses. I chewed endlessly on the problem: “How can it be so beautiful and also so cruel, wasteful and futile?” Hence at this time I could almost have said with Santayana, “All that is good is imaginary; all that is real is evil.” (161-62)

In two of the three poems in “Hesitation,” this split is clearly seen—and they prepare for the third section. (The three poems are numbered XXII through XXIV, because the poems of *Spirits in Bondage* are numbered consecutively throughout.)

In the twenty-second poem, “*L’Apprenti Sorcier*,” Lewis presents a dream vision. It begins:

Suddenly there came to me  
The music of a mighty sea  
That on a bare and iron shore  
Thundered with a deeper roar  
Than all the tides that leap and run  
With us below the real sun[.]

A bit later, the speaker makes the fact of a dream specific:

And in my dream I stood alone  
Upon a shelf of weedy stone[.]

He says that this dream place was not far from where

The fierce, cold eyes of Godhead gleam,  
Rovelling hate and misery  
And wars and famines yet to be.

Thus the poem is set in the theology of the first half of “The Prison House.” (An argument could be advanced that this poem says that this evil Godhead is just a dream, but a likelier reading is that the dream vision reveals the truth.)
The poet sees huge breakers striking the coast—and then, beyond the breakers, “those / Thin, elemental people.” (“Elemental” presumably refers to sea-gods being in their watery element.) This is familiar from “The Philosopher” and “The Ocean Strand,” where the Longævi—the nearly-immortal elves and sea-gods—are desired and/or seen. In the dream-vision, they are in the sea beyond the breakers, calling,

“Leap in! Leap in, and take thy fill
Of all the cosmic good and ill,
Be as the Living ones that know
Enormous joy, enormous woe[.]”

This suggestion that the sea-deities feel with intensity both happiness and grief is new. The supernatural realm is not just beauty, but intensity of experience. The godlings call to him that all his studies hunted for this experience.

“Be bold and dare the glorious leap,
Or to thy shame, go, slink again
Back to the narrow ways of men.”

The final couplet establishes the hesitation:

So all these mocked me as I stood
Striving to wake because I feared the flood.

Obviously, within the poem, the danger of a painful death in the crashing breakers is set against a far leap into the depths of the ocean, the realm of the Living ones. This is certainly a specialized version of a Søren Kierkegaard-like “leap to faith.” Probably, although it is not clearly stated, a chance exists that the whole experience is a temptation set up by the evil Godhead of the poem.

The title of the poem is the same as that of Paul Dukas’s program music. Literally, the title translates as “The Apprenticed Sorcerer” or “The Apprentice Sorcerer” (Young), but “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” is the standard English version. “The Apprentice Sorcerer” seems the best translation for the context of Lewis’s poem, for no guiding sorcerer appears—or even is mentioned. Thus, the emphasis should not be on a relationship to a sorcerer. In Lewis’s poem, his protagonist has studied magic in order to reach the mythic:

[“] For all thy study hunted this,
On wings of magic to arise,
And wash from off thy filmed eyes
The cloud of cold mortality,
To find the real life and be
As are the children of the deep![“]
Unlike the apprentice in Dukas’s music and in Goethe’s ballad that was its source, Lewis’s apprentice does not cause a problem by purloined magic, but instead cannot make the final leap (over the breakers) to achieve the mythic immortality to which his magic has led him. Presumably, if he had successfully made the leap, he would no longer be an apprentice but would be a full sorcerer.

The twenty-third poem, “Alexandrines,” is the odd poem among these three. The poet says he hates and fears a certain abandoned house with its ruined gardens and courtyard. In “a little, silent room” of that house, “Someone” awaits him, and in the end will draw him there “with an evil eye” and will “hold [him] fast.” The suggestion, in this context, is that the hesitation is the delaying of the confrontation because the speaker, the poet, expects to lose it. Or possibly the hesitation will be when he is held fast by the evil eye. Perhaps this is all that should be said about the poem, but in the context of *Spirits of Bondage*, the major villain is sometimes called Satan, sometimes Nature, and occasionally (as in “De Profundis” and the second “Satan Speaks”) God. Very tempting is a reading of this poem in which Lewis fears a meeting with God because he will surrender his will to the deity. In *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis describes his emotional background as he approaches such a belief:

> [...] I had always wanted, above all things, not to be “interfered with.” I had wanted (mad wish) “to call my soul my own.” [...] Even my recent attempt to live by my philosophy had secretly (I now knew) been hedged round by all sorts of reservations. I had pretty well known that my ideal of virtue would never be allowed to lead me into anything intolerably painful; I would be “reasonable.” But now [...] [t]otal surrender, the absolute leap in the dark, were demanded. (214-15)

This, of course, is a later Lewis, moving from Idealism to Theism; but the desire to be left alone runs throughout the first part of Lewis’s memoir. It may well be behind “Alexandrines,” as a desire to be left alone by the Christian faith. If so, the decayed house is a symbol of the church as Lewis conceived it at the time: old, ruinous, frightening. This poem, reflecting God as Lewis saw him in his antitheistic days, a frightening controller, nonetheless foreshadows Lewis’s eventual conversion: “the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England” (215). (Stephen Thorson sees the possibilities for symbolic reading here, asking, “Does the house represent the mind, the subconscious, the past, or a church? The questions remain” [29]. And Bremer offers a reading in terms of a malicious God and the church.)

The twenty-fourth poem, “In Praise of Solid People,” connects with the opening of “The Ocean Strand” that praised the markets and the streets with their people; but the protagonist’s situation comes later, in the seventh quatrain.
The Thematic Organization of *Spirits in Bondage*

and following. The “brooding” speaker, alone in his room, begins to have visions:

And dusky galleys past me sail,  
Full freighted on a faerie sea;  
I hear the silken merchants hail  
Across the ringing waves to me  

—Then suddenly, again, the room,  
Familiar books about me piled,  
And I alone amid the gloom,  
By one more mocking dream beguiled.

He describes himself as “still no nearer to the Light, / And still no further from myself”; he is “fretted by desire.” In this poem, the hesitation does not seem to be deliberate on the poet’s part; instead, it seems to come from a human inability to transform certain types of dreams into reality. Is it actually possible to journey to faerie?

The common-sense answer is “No.” But the third section of *Spirits in Bondage* tries, mainly unsuccessfully, to answer “Yes.”

**V. Escaping the Human World?**

The sixteen poems of “Part III: The Escape” can be divided into three groups: in two of the poems, an argument is made for success of an escape (*via* faerie in one case, mankind’s spirit in the other); in nine, quests of one sort or another (described journeys, walks in nature, experiences after death) end up largely unachieved—although projections after death can be hopeful; and in the remaining five, a miscellaneous group of themes appear—an ambiguous assertion of contact with faerie, two historical statements of contact, an assertion of the possibility without support, and a narrative of swan-maidens without a protagonist’s viewpoint. This means that, although the section is titled “The Escape,” and that, although the speakers sometimes seem certain that they will achieve their escape, the section as a whole is often as uncertain as some of the poems in the second half of “The Prison House”: for example, as that in which the Philosopher (or prophet) should “live a perfect whole” (presumably a life of wholeness, as in Arnold’s “The Scholar Gypsy”) and achieve the journey to “where the ever-living” are—but the poem does not instance a philosopher or prophet who has achieved this. In short, Lewis’s poems in this third section are honest enough to not force their conclusions much beyond where Lewis himself was.

As indicated above, the largest number of these poems can be described as quests or searches for the titular escape. The protagonists cannot all be
described as Lewis personally, as will be made clear in the analyses. The interest, as always, is both in what the individual poem means and how it fits into the book's organization.

The twenty-fifth poem, "Song of the Pilgrims," is an unusual first-person-plural lyric. It begins,

O Dwellers at the back of the North Wind,
What have we done to you? How have we sinned
Wandering the Earth from Orkney unto Ind?

The pilgrims of the title have spent years searching for the country of the Hyperboreans—a place in the far north of feasts and music (according to Pindar in the tenth "Pythian Ode"; another classical account appears in Pindar's third "Olympian Ode.") In Lewis's poem much is made of rose gardens in the northern land beyond the snow; he also combines the emphasis on natural beauty with the people not aging ("ever living queens that grow not old"); Pindar also mentions agelessness. Lewis brings in a suggestion that this place is part of faerie in that the poets there wear "robes of faerie gold." The poem, after giving details of the pilgrims' search for this land, ends with an affirmation:

But, by the very God, we know, we know
That somewhere still, beyond the Northern snow
Waiting for us the red-rose gardens blow.

This sounds like a great statement of hope, even though it is not certain what Lewis means at this point in his life by the oath "by the very God"—what, or which, very God? Two possibilities exist with some likelihood. First, that this oath is dramatically suited to the speakers—they mean the Christian God, unaware of the irony of swearing by Him while seeking a pagan paradise. Second, Lewis may be using "God" as a cover for his real attitudes—his imaginative feelings, not his rational position. That is, no doubt Lewis knew that in Pindar's "Pythian Ode," the Hyperboreans sacrifice donkeys to Apollo.

Even more bothersome is one word slipped into the tenth tercet about this land:

Yea, when we are drawing very near to thee,
And when at last the ivory port we see
Our hearts will faint with mere felicity.[

The ivory port, like the ivory gate of Hades, may suggest this whole land is but a false dream. Perhaps the realistic, anti-romantic side of Lewis reminded him that North Pole was a point on a sheet of ice. (In other words, this use of "ivory port" suggests that hesitation—an implicit hesitation of commitment to the vision—is not limited to the three poems in the second section.)
The twenty-sixth poem, “Song,” argues that beauty seen by humans in nature must be a “veil of endless beauty.” This seems to be a particular version of the Platonic belief that the things of this world are merely shadows of ideal forms; in Lewis, the beauty of this world hints at the supernatural beauty beyond it. Lewis, after examples of faeries, satyrs, and tritons in nature, goes on to suggest the stars are islands with “eternal meadows.” He mentions “the Other People” on these islands, but it is not clear if he means faeries or angels. He uses the term “spirits” for those that fill the realm of beauty; they have “seen the bright footprints of God.” Presumably this is the God who was far away from this world in “De Profundis,” “[s]inging alone his musics of delight”; and who was in “the outer spaces” in “Satan Speaks” II. Here is more than “the far, spent echo of music” that reaches mankind: a doctrine of plentitude seems to be applied to beauty here, filling the universe. This is an argument, not a quest as such, but the argument is stated without hesitation or rebuttal. The question of reaching the starry islands does not arise. Does this argument involve any escape? Certainly the contemplation of the beauty of this world is affirmed; intellectually, the beauty is a symbol of something more—or, in Platonic terms, the earthly beauty is an imitation of Beauty in the world of ideas.

Lewis makes an interesting (if long) comment on “Song” in his letter to Greeves of [29 May 1918]. He had sent the first version of “Song” to Greeves in a letter of [23 May 1918], and he is responding to Greeves’s comments:

You say that nature is beautiful, and that is the view we all start with. But let us see what we mean. If you take a tree, for instance, you call it beautiful because of its shape, colour and motions, and perhaps a little because of association. Now these colours etc.[.] are sensations in my eye, produced by vibrations on the aether between me and the tree: the real tree is something quite different—a combination of colourless, shapeless, invisible atoms. It follows then that neither the tree, nor any other material object can be beautiful in itself: I can never see them as they are, and if I could it would give me no delight. The beauty therefore is not in matter at all, but is something purely spiritual, arising mysteriously out of the relationships between me & the tree: or perhaps as I suggest in my Song, out of some indwelling spirit behind the matter of the tree—the Dryad in fact. (TST 217; CL 374)

Lewis does not, in fact, mention a dryad in either version of “Song”: the dryad has been produced out of the illustration about the tree. But the faeries and satyrs “in the woods” are the equivalent, as well as the tritons “in the summer sea.” These traditional mythic figures become the means of communicating the non-physical, spiritual experience of beauty. Lewis goes on to make this matter explicit, with another statement about the existence of Spirit:
You see the conviction is gaining ground on me that after all Spirit does exist, and that we come in contact with the spiritual element by means of these ‘thrills’.

The “thrills” are what Lewis later would call by varied names, such as *Joy*; as is well known, he tied the experiences to the *Sehnsucht* of German Romanticism (*Surprised 14*).

I fancy there is Something right outside of time & place, which did not create matter, as the Christians say, but is matter’s great enemy: and that Beauty is the call of the spirit in that [S]omething to the spirit in us. (*TST 217; CL 374*)

Thus, at the time of the composition of “Song,” its content was believed by Lewis to be true (taking the faeries *et al.* as symbols). Its argument is not just Lewis being good at arguing a position in verse.

In the twenty-seventh poem, “The Ass,” the speaker meets a newly-awakened ass in a field in the early morning. The speaker asks the ass four questions and blesses the ass, but the ass—of course—does not reply. Perhaps thematically the most important two couplets are these:

> “Can it be true, as the wise men tell,  
> That you are a mask of God as well,  
> “And, as in us, so in you no less  
> Speaks the eternal Loveliness[?]”

The “mask of God” sounds Christian in popular usage, but “the eternal loveliness” is a motif that runs through the second half of the first section and was prepared for in this third section by “Song.” It is basic to Lewis’s world view at the time. (Lewis must have been delighted to have hidden the pun on the Latin *asinus* in “as in us.”)

The conclusion of this poem is in the last two couplets:

> But the ass had far too wise a head  
> To answer one of the things I said,  
> So he twitched his fair ears up and down  
> And turned to nuzzle his shoulder brown.

This can be read as simply the appropriate end to a piece of light verse, but it may also be taken as a statement of the hidden quality of spiritual meaning in the world of nature. Nature does not give up its secrets to one who prattles about what “the wise men tell.” But, at the same time, the irony is that the secret is there. After all, the ass’s ears are “fair.”
The twenty-eighth poem, "Ballade Mystique," is an ambiguous statement. In this poem, the speaker is living in a big, red, and bare house on an ocean coast in the spring. The first stanza pits the speaker against his friends, who feel he must be lonely. (Technically, the speaker could be a woman as much as a man; but the use of a first-person female persona is not typical of the young Lewis, no matter what he did near the end of his life in Till We Have Faces.) In the third stanza and the envoy, the speaker announces his contact with the supernatural world: he has "seen the Dagda's throne," has defended a forest with a "magic shield and spear," has had "[i]mmortal shapes of beauty" (presumably spirits of some sort) go by him in towers he has reared, and has friends of another sort "[b]eyond the western ocean."

If one wants to undercut this poem as depicting a successful contact with the supernatural, the third stanza could be used to provide an argument that the contact is nothing more than daydreams; the speaker says that he has

[... found a forest all my own  
To ward with magic shield and spear,  
Where, through the stately towers I rear  
For my desire, around me go  
Immortal shapes of beauty clear [...].

If he established a private forest and reared there stately towers "[f]or [his] desire" (stress added), the question is what, precisely, his desire consists of. If one assumes those "[i]mmortal shapes of beauty" are women or womenlike elves, then the desire may be sexual day dreams, such as are common among young men. The rearing of "stately towers" can be read as phallic images. (Thorson adds a slight variant: the images may not be daydreams but images coming from the reading of romantic literature [28].)

These are the possibilities: a poem affirming a type of spiritual contact through beauty ("I have seen the Dagda's throne / In summer lands") or a poem describing a type of psychological withdrawal into fantasies (written or personal), including sexual ones. The poem is ambiguous, whether or not Lewis intended it to be so. (Bremer offers an interesting reading of this poem as a deliberately autobiographical presentation on Lewis's part.)

The twenty-ninth poem, "Night," is the second poem of that title. This is another of the poems about reaching contact with faeries in nature: the speaker wishes to withdraw into "a little Druid wood," with a stream, hazel trees, eglantine, and white owls; there the faeries sing and dance, as men have seen them. Then the poem shifts to the past: according to oral tradition, kings have had faerie lovers—and the kings accompanied the faeries to their underwater dwellings. The last line of the poem, an exclamation, is "Kings of old, whom none could save!" The line can be read in two senses: first, no human could keep
them from going to faerie, such is their intensity of passion; and, second, no
Christian—not even Jesus Christ, presumably—could save the kings from
choosing the pagan life of the faeries. One remembers that the Queen of Drum
rejects Christian belief in her flight to faerie (ll. 249-284). The shift in time in the
poem leaves the situation unresolved as an attempt to escape. The speaker does
not join the faeries and turns to ancient stories about the “kings of old” who have
gone with their lovers. But this is not the same as the speaker achieving the
union.

Some critics may argue that the exclamation in the poem about the end
of the speaker’s autobiographical part applies to him:

[...] amid the pale of dawn
The wandering stars begin to swoon. . . .
Ah, leave the world and come away!

The second ellipsis is in the original poem, with four dots. If one trusts the
punctuation, the four marks mean the end of a clause and then a normal ellipsis.
In that case, leave and come would be commands, and they could apply to the
speaker. But, if one reads the ellipsis as an ordinary one, then leave and come can
be parallel to swoon. The planets “begin to swoon” (with an ellipsis to show the
swoon) and to “leave the world” and to “come away” [from] the world. From
understood. That is, the planets begin to grow dim, be no longer visible, and
disappear. But the exclamation does seem strangely intense, as if carrying the
speaker’s desire that he himself escape.

The death wish of “To Sleep,” “Sonnet,” and “The Autumn Morning” is
also suggested here, as appears in other poems about going with elves and
faeries. Here the faery lovers have “charmed [the kings of old] out of life.”
Grammatically, the faeries seem to have “cold lips unafraid”; the “cold lips” are
appropriate for the faeries, both in their coming from the sea and as symbols of
death, although one would expect the kings to be the ones who show no fear in
daring to love these supernatural women. Further, no one can stop the kings
from going to “the Country-under-wave”—which, as with the burial-
mound/faery-mound homes of some elves, is a place where many men—sailors
and passengers alike—have died.

The thirtieth poem, “Oxford,” is—like “Song”—a poem about a
successful type of union. (It is notable that neither “Song” nor “Oxford” are
narrative poems; Lewis has strength in his arguments from the beginning.) The
first two quatrains, of five, are these:

It is well that there are palaces of peace
And discipline and dreaming and desire,
Lest we forget our heritage and cease
The Spirit's work to hunger and aspire:
Lest we forget that we were born divine,
Now tangled in red battle's animal net,
Murder the work and lust the anodyne,
Pains of the beast 'gainst bestial solace set.

This poem is closely connected with the World War I imagery of the first half of the first section—and Lewis's statement that he (and others) have a chip of "universal spirit." "Murder the work and lust the anodyne" sums up much of the war as seen at the time: trench warfare at the front and organized brothels behind the lines. The second stanza sums up the animal nature of war. Lewis presented that earlier in such poems as "French Nocturne."

The first stanza establishes the contrast—Oxford vs. the trenches; in terms of this poem, a "palace of peace" vs. the second stanza's "red battle's animal net." In the fourth line of this first stanza, Lewis capitalizes Spirit in "[t]he Spirit's work to [...] aspire." This emphasis (if not the capitalization) also began in the first half of the first section, in "Victory."

The rest of the poem ties Oxford to an ideal; it is "[t]he Spirit's stronghold," and its existence proves "We are not wholly brute." Perhaps this treatment of Oxford seems naive; Lewis's experience of the school had been brief, of colleges with most of their students gone to war. But nevertheless the poem captures what Oxford meant to Lewis during the war years—and, within the context of this book, what one type of emphasis on Spirit looks like.

The thirty-first poem, "Hymn (for Boys' Voices)," is a curious work. The first tercet reads:

All the things magicians do
Could be done by me and you
Freely, if we only knew.

Presumably, that ending means "if we only knew how" or "only knew the secret." The next two stanzas announce children could play the faeries' games if they were shown how to do it, and "[e]very man" could be "a God" if he could see as God does. Next comes a sentence running through six tercets with a parallel assertion, and then a single tercet at the end doing the same thing. (The God that is mentioned seems to be the God of beauty of "De Profundis"—he is singing and is compared to Orpheus.) One is tempted to reply to "if we only knew" with "But we don't." Perhaps the un-answered optimism of these stanzas is why the title calls it a song "for Boys' Voices"—the boys are young enough to still believe such marvels can be achieved. In "The Philosopher" in the latter part of the first section, youth was necessary for the achievement of the journey to
faerie; this seems to have the same thesis. But, while these stanzas assert that
great things are possible by magicians, faeries, and God, they also suggest that
no ordinary human yet is achieving them.

The thirty-second poem, "Our Daily Bread," begins as a reply to
"Hymn (for Boys' Voices)." It suggests that no special knowledge is needed for
the supernatural experiences; here are the first two quatrains:

We need no barbarous words nor solemn spell
To raise the unknown. It lies before our feet;
There have been men who sank down into Hell
   In some suburban street,

And some there are that in their daily walks
Have met archangels fresh from sight of God,
Or watched how in their beans and cabbage-stalks
   Long files of faerie trod.

The speaker goes on to say he has experienced this in common places—he has
heard their voices call him, has seen the "land beyond the wall," has seen "a
strange god's face." And sometime these experiences will cause him to leave his
common life and go as a pilgrim until he reaches "the last steep edges of the
earth" where he can leap into a "gulf of light." The poem ends with a statement
about the pre-existence of the "Self": before his birth and the narrowing of the
Self in this world, part of him (his Self? his Soul? his Spirit?) "lived aright."
Presumably the "gulf of light" is a statement of spiritual light; perhaps it is the
"universal spirit" of which the speaker may be said to have a chip. In this poem's
theology, the chip seems to diminish during life on earth, but a return to the
source is possible, presumably for a restoration of spirit, a re-charging of the
chip. Leaping into a gulf is normally a suicidal action; the phrase of a "gulf of
light" seems to alleviate those overtones. No nearby danger is described that one
must leap over, as in "L'Apprenti Sorcier." (Lewis's poor short story "The Man
Born Blind" was written to illustrate a point to Owen Barfield [cf. Ward 33-35],
but it shares some imagery in common with this poem, with the more common
result of the leaping into gulfs.) In this poem, the speaker says he has heard
faerie voices, etc., which seem to be experiences of Sehnsucht, as in the discussion
of "Song," but he has not become a pilgrim yet (perhaps he has not yet died) to
return to his divine pre-existence. No quest has yet been undertaken. How
serious Lewis was about a pre-existence is impossible to say. He would have
found the concept presented in Plato; and, since Wordsworth used the idea in
"Ode: Intimations of Immortality," Lewis could have found there the permission
needed to use pre-existence hypothetically in English poetry. (If it is a symbol of
something, not just a statement of Platonic pre-existence, the symbolism is not clear.)

The thirty-third poem, "How He Saw Angus the God," is the first of two Irish poems in this section. It is also another that, in its conclusion, seems oddly placed in the "Escape" category. It begins with a common pattern in the second half of the first section: the speaker goes out into external nature early in the morning, in this case singing. The details are better imagined than in some of the other poems, and there is a shift to the plural *we* at one point:

—That little wood of hazel and tall pine  
And younking fir, where oft we have loved to see  
The level beams of early morning shine  
Freshly from tree to tree.

Perhaps this is a reminiscence of walks with Arthur Greeves in an actual area; at least, it seems to catch Lewis's casual assumption of shared walks, such as those with Greeves.

In the previous poems of this type, the sight of a naiad or a faerie comes through the experience of nature; here it is a very specific Irish god who appears, the male god of love:

Swift, naked, eager, pitiless fair,  
With a live crown of birds about his head,  
Singing and fluttering, and his fiery hair,  
Far out behind him spread,  
Streamed like a rippling torch upon the breeze  
Of his own glorious swiftness[]

Most of the earlier poems end with a suggestion that the speaker will one day join the Ever-living, but this poem has a different ending—here is the last stanza:

But, when I followed him beyond the wood,  
Lo! he was changed into a solemn bull  
That there upon the open pasture stood  
And browsed his lazy full.

Surely an implied pun is in this transformation (the god "changed into" the bull): from Angus the god to an Angus bull. The bull's color is not given in the poem; but, since the god's hair is red, one may assume this is a Red Angus. (The British registry of Angus cattle does not distinguish between the Red and the Black, as does the American; but obviously the British are aware of the two colors.)

However, more than the pun, what does this transformation **mean**? Certainly the change is one from "swiftness" (*swift* and *swiftness* are both used in
the description of the god) to lazyness (lazy is used). One can think of
descriptions of a bull that might emphasize its power or its sexuality, both
appropriate for a god of love; but Lewis emphasizes contrast. The words solemn
and browsed also contrast with the tone of the god’s description. Surely despite
this poem’s placement in “The Escape” grouping, this is another statement, like
“Irish Nocturne,” of the failure of the modern Irish to live gloriously; instead of
being like their god, they are like a lazy bull. As a quest, this has ended in a
pasture.

The thirty-fourth poem, “The Roads,” begins “among the hills of
Down”—in other words, not far from Belfast. Probably it was placed next to
“How He Saw Angus the God” because of its Irish connection, but the poems are
not otherwise much alike. From the hills of Down, the speaker looks at the roads
spread out of the west—to the east would be the Irish Sea—and he says, “[T]he
call of the roads is upon me [...] [to] seek for the lands no foot has trod and the
seas no sail has known.” No such land exists on Tellus, but this is a romantic
quest “[f]or the lands to the west of evening and east of the morning’s birth, /
Where the gods unseen in their valleys green are glad at the end of earth[.]” As a
statement of a desire for such a journey to such a divine place, this poem will do
well enough; it is a statement of longing (of Sehnsucht), not of achievement.

The thirty-fifth poem, “Hesperus,” is another poem of longing. From
the first stanza:

I would follow, follow
Hesperus the bright,
To seek beyond the western wave
His garden of delight.

Hesperus, as the evening star, is seen by the speaker in his “evening walks,”
although—rather confusingly—Hesperus, when morning comes, is said then to
retire to the West, where, following Greek mythology, his daughters, the
Hesperides, guard a tree with golden apples. Of course, Lewis may be counting
on his reader to know that Hesperus and Eosphorus—the morning star—are the
same bright planet seen at different times (most commonly applied to Venus,
occasionally to Mercury). The speaker of the poem wishes he could also go to the
far west:

Ah! that I could follow
In thy footsteps bright,
Through the starry hollow
Of the summer night,
Sloping down the western ways
To find my heart’s delight!
Thus the final stanza. The "hollow" and the "slope" are, of course, the way the stars seem to move down the sky in the west as the earth turns. The point is the desire to follow Hesperus, to reach a land of pleasure. No suggestion is made that this desire can be achieved.

The thirty-sixth poem, "The Star Bath," is another oddity among the poems in that it has to make the speaker immortal or reincarnated in order for him to recount the stars coming down to bathe in a mountain pool "[a]ges ago before the birth of men / Or earliest beast." The stars’ appearance is said to be like "clustering fireflies"; they come like "a flock / Of falling birds"; their bathing involves the "hissing of faint flame." Lewis seems to be considering these stars as small specks of fire, as they are seen from earth. Obviously, the size of stars considered from science's perspective is an impossibility—the mountain pool would be evaporated, and the earth itself would be destroyed. (The only other possibility is that these are spirits from the stars, like dryads from trees. But nothing the poem says encourages this reading.)

It is not clear who the speaker is supposed to be. Perhaps the likeliest possibility is that this is based on something like the Platonic pre-existence of the soul, so the soul or spirit of the speaker really did see this prehistoric event. If this is correct so far, then the question remains of meaning. If this be an "escape" as in the section title, then the escape from the present world is through memories of pre-historic events. Since most people do not have such memories—or, at least, mental access to such memories—this depicts the escape of a solitary individual, not an average person. Furthermore, the poem does not celebrate this as an escape. The poem’s conclusion treats it more as a wonder: "Yet I was still the same / That now remember, knowing not where or when [the stars took their bath].” If this be an escape (despite the emphasis), it is strictly a mental one; as in "Dungeon Grates," in which a momentary glimpse of beauty is enough, here the memory of a wonder—a prehistoric memory at that—is enough. But this poem takes much conjectural forcing to fit it to the major themes of the book.

The thirty-seventh poem, "Tu Ne Quæsieris," is titled with the opening of Horace’s eleventh ode, Book I; the title is usually translated as “Ask not” (cf. King 85). The argument of Horace’s poem is that one should not seek to know the future (e.g., when one will die) but use the present. Lewis applies the argument to life after death. He rejects the hopeful claims of spiritualists as not affecting his current life—one of his examples of his current life is "break[ing his] will against God’s will.” But then he reaches his death and celebrates a blending into nature. The capital “D” for Divine as he starts suggests some sort of religious belief—perhaps in the goddess Natura.

But when this searching thought of mine
Is mingled in the large Divine [...]
Then, he says, his laughter will be part of Southern breezes, his glorious
daydreams will be part of sunsets, his "dead sin and foolishness" will be part of
"Nature's whole distress," and then, he adds in conclusion,

To perfect being I shall win,
And where I end will Life begin.

The capital on "Life" implies some sort of meaningful spiritual existence, and
"perfect being" perhaps can be paraphrased as "a perfected existence." But all of
the examples are tied to a Romantic celebration of nature. It is not clear from
what the speaker says whether his individual consciousness will continue to
exist or whether he is being blended into whatever kind of spirit exists in nature.
Certainly this poem is celebratory about a future existence (in contrast to Horace
about the future in this world and in a different way from the messages given
spiritualists), but the generalizations about this Life in this Divine are not very
clear. Probably because Lewis was not certain what he really could affirm.

The thirty-eighth poem, "Lullaby," is a descriptive piece without any
narrative persona or comment. A tower by a wood is dwelt in by three maidens
who "spin both night and day" (as Tennyson's Lady of Shalott weaves) except
for a period at the evening when, with use of a magic word, they are transformed
into swans, fly out a window, and sing a high-pitched lullaby. This seems to be a
fairy-tale of Lewis's own invention in some details, suggested by pan-
Scandinavian stories about swan-maidens. A number of swan varieties may have
suggested the singing—the whooper, trumpeter, and whistling swans. If this is
what Lewis had in mind, then the poem is parallel to "Night" I and "To Sleep" in
that the lullaby may bring sleep to those that hear it—and thus (in the context of
this book) allows them to escape the misery of life. The high-pitched singing may
deliberately echo the high-pitched songs of faeries in "Night" II: "faerie voices,
thin and high / As the bat's unearthly cry." However, the most famous folk belief
about swans in the west refers to the mute swans singing just before their deaths.
Possibly Lewis meant to invert this, so the singing of these swan-maidens brings
not sleep but death to their hearers. Thus the lullaby would be one bringing the
final sleep. This reading unites this poem to several poems in the book that end
in suggestions of death. Since this poem is descriptive, without any stated
meaning, its application is open to either interpretation.

The thirty-ninth poem, "World's Desire," is one of the three poems
addressed to a woman in the book: "Apology" and "Ode for New Year's Day"
are addressed to Despoina (and she seems clearly a woman, not a goddess, in
"Ode"), and this one is addressed to "Love." This comment omits the poem
addressed to a female personification—"Night" I, to "Mother Night." Critical
disagreement exists about Despoina (cf. King 73, 75, 327-28.n37), but "Love"
seems clear enough.
The speaker describes a castle across a ravine, built on a rock (perhaps an allusion to Matthew 7:24-25). Below it is a wild forest and a strong river. The North Wind blows on the forest. (Perhaps a symbol of death on this side of the ravine, alluding to George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind.* But the castle is not affected, being calm, white and sunlit. Within this setting is “the faerie maiden,” “[s]inging of the world’s regret.” She weeps and looks up in vain to the castle; her feet are torn by the briars. Seemingly also in this setting are the speaker and his love. Twice the speaker promises her that they will live in the castle: “it shall be a resting-place, dear heart, for you and me” and, among “the lovely folk” wandering in the castle’s gardens, “beloved, there’s a place for you and me.”

This poem seems to be deliberately misleading for the average reader, who will normally identify with the lovers. Whatever the relationship between the speaker and his love, the reaching of the castle is a promise not achieved in the poem. The imagery suggests the castle is a false image, a false dream, for its “gates are made of ivory” and, again, it has “ports of ivory.” As has been said about two earlier poems with mention of ivory portals, Vergil’s Hades has gates of ivory for false dreams to pass through. Finally, the faerie maiden is described with “soulless loveliness” that cannot win the castle. *Loveliness* in this book is used in connection with Beauty, the quality that stands in contrast to Satan or the God of this world. Lewis, when he first introduces her, describes her not as *a*, but as *the*, faerie maiden—hence, the principle of Beauty.

Therefore, this poem may be read as an allegory. The speaker and his love are the people of this world who wish to achieve Heaven, on the other side of a divide from this tumultuous world of corrupted nature. But Heaven is an illusion. Thus the title of the poem—“World’s Desire”—is ironic. The faerie maiden—who is often removed from this world in the book’s poems, as having a life elsewhere—is here instead a suffering member of the world: as in “The Witch” she is an example of what happens to Beauty (perhaps to the artist, since she is singing) in this world. Her song’s topic—“the world’s regret”—is not perfectly clear, but perhaps it can be summed up as Matter = Nature = Satan.

The fortieth and final poem, “Death in Battle,” serves as an epilogue to the volume. An earlier version is titled “My Own Death Song” (Greeves 310)—and, one would conjecture, Lewis had told Greeves to publish it under that title if he did not survive the war. The speaker has been fighting in the war “[a]mong men cursing in fight and toiling.” He leaves behind “[t]he brutal, crowded faces around [him], that in their toil have grown / Into the faces of devils—yea, even as [his] own.” The setting is thus that of the first half of the first section.

When he is killed, he enters (or requests an entrance to) a different world certainly, but not, it seems clear, a Christian world. The poem begins with “Open the gates for me”—a request, or possibly a command. In the second
quatrain, the entrance seems certain (not just requested): “the heat and the pain together suddenly fall away, / All’s cool and green.” (Obviously, in one sense, the whole poem is hypothetical, based on Lewis’s own projected death; but the point is what sort of language he uses, and how it ties into the context of *Spirits in Bondage*.)

In the first stanza, this is the description of the afterlife:

Open the gates of the peaceful castle, rosy in the West,
In the sweet dim Isle of Apples over the wide sea’s breast[.]

In light of the use of the ivory-portaled castle in the previous poem, this castle might be taken as ironic, but the connotations of images have shifted before in this book (such as the faerie maiden of the previous poem compared to the earlier faerie maidens). More interesting is the reference to his going in death to the “Isle of Apples”: this is Avallon (Welsh *Afallon*), the Celtic land of the dead somewhere in the western ocean. This is clearly pagan. But the fourth quatrain is not so clearly Celtic:

Ah, to be ever alone,
In flowery valleys among the mountains and silent wastes untrod,
In the dewy upland places, in the garden of God,
This would atone!

The images of nature are here, of course, but “the garden of God” raises questions. This could be the far-off God of Beauty of earlier poems. But, given that this is (or seems to be) the Isle of Apples, this god possibly could be Manannán mac Lir. However, Lewis’s use of “God” makes it sound vaguely Christian and thus not likely to cause him troubles with his readers. The word “atone,” used in the sense that this nature makes up for the warfare, is also a Christian cover for Lewis’s meaning.

Did Lewis really believe in the Isle of Apples? Not literally, but possibly imaginatively. Earlier was quoted the passage from *Surprised by Joy* in which Lewis analyzes his split between reason and imagination in this period. That is enough of an answer. But a second answer is also significant. In a letter to Greeves before he served in the war, Lewis wrote, “If I do ever send my stuff to a publisher, I think I shall try Maunsel, those Dublin people, and so tack myself definitely onto the Irish school” ([8 July 1917], *TST* 195, *CL* 1.325). The poems about faeries, the one reference to a leprechaun, the depiction of the god Angus, the “Irish Nocturne,” and “The Roads,” and this depiction of the Isle of Apples are part of Lewis’s Irish culture—and part of a momentary impulse to join “the Irish school.” The Isle of Apples was hardly religious doctrine for Lewis the antitheist, but it was the appropriate imagery to use for a hoped-for (but not rationally expected) afterlife for an Irishman.
VI. A Retrospective

In the 1943 "Preface" to the third edition of *The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity*, *Reason and Romanticism*, Lewis describes his early experiences of Longing or *Sehnsucht*. Before he found that this Longing was a desire for God (not in either the diabolic or the far-away sense of *Spirits in Bondage*, but in the Christian sense, as recounted in *The Pilgrim's Regress*), he had thought it was aroused by various things of this world:

[...] if [this longing] comes to a child while he is looking at a far off hillside he at once thinks 'if only I were there'; if it comes when he is remembering some event in the past, he thinks 'if only I could go back to those days'. If it comes (a little later) while he is reading a 'romantic' tale or poem of 'perilous seas and faerie lands forlorn', he thinks he is wishing that such places really existed and that he could reach them. If it comes (later still) in a context with erotic suggestions he believes he is desiring the perfect beloved. If he falls upon literature (like Maeterlinck or the early Yeats) which treats of spirits and the like with some show of serious belief, he may think that he is hankering for real magic and occultism. When it darts out upon him from his studies in history or science, he may confuse it with the intellectual craving for knowledge. (8)

Lewis adds, "But every one of these impressions is wrong. The sole merit I claim for this book is that it is written by one who has proved them all to be wrong" (8).

Although this statement is a useful summary of Lewis's youthful folly, it is also a useful guide to how important these objects were to Lewis when he was in his late teens and his twentieth year. Lewis's list can be applied to his poems in *Spirits in Bondage*:


*The past.* Cf. "The Star-Bath" (before the existence of mankind or the "earliest beast").

*The land of Faerie.* Cf. the various references to faeries, sea-gods, etc.


To these topics may be added two that Lewis had mentioned earlier in his preface (7):


*Marvellous literature.* Cf. "Milton Read Again" and "Ballade Mystique."
The study of science or history does not seem to have inspired any of the poems unless the emphasis on the stars around the Sun in "In Prison" belongs in this category. (This is not an argument that each of these poems is about Sehnsucht—just that the Longing came from the objects at times, and thus the objects or topics came to Lewis’s mind as the basis of poems. Some of the poems are about Longing, such as "Hesperus," but they were pointed out in their discussions.)

Obviously, Longing does not flow from World War I nor from such a negative situation as recounted in "Alexandrines." By 1955 in Surprised by Joy, Lewis writes about his war experiences:

[...the frights, the cold, the smell of H.E. [high explosive], the horribly smashed men still moving like half-crushed beetles, the sitting or standing corpses, the landscape of sheer earth without a blade of grass, the boots worn day and night till they seemed to grow to your feet—all this shows rarely and faintly in memory. It is too cut off from the rest of my experience and often seems to have happened to someone else. It is even in a way unimportant. (185)

At the time of Spirits in Bondage, the war experience was still important: it was the basis of the opening poems and a scattering of later ones. It caused Lewis to have nightmares for a number of years after the war (Gilchrist 140; Sayer 139). It was while he was recovering from his war wounds that Lewis formulated Matter = Nature = Satan. But Lewis’s dismissal of his wartime experiences in 1955 is true in one way: it was his romantic experiences of Sehnsucht that later became the basis of his finding his way to a Christian faith. That is the main stream of his life’s experiences. Spirits in Bondage shows one obvious dead end in the war-inspired depiction of an evil god—not that Lewis ever completely escaped that fear: it came back, for a while, in his account of his reaction to his wife’s death, in A Grief Observed (9-10, 24-28, 32-36). Most of the other poems in Spirits in Bondage are more like beginnings of quests. It is no wonder Lewis could not achieve a complete “Escape” in those days.
Appendix: The Matter of the Five Substituted Poems

As said in the essay, the matter of the five substituted poems is complicated. In his letter to Arthur Greeves of [12 September 1918], Lewis says that William Heinemann has written, asking him to reconsider "some" weak poems; the number is not mentioned (TST 230; CL 1.397). But the five poems comes from a letter from Heinemann, of 8 October 1918, in which he suggests these five be omitted:

5.) To Sir Philip Sydney.[
7.) Ballade on a certain pious gentleman.
14.) Sonnet.
22.) Retreat.
24.) In Venusberg. (qtd. King 320-21.n45, from the Lewis Papers 6.49)

Lewis wrote two poems just titled "Sonnet," as well as three with "Sonnet" as the main title (Greeves 309); one of these is subtitled "To Sir Philip Sydney"—so Lewis seems to have dropped his original main title when he submitted this one. Thus, Heinemann rejected two sonnets, while one "Sonnet" (without a subtitle) remains in the book. (Two sonnets seem to have not been submitted.) Lewis, after an exchange of letters with the publishing staff, sends five "new" poems, according to the same letter to Greeves. Walter Hooper lists five poems as those that were sent:

VI. Spooks
XXI. The Autumn Morning
XXIII. Alexandrines
XXXII. "Our Daily Bread"
XXXVII. Tu Ne Quaeisieris (Hooper xxxiv)

Hooper cites no source for his list, and Don W. King, in his C.S. Lewis, Poet, says about each of Hooper’s five: "I have been unable to verify Hooper’s assertion" (327.n36, 329.n47, 329.n56, 330.n61, 330.n65). Clearly Hooper did not just take the numbers of the poems from Heinemann’s list and assume the substitutes have the same positions, wherever Hooper got his five. One may add that "The Autumn Morning," which Hooper lists, was not new, if Lewis is to be taken at his word about the five poems’ newness—it had been written in the summer of 1916 (Greeves 309), three years earlier. Under these uncertainties, no special emphasis was placed on Hooper’s five in this paper, to support or not support Lewis’s thematic arrangements.

At this point, perhaps it is best to clarify the original correspondence, since a reader may have wondered about Lewis sending new poems shortly before 12 September 1918 and Heinemann listing five poems to omit on 8
October. (1) William Heineman writes to Lewis on 3 September 1918, accepting his book for publication and asking him to reconsider “some of the pieces.” The phrase “some of the pieces” is used in Lewis’s letter to Greeves but not in quotations marks—however, it appears in the copy of Heinemann’s original letter, typed into The Lewis Papers by W. H. Lewis (Vol. 6, pp. 31-32). Don W. King quotes this part of the correspondence (320.n45 [first of two quotations from Heinemann]), and Laura C. Schmidt has checked the original letter to make certain that parts omitted by King do not contain any clear references of what to omit—they do not (email of 28 February 2009). (2) Lewis immediately replies that he has “a few new pieces” and asks if he might send some as possible substitutes. This letter is referred to in the letter to Greeves of [12 September], and the phrase “a few new pieces” is taken from the Greeves letter. (3) Charles Sheldon Evans, the managing editor, replies on 5 September 1918. Again, this letter is in The Lewis Papers on pp. 31-32. Evans says that Heineman “was of the opinion that one or two of the pieces were not up the general standards of the book” and tells Lewis to send the poems he mentions (Schmidt, same email). (4) Lewis responds by sending “5 new poems” (quoting from the letter to Greeves). Presumably he sends these on 6 or 7 September 1918, or very soon thereafter. At this point a pause occurs in Lewis’s correspondence with the publisher because Evans also tells Lewis that Heinemann is “out of town for a week or two” (quoting the letter to Greeves).

(5) On [12 September 1918], as has been said, Lewis writes Greeves about his book’s acceptance and about the correspondence since then (TST 230, CL 1.397). (6) After Heinemann’s return, he replies to Lewis on 8 October 1918 with the list given above. The first three of his list are certainly older poems; these dates are from Greeves’s copy of Lewis’s poems (309): “To Sir Philip Sidney” (summer 1916), “Ballade on a certain pious gentleman” (Easter 1917), and “Sonnet” (Easter 1916). (If one assumes this “Sonnet” is either No. 14 or No. 23 of Greeves’s collection—the two without subtitles—then it cannot be No. 14 because that “Sonnet” appears in Spirits in Bondage as No. XX [Schmidt, email of 3 March 2009]—and thus it is, with a high degree of probability, No. 23, which was written in the Easter vacation of 1916. Of course, Lewis could have dropped the subtitle from one of the other two sonnets or he could have written another “Sonnet” late in the process, but the probabilities are with No. 23.) “Retreat” and “Venusberg” do not appear in Greeves’s collection, so they were presumably written after Easter 1917, the last date he has. This letter from Heinemann to Lewis is reprinted in King (320.n45 [second letter].) (7) On 18 October 1918, Lewis writes his father that Heinemann “accepts some new pieces I had sent him and mentions a few he wants rejected” (CL 1.408). This fits the sequence of events: first, Lewis sends five new poems and, then, Heinemann lists what he was rejecting by number in the typescript. Thus, even if Heinemann started out
with a feeling that "one or two" were weak, when he is faced with five new possibilities, he finds five to reject. Ironically, two of those he rejects were also new. (Lewis mentions in a later letter that one of the poems rejected dealt with the passing of King Arthur, based on Layamon's *Brut* [to Greeves, 2 March 1919, *TST* 248, *CL* 1.440]. Presumably this was "Retreat"—unless Lewis combined the island Avalon with the mountain Venusberg.)

If Heinemann just substituted the five new poems for the five he rejected, then the new poems Lewis sent are

V. Irish Nocturne  
VII. Apology  
XIV. The Witch  
XXII. *L’Apprenti Sorcier*  
XXIV. In Praise of Solid People

However, these poems seem to fit into their places too well to be the result of chance placement by the publisher. (The reader may decide whether the thematic arguments in this essay are convincing about this fitness.) And surely Lewis, who had arranged the book with the overall plan he explained to some degree, would have had suggestions about the placement for the five new poems. "Please place 'Such and Such' between 'This' and 'That' and renumber the sequence." Thus, the numbering of the published sequence may not match the originally submitted typescript, since more of the new poems may have fallen in different areas from the original five. (A thematic study of those three that can be identified and read in Greeves’s collection would be interesting, since one can place them in an approximate position in the sequence.) Also, one can date two of these from Greeves’s list: "Irish Nocturne" and "*L’Apprenti Sorcier*" were written during Easter 1917. Again the question arises of what Lewis would call "new." So for all three of these reasons, it is doubtful that these five, taken as a unity, are the substitutes.

This study of the substitution of five "new" poems for five in the original typescript does not attempt to come to any conclusions about the "new" poems' positions in the published book or their thematic fit; but it does attempt to set out the facts that are currently known about them. And it explains why the essay has not tried to discuss their effect on the thematic structure of *Spirits in Bondage*.
Acknowledgements

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Kondratiev, Alexei. Not cited in the text, but his comment about the resemblance of Lewis’s early dualistic poems to Gnosticism—given in the discussion after the reading of the first part of this essay at the Mythopoeic Society Conference on 17 August 2008 in New Britain, Connecticut—led to the point made about “De Profundis.”


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Guests of Honor

❖ James A. Owen, artist and writer of the noted independent comic book *Starchild*, and the young adult fantasies *Here, There Be Dragons* and *The Search for the Red Dragon*, will be the Author Guest of Honor.

❖ Diana Pavlac Glyer, Ph.D., author of *The Company They Keep: C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien as Writers in Community*, winner of the 2008 Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for Inklings Studies, will be the Scholar Guest of Honor.

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