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## Paradise Retold: Lewis's Reimagining of Milton, Eden, and Eve

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### Online Winter Seminar

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### Abstract

C.S. Lewis' interaction with John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in particular his commentary on and retelling of Milton's version of the myth of humanity's Fall, allow us to track Lewis's evolving stance on gender through his changing presentation of Eve-figures. His intertextual interactions with *Paradise Lost* and Eve change dramatically from *A Preface to Paradise Lost* and *Perelandra* to the later *The Magician's Nephew*. Lewis's fragmentation of Eve into multiple characters in *The Magician's Nephew* exhibits specifically gendered changes from his early depictions of Eve, reflecting the more nuanced consideration of gender evidenced in Lewis' later years.

### Additional Keywords

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*; Gender in C.S. Lewis; Lewis, C.S. *A Preface to Paradise Lost*; Lewis, C.S. *Perelandra*; Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Tinidril; Lewis, C.S. *The Magician's Nephew*; Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Polly Plummer; Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Digory Kirke; Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Jadis; Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Women; Good and evil



## PARADISE RETOLD: LEWIS'S REIMAGINING OF MILTON, EDEN, AND EVE

BENITA HUFFMAN MUTH

THROUGHOUT *PERELANDRA*, C.S. LEWIS'S SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL set in an Unfallen world, the main character Ransom reminds himself that events in Eden were unique and cannot unfold exactly the same way again, opening the possibility of a different conclusion to the myth of humanity's fall from a sinless, paradisiacal state. Ransom is particularly focused on the possibility that Perelandra's Eve-figure might not transgress and thus maintain the world's innocence. In stressing the importance of a flexible myth that allows a different ending for both its woman and its world, Lewis recalls John Milton, who more than 275 years earlier, explored the potential for a different ending to the events narrated in Genesis when he turns two Biblical chapters about humanity's fall and scattered verses about Satan's rebellion into the twelve-book epic *Paradise Lost*. Milton stresses that Eve's choice to eat the fruit was not inevitable, and her disobedience, followed by Adam's, is not the narrative's inescapable, necessary ending. Milton's God addresses the issue explicitly when he says humanity is "sufficient" (3.99) to withstand their temptation, and Milton's detailed portrayal of prelapsarian Eden in Books 4-9 challenges readers to imagine a functional, sustainable, unfallen world.

C.S. Lewis takes up that imaginative challenge in his own criticism and fiction by commenting on and critiquing Milton's version in *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942) and presenting his own different versions of the Fall myth in *Perelandra* (1943) and *The Magician's Nephew* (1955). That these multiple presentations refigure both the Biblical account and *Paradise Lost's* version of the fall emphasizes Lewis's interaction with those sources and their expression of the Fall myth's "particular pattern of events" (*George MacDonald: An Anthology* xxx).<sup>1</sup> Lewis's commentary and retelling of Milton's version of that myth allow

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis saw myth as not characterized by specific tellings, media, genre conventions, or literary genius, but by an extra-literary quality of recurring event-patterns that have a lasting, numinous effect on the reader or hearer. No single version, then, is authoritative, opening the door for various versions of the same myth. For more on Lewis's view of myth, see the Preface to *George MacDonald: An Anthology* and "On Myth" in *An Experiment in Criticism*. Salwa Khoddam discusses this idea of myth in relation to Lewis's own created worlds in her introduction to *Mythopoeic Narnia: Memory, Metaphor, and Metamorphoses in The Chronicles of Narnia*.

us to track, through his changing presentation of Eve-figures, Lewis's evolving stance on gender, as his interactions with *Paradise Lost* and Eve change dramatically from *The Preface to Paradise Lost* and *Perelandra* to *The Magician's Nephew*. In particular, his fragmentation of the Eve character in *The Magician's Nephew*, which exhibits specifically gendered changes, reflects the more nuanced consideration of gender evidenced in Lewis's later years, as he makes more complex the roles Eve plays to reinforce Lewis's commitment to the importance of human action in maintaining and redeeming creation.

The possibility of reimagining humanity's actions in Eden, especially Eve's, was a marker of both Milton's and Lewis's commitment to Free Will, an ideal neither considered gendered. Milton's commitment to Free Will in opposition to doctrines of predestination is perhaps the key issue in his presentation of the Genesis story. As Satan flies toward Paradise, Milton's God justifies His craftsmanship of humanity, especially its inclusion of Free Will (and thus humanity's option to act counter to God's will). God asserts that He made humanity, both male and female, according to the same principles as the angels: "just and right / Sufficient to have stood though free to fall" (3.98-99). God proclaims this quality vitally important to the agency of both angels and humanity:

Not free, what proof could they have given sincere  
Of true allegiance, constant faith, or love,  
Where only what they needs must do appeared,  
Not what they would? What praise could they receive? (3.103-106)

Free will, according to Milton's God, makes humanity's actions meaningful, sets up the condition for their further exaltation, and allows them to offer and express love.<sup>2</sup> Such a claim was particularly important for Milton's Eve, who becomes a free, independent, responsible agent, whose actions could lead her to success rather than ensure failure. As Diane K. McColley writes, Milton "broke the stereotypical scapegoating of Eve as essentially a temptress" and gives "responsible motives for her independent movements" which "are not proleptic of the Fall" (179).<sup>3</sup>

Lewis, too, displays a strong commitment to free will for all humanity, regardless of gender, and to the implication of the theoretical possibility of an unfallen creation, often expressing those ideas by echoing Milton's language. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes:

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<sup>2</sup> See also *Paradise Lost* 3.107-10 and *Areopagitica* (350) for Milton's idea that human freedom of choice is a key component of virtue.

<sup>3</sup> For a complex look at Milton's depiction of Eve and consideration of gender, see McColley's "Milton and the Sexes."

God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go either wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong; I cannot. If a thing is free to be good it is also free to be bad. [...] A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. (47-48)

Lewis, like Milton, follows established Christian doctrine in viewing the world as fallen and thus in need of divine redemption, but sees the potential for failure included in Free Will as part of the perfection of humanity's design, not a flaw:

Of course God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way: apparently He thought it was worth the risk. [...] If God thinks this state of war in the universe is a price worth paying for free will—that is, for making a live world in which creatures can do real good or harm and something of real importance can happen, instead of a toy world which only moves when He pulls the strings—then we may take it it is worth paying. (48)

The tenor of Lewis's discussion is certainly Miltonian, recalling especially Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644), his tract against the 1643 Parliamentary order reinstating the previous regime's policy of forbidding unlicensed publications.<sup>4</sup> Here, too, Milton argues against the concept that restriction preserves virtue: "Many there be that complain of divine providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions" [puppet shows; OED "motion" 8.a] (356). Lewis's references in *Mere Christianity* to "automata" and "a toy world" provide a gentle echo of Milton's Adam "in the motions."<sup>5</sup>

Certainly the Christian doctrine of Free Will predates Milton and continues after him; Lewis's ideas are in line with traditional Christian thought,

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<sup>4</sup> In *Areopagitica*, Milton writes of this topic using much the same words as he gives later in *Paradise Lost* to God: "If every action which is good or evil in man at ripe years were to be under pittance, and prescription, and compulsion, what were virtue but a name, what praise could be then due to well-doing, what gramercy to be sober, just, or continent?" (356)

<sup>5</sup> In *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis cites Milton as one of those religious writers "on whom I could really feed" even before his conversion to Christianity, despite what seemed Milton's odd "kink" of Christianity. Lewis considers the attraction for Milton, Spenser, and others while himself an atheist as "the ludicrous contradiction between my theory of life and my actual experiences as a reader" (213).

not solely culled from Milton.<sup>6</sup> Yet one clear intellectual similarity is their common commitment to the theoretical potential for a different outcome to the Eden narrative. That Milton's Adam and Eve are not only "free to fall" but "sufficient to have stood" implies the possibility of a perpetually unfallen world. That Lewis can "imagine" creatures free to be bad presupposes creatures free to be good. The idea that God took a "risk" that humanity would choose evil implies that humanity could have, at one point, chosen differently and that the story "God 'made up out of His head'" (38) might have gone differently, for both men and women.<sup>7</sup> Milton explores the concept of the story's potentially different ending by creating in *Paradise Lost* a lavishly detailed Eden capable of continuation and proposing plans for its future. In a similar manner, Lewis imagines, not the earthly Eden, but two literary worlds, first Perelandra and later Narnia, in which a fall is possible, perhaps even probable, but not preordained, and which emphasize the vital importance of human choice and agency, both male and female, in the world's direction.

However, in creating his own imaginative Edens, Lewis initially also follows Milton's lead in foregrounding traditional gender hierarchy as part of the unfallen ideal.<sup>8</sup> Milton certainly imagines an unfallen world as incorporating gender hierarchy. Despite his "radical [...] insistence on women's spiritual completeness, responsibility, and fitness" (McColley 189), Milton viewed gender hierarchy not as a result of the fall, but (like marriage, sex, and work) a component of the unfallen ideal. Adam and Eve are "Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed" (4.296).<sup>9</sup> Eve herself claims that, "God is thy [Adam's] law, thou mine; to know no more / Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise" (4.637-38). Their fall results from a failure to support the natural hierarchy of their lives, and their failure to choose God's commands over their own wishes is manifested in a failure of gender hierarchy. Eve's thoughts of putting herself, not just on

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<sup>6</sup> His ideas also take into account insights from scientific discovery. See "The Fall of Man" in *The Problem of Pain* (1940) for Lewis' discussion of original sin (63-65) and defense of an early paradisiacal state for humanity, in which he presents a "myth" compatible with evolution, anthropology, and archeology (71-79). He writes, "man, as a species, spoiled himself, and [...] good to us, in our present state, must therefore mean primarily remedial or corrective good" (84).

<sup>7</sup> Lewis also affirms this view in his non-fiction. While noting that we cannot talk with any kind of authority about a hypothetical "what might have happened," he believes a fall is not inevitable: "if there are other rational species than man, existing in some other part of the actual universe, then it is not necessary to suppose that they also have fallen" (*The Problem of Pain* 80-81).

<sup>8</sup> Numerous critics, including Adam Barkman and Margaret Hannay, find sexism in Lewis's writing.

<sup>9</sup> Adam is formed for "valor" and "contemplation" (4.297); Eve for "softness" and "attractive grace" (4.298). Adam is formed "for God only; she for God in him" (4.299).

God's level but above Adam's, tempts her to eat the fruit; Adam's prioritizing of his relationship with Eve over his relationship with God and inappropriately following the course Eve sets tempts him to do likewise.

Such a view is congruent with Lewis's own expressed ideas about women and marriage, especially in his early works. Adam Barkman, arguing against harsh assessments by feminist critics, asserts that Lewis's ideas generally followed the traditional Christian orthodoxy of his time in seeing men and women as equally capable of achieving spiritual excellence, but having uneven spiritual essence and function (417). Lewis's comments about marriage in *Mere Christianity* echo the culturally inscribed idea, reflected in Biblical texts and long-standing societal ideal of which Milton is only one representative: the male has a different and superior role in marriage:

The need for some head follows from the idea that marriage is permanent. [...] If there must be a head, why the man? Well, firstly is there any very serious wish that it should be the woman? [...] There must be something unnatural about the rule of wives over husbands, because the wives themselves are half ashamed of it and despise the husbands whom they rule. (113)

Lewis's tone in this passage, written before his own marriage, asserts this "natural" order with an off-the-cuff, dismissive breeziness that strikes hard on twenty-first century ears. Less radical than Milton's assertion of near-equality of male and female and carefully patterned hierarchy, Lewis's relatively unreasoned acceptance of the social status quo seems to signal his belief in women's lesser competence.<sup>10</sup>

Yet such theoretical dismissiveness, while undoubtedly at the time sincere, may not fully represent Lewis's final ideas about the value of women as individuals. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen argues in *A Sword Between the Sexes: C.S. Lewis and the Gender Debates* that Lewis's immersion in male-dominated British academia supported an easy theoretical misogyny often at odds with his actual practice. Such a viewpoint is also seen in Owen Barfield's comment that Lewis was a misogynist theoretically, but not on a practical level in his relationships with individual women (Downing 150). Certainly his numerous uses of valiant female characters (perhaps most notably in *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Till We Have Faces*) argues against a consistent, knee-jerk misogyny

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<sup>10</sup> See also Alan Jacobs, who while believing ideas about Lewis's supposed misogyny stem largely from misunderstandings, concludes nevertheless that "there is no question that Lewis shared the attitude toward women common to men, and especially Christian men, of his time" (253). The quotation from *Mere Christianity* discussed here is an example of such an attitude.

and a nuanced, though culturally grounded, view of women and their abilities, both spiritual and practical, and Van Leeuwen notes that Lewis's sexism lessens in later life and texts. In particular *Till We Have Faces* (1956), *A Grief Observed* (1961), and *The Discarded Image* (1964) present a more nuanced view of gender relations, moving away from the more traditional view of men and women as belonging to separate spheres, showing fluidity in his thinking about gender that evolved over the course of his life.

Lewis, like many of his and earlier generations, is caught in a cultural contradiction, accepting wholeheartedly the Christian view of the equality of souls in which "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave or free, nor is there male or female" (Galatians 3:28), the subordination of all souls to God's goodness, and the directive to love one's neighbor while also accepting the prevailing cultural idea that men and women, in earthly existence, have different roles and social functions. Certainly Lewis was committed to the Christian ideal that values individual souls and individual free will, regardless of gender; but he had been born into a world of complex class and gender norms which took for granted the idea that men and women had different roles. Like Milton, he sought to blend his societal understanding with the spiritual equality given to all humanity.

Lewis's refigurations of Milton's Eve reflect his accommodation of an influential hierarchical tradition that incorporates and supports a societal gender expectation that views woman's position as different from (and subordinate to) man's and a Christian ideal which values individuals and individual choice, regardless of gender. His attempts at reconciling these views were not static; they exhibit the development and change that Van Leeuwen finds over time, and this development is perhaps most clearly visible in his literary engagement with Milton's Eve and her role in the loss or maintenance of a paradisiacal world. In particular, Lewis's differences between textual engagement with Milton's Eve in the 1940s and his return to Eden-building in the Narnia series in the mid-fifties serve as two useful points along the way of Lewis's evolving gender ideals.

Lewis's engagement with Milton's Eden and Eve in *A Preface to Paradise Lost* and *Perelandra* show Lewis accommodating the ideas of Christian equality with traditional gender hierarchy in much the same manner as John Milton did centuries earlier. Milton depicted women (as represented by Eve) as possessing high, valued status and as being spiritually significant agents, while at the same time accepting of and most comfortable within a benevolent patriarchal ideal. Such a view affirms the individual worth of women while simultaneously affirming their position in the traditional gender hierarchy.

Lewis at this time sees John Milton as a model for successfully negotiating this ideal balance between a gendered hierarchy and an affirmation

of woman's value, a topic Lewis discusses in *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. In this work of literary criticism, Lewis addresses Milton's version of the Fall, critics' misunderstandings of it, and his own evaluation of the portrayal, finding much to admire and some to criticize.<sup>11</sup> Lewis's discussion of Eve seeks to correct what he sees as the mistaken idea of past literary critics that she and Adam are childish savages by emphasizing Milton's insistence on Adam and Eve's maturity and royalty. They are not unsophisticated, naïve children, but "full-grown and perfect" (116) rulers with innate majesty. As Lewis writes, "In considering [Adam's] relations with Eve we must constantly remind ourselves of the greatness of both personages. Their life together is ceremonial—a minuet, where the modern reader looked for a romp" (119). Lewis's image of a minuet, besides conveying the sense of bygone, upper-class maturity, also carries the connotations of pattern, order, and cooperative gender roles. Such a dance requires both male and female partners with equal knowledge of the steps and figures dancing in relation to each other. It is also public, with communal implication, unlike the more personal, unstructured, and immature connotations of "romp." Eve here is presented as Adam's partner in a system of rules and procedures which create harmony and order, a pattern they lead for a broader community to come.

This concept of ceremonial, innate royalty with wider implications extends into Lewis's discussion of gender hierarchy, where he addresses Samuel Johnson's complaint "that Milton thought men made only for rebellion and women only for obedience" (71). In addressing this charge, Lewis first reminds readers that Eve's position in Milton's prelapsarian hierarchical conception includes subordination to Adam, but also includes royalty and active virtue: "This royalty is less apparent in Eve, partly because she is in fact Adam's inferior, in her double capacity of wife and subject, but partly, I believe, because her humility is often misunderstood" (120). Lewis asserts that Eve's humility in obeying Adam's commands and seeing herself as fortunate to have him would be "in Milton's view, becoming humility" (120); it is certainly a contrast to the pride and willful mental usurpation of hierarchy practiced by Satan.

But Lewis also notes that her position is lower only in relation to Adam, not to the rest of creation, and that her affirmation of her husband's role and position should not be taken for insignificance or demeaning subservience. Lewis likens Eve's attitude toward Adam to Portia's toward Bassanio in *The*

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<sup>11</sup> Lewis defines the purpose of *A Preface to Paradise Lost* as an attempt "to 'hinder the hindrances' to the appreciation of *Paradise Lost*" (129), a formidable task in light of what he sees as "more than a hundred years of laborious misunderstanding" (vi). To this end, Lewis's work provides insight into critical issues, such as epic traditions and Christian doctrine, critics either misunderstand or willfully ignore.

*Merchant of Venice*, where she sincerely protests she is nothing compared to him. As Lewis writes,

She may speak thus to Bassanio: but *we* had better remember that we are dealing with a great lady. I am inclined to think that critics sometimes make the same mistake about Eve. We see her prostrate herself in spirit before Adam—as an Emperor might kneel to a Pope or as a Queen curtsies to a King. You must not think but that if you and I could enter Milton's Eden and meet her we should very quickly be taught what it is to speak to the 'universal Dame.' (120)

Thus, Lewis reinforces Milton's portrayal of Eve as lower than Adam, but nevertheless exalted. He insists that hierarchy encompasses gender, but extends beyond it. Eve is, by virtue of her wifely role, rightly subordinate to Adam, but by virtue of her queenly role, superior to any male subjects ("you and I"), and Lewis reminds us that "she stands before [the Angel Raphael] unabashed—a great lady doing the honours of her own house, the matriarch of the world" (121). Lewis's statements assert the importance of hierarchy built into the world itself, with gender hierarchy being merely one iteration of it. Traditional gender hierarchy is maintained: Eve is subordinate to Adam and accepts that role voluntarily and happily as a part of her love for him. Yet Eve, in Lewis's eyes, is not demeaned: in her role as Mother of Humanity, she outranks all other human beings besides Adam, giving her actions and choices dignity, significance, and power.

Lewis presents this interpretation of Milton and of Milton's Eve in fictional form through *Perelandra*, published in 1943, only a year after *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. Margaret Hannay has shown how this novel echoes Miltonic details Lewis admires and corrects those he believed were poetic or theological missteps. For instance, Lewis avoids what he sees as Milton's mistakes of presenting God and prelapsarian sexuality directly by not doing so himself (73). His approval of Milton's portrayal of Eve as royal is clear in the queenliness of the Lewis's Green Lady. Hannay may feel Lewis does not successfully bestow majesty on his Eve (82), but successful or not, Lewis clearly sets her up to be perceived as royal. The animals attend her like courtiers, and "there was in her face an authority, in her caresses a condescension, which by taking seriously the inferiority of her adorers makes them somehow less inferior" (5.65). She recognizes the implications of her exalted position in contrast to others. When she realizes Ransom is not his world's first Father, her attitude toward him changes: "there was a note of deliberate courtesy, even ceremony, in her speech. [...] She knew now at last that she was not addressing an equal. She was a queen sending a message to another queen through a commoner, and her manner toward him was henceforward more gracious" (5.67). Like Milton's Eve, Lewis's

Green Lady possesses queenly authority as a key quality, does not undervalue herself, and is not to be underestimated.

Lewis also emphasizes Milton's insistence of humanity's—and Eve's—sufficiency to withstand temptation by envisioning an Eve-figure who does so. As John Tanner notes, like Raphael's warnings to Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*, Ransom's warnings about sin unintentionally move the Lady away from innocence and make the forbidden increasingly concrete and alluring (136). Yet unlike Milton's Eve, who almost immediately allows herself to be seduced by Satan's twisted logic and flattery, *Perelandra's* Lady resists Weston's verbal enticements to sin with logical and theological subtlety. When he parses the definition of "disobedience," for instance, the Lady immediately notes the strained logic (9.116). She resists disobedience, though worked on almost constantly by the Un-Man, for an undefined "series of days and nights" (10.128). Rather than initiating a Fall, she plays a key role in averting one.

Thus, *Perelandra* supposes both a woman—and through her, a world—that does not fall through her successful application of Free Will. Both Milton and Lewis reject an interpretation of Genesis which assumes the female as responsible for male disobedience; Adam's culpability for his own fall is clearly emphasized in *Paradise Lost*. As in *Paradise Lost*, the Green Lady is tempted as an individual, and presumably Tor, like Milton's Adam, would have had his own temptation had she fallen. However, through the Green Lady's triumph, *Perelandra* vindicates women from any charge of being inherently too weak to stand firm against temptation, and in its replication of a Miltonic Eve, it vindicates traditional Miltonic marital and gender hierarchy as well.

This triumph still includes the suspicion that the female is not endlessly strong. *Perelandra* does in fact present the Lady's potential endurance as limited, if the Tempter's verbal onslaught continues. Even with Ransom playing "good angel" to the Weston's "bad angel,"<sup>12</sup> the Lady seems to weaken. While stronger than Milton's Eve, the Lady toys with self-indulgent dramatizing (and thus overdramatizing) herself, a potential jumping-off point for disobedience. Possessing Weston, the Un-Man aims to seduce the Lady to abandon her true nobility for a false, sentimentalized, prideful version, and Ransom assumes his eventual success. The voice in Ransom's head prompts that "This can't go on" (11.140), and Ransom thinks that, "but for a miracle, the Lady's resistance was bound to be worn away in the end" (11.140). Though like Milton's Eve, she is "sufficient to stand" and does a far better job of it than Eve, Ransom fears her resources will ultimately fail. Ransom then resolves to kill the Un-man, and his success ends the Lady's temptation, securing the new world's safety. While

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<sup>12</sup> John Tanner in particular notes that Ransom and Weston's Un-Man function as these characters reminiscent of morality plays (132).

gender does not ordain her fall, she is still targeted as the weaker link and saved by male intervention.

In this revision of the Fall myth, Lewis upholds the value and spiritual significance of women and maintains traditional gender roles. The Green Lady is a ruler, a person of significance, who thwarts the Satan figure with her resistance and her spiritual understanding. But she is also a wife who assents to her husband-king's authority, and her independence is not one intended to exist unsupported indefinitely. Lewis's conceptual blending of these two ideals allows him, like Milton, to maintain traditional gender roles while affirming the spiritual sufficiency of a women. In *Perelandra*, successful spiritual independence and traditional gender hierarchy are blended into part of the natural order, one that survives unfallen, and provides a vision of how the value and strength of women might be blended—happily and successfully, the novel implies—with the traditional position of men unchallenged.

While *Perelandra* envisions an Eve-character who succeeds and yet conforms to a traditional conception of hierarchy and gender, *The Magician's Nephew* spreads the characteristics of Milton's Eve among several characters, rather than presenting a single Eve-figure, a choice that reveals more awareness of gender complexity than seen in Lewis's earlier works and, to some degree, reverses the gender distinctions in earlier versions of the Fall myth. Published in 1955, 12 years after *Perelandra*,<sup>13</sup> Lewis more drastically reconfigures aspects of the Genesis fall narrative and *Paradise Lost*,<sup>14</sup> and he is less in lock-step with Milton in his attempts to keep spiritually powerful choices by women within the bounds of hierarchical marriage or within the circumscribed role laid out by Milton's Eve.

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<sup>13</sup> It may also be significant to Lewis's more complex view of gender expressed in *The Magician's Nephew* that it was published after the beginning of his friendship with Joy Davidman, whom he later married. Davidman and Lewis first met in person, after two years of letters, during her visit to England in 1952.

<sup>14</sup> Besides the allusions to *Paradise Lost* in *The Magician's Nephew* discussed later in this article, other parts of Milton's epic given homage in Lewis's novel include the Son rather than the Father creating Earth (7.163-167 and 7.587-591); "another world" (7.155) being created after a revolt in an earlier-created realm; the Son speaking "the omnific word" (7.217) in creation (with its negative parallel in Jadis's destructive "Deplorable Word" [MN 5.66]); the creation of light as accompanied by a singing host, "celestial choirs" for Milton (7.253-260) and stars for Lewis (MN 8.107); and a warning that a person with evil intent will attempt to undermine the new world (Raphael warning Adam about Satan [5.519-543, 6.895-912], with Aslan warning the Talking Animals). Most charmingly, the grasses spreading over barren earth from Aslan's feet (MN 9.112-115) and the rising of the Narnians from swelling ground (MN 9.122-123) recall the description of the creation of vegetation and animals in *Paradise Lost* (7.301-328; 7.449-476).

The first mark of Lewis's later complexity in addressing Eve is that he assigns individual parts of Eve's character or role to several female characters who nevertheless resist full identification with her. *The Magician's Nephew* contains many details from Genesis—like a newly created world, a garden, and forbidden fruit—and from *Paradise Lost*—like Milton's Satan, its tempter climbs the garden's wall, disdains any secondary position, and aims at perverting the Creator's plans. However, this story lacks a single, clear Eve-figure. Three female characters—Polly, Helen, and Jadis—possess aspects of that role, but none move from Eve-like innocence through temptation to disobedience.

As a main character and Digory's female partner in the adventures, Polly is a clear candidate for an Eve-figure. For Milton's Adam, companionship is the primary need Eve fulfills and Milton asserts that "a meet and happy conversation is the chiefest and noblest end of marriage" (*The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* 249), giving "the mutual enjoyment of that which the wanting soul needfully seeks" (254). As Adam needs a companion, so does the child Digory, who finds one in the attics. Digory, lonely and displaced and grieving his mother's coming death, needs a companion badly, and their friendship enriches the cold, wet summer for both with conversation and play-adventures. As their adventures become real, they are partners in explorations of new worlds and who work together to remove Jadis from their world. In a story that, like Genesis and *Paradise Lost*, centers around a male-female pair that brings evil into a new world, Polly may initially seem the most obvious Eve-figure, translated into a child's-story context.<sup>15</sup>

Yet Polly also resists complete identification with Eve. One obvious difference, of course, is that as a child, she is never presented as a wife or sexual partner for Digory; even when grown, the narrator notes that they remain life-long friends, but never marry.<sup>16</sup> This is, certainly, due to genre convention: a sexual connection between pre-pubescent children in a children's story is inappropriate. In fact, Lewis claims in "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to Be Said" one attraction of the fairy tale form for the Narnia books was that it "seemed to demand no love interest" (46), thus avoiding romantic entanglements. Yet the fact that Polly never, even in the future, becomes a life-partner gains additional resonance here. Genre demands can be fudged, when

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Ward suggests that Polly's name is "carefully chosen" (182). As a form of "Molly," it is connected to "Mary," the archetypal mother; and her surname "Plummer" (suggesting "grower of plums") connects her to fruit trees and growth (n.84, 297). Such connections to Mary, the "new Eve" of Christian tradition (see note 29, below, for more) also link Polly to Eve, who in Milton is a gardener deeply concerned with her "nursery" (8.46) of fruits and flowers.

<sup>16</sup> See Van Leeuwen, Chapter 5 ("A Better Man than his Theories") about Lewis and his relationship to female students, colleagues, and friends.

desired. For example, in *The Horse and His Boy* (the Narnia book published most immediately before *The Magician's Nephew*) Aravis is a similar female companion for the male protagonist who, at the story's end, later becomes his wife.<sup>17</sup> Because *The Magician's Nephew* is redolent in echoes of *Paradise Lost*, readers may be half-expecting such a departure here; thus, the specific mention that the book's male-female pair do *not* marry, besides conforming to convention, also serves to distance the primary female companion from Eve. In *Paradise Lost* and *Perelandra*, the roles of Eve and the Lady are almost inextricable from their role as wives. But Polly, by contrast, is definitively not a matrimonial partner for Digory, even in the future. She is his non-sexualized, non-romanticized friend and who, in a significant departure from Milton's Eve, is Digory's equal throughout their adventures and their life-long relationship.

Besides being non-matrimonialized, Polly is a child born into a fallen world; however admirable, she does not possess Eve's innocence, maturity, or queenliness. She gets dirty exploring attics, she is easily tricked into touching the rings by Uncle Andrew, and she can be sharp-tongued and occasionally insensitive. On their first meeting, she comments on Digory's "funny name" (1.4), and when arguing, she turns to insults that put down the other and praise herself. In their first angry exchange, she remarks, "At any rate I *do* wash my face" (1.4), and after reminding Digory that they need to mark the pool to their world before trying others, she comments, "It's a good thing *one* of us has some sense" (3.41). Her childishness shows in her desire to create Smugglers' Caves and imagining putting the shiny rings in her mouth if she were only a little younger. Despite her many good choices, other actions show that she is not merely inexperienced, but immature, as is seen through her lack of tact and in how she falls easily into quarrels with Digory in defense of her self-image. She is neither horribly good nor horribly bad, a child born into a sinful world who matures through her adventures and learns from mistakes, not (in a significant theological difference from Eve and *Perelandra's* Lady) a sinless queen whose choices determine the fate of her world.

Yet perhaps the most striking narrative contrast between Polly, Lewis's Green Lady, and Milton's Eve is that Polly is a resolute foil for Digory's wavering and self-deception. This is not to say she is faultless or all-wise; she does not see through Uncle Andrew's flattery and deceptive gift of the ring, for instance. But when guidelines are clear, she is not tempted to stray from them, certainly less so than Digory. She sensibly does not wish to strike the bell in the Hall of Kings on Charn; the warning against danger is enough. Nor does she fabricate any imaginary "magic" to justify transgressing the plaque's warning

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<sup>17</sup> Caspian and Ramandu's daughter also marry at the end of *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader,"* and Tirian seems intrigued by Lucy in *The Last Battle*.

or her common sense. By contrast, Milton's Eve allows herself to be swayed by Satan's sophistry about the fruit's wonderful powers and, despite knowing better, joins in it to justify her desire to eat the fruit to become a "Goddess humane" (9.732). Lewis's Green Lady thinks of "greatness, tragedy, high sentiment" in response to Weston's mirror, and Ransom sees the dangers of the "external and [...] dramatic conception of the self" waking in her. Ransom sees her potential for self-deception as the most potent danger, as the Un-Man is "making her mind a theatre in which that phantom self should hold the stage" (P 138-139).

Polly, however, is not attracted by self-dramatization or deception. She finds Digory's acceptance of the poem's suggestion that wondering will drive them mad both "silly" and irrelevant: "What does it matter what would have happened?" she says (MN 4.55). She feels none of the "Magic" Digory insists compels him and believes he is merely "putting it on" (4.55). From the first, she distrusts Jadis and does not allow herself to be dazzled as Digory initially does. Nor is she swayed by Jadis's attempts to encourage the children to overdramatize themselves as Weston entices the Lady to do; when Jadis spins a courtly tale about how Digory came hero-like to free her, Digory admits weakly that it didn't exactly happen that way, but Polly is adamant: "Why, it's absolute bosh from beginning to end" (5.71). Although not faultless, Polly is neither the tempter's object, as Eve was Satan's and Digory is Jadis's, nor does she prove herself particularly susceptible to self-deception.<sup>18</sup>

Here, the female is certainly not viewed as inherently the easier target, reversing the gender dichotomy of *Perelandra* and *Paradise Lost*. In *Perelandra*, the male Tor is never tested by the Un-Man; in *The Magician's Nephew*, Polly is not Jadis's object. In *Paradise Lost*, Eve goes alone to the Tree of Knowledge and is tempted to eat its fruit; in *The Magician's Nephew*, Digory, not Polly, is the one tempted to steal fruit in a garden. Despite being the primary female character and companion, Polly is not Eve. In fact, she displays potential connections to Milton's Adam, whose steady intellect provides support and instruction for Eve, as when he instructs her about reason's power over fancy. Milton's female Eve is weaker without the male Adam, one reason Satan chooses her as his object and tempts her when alone, avoiding Adam.<sup>19</sup> Here gender roles are reversed,

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<sup>18</sup> Perhaps her early experience with Uncle Andrew and the attraction of the rings prepares her for the experience in Charn? But even so, taking a tempting toy-like gift from a neighbor, whom she believes a little deranged, is a lesser level of temptation and transgression than Digory's refusal to ignore the warning in Charn or his attraction to the determined inveigling to which Jadis, a self-proclaimed genocide, subjects him.

<sup>19</sup> See *Paradise Lost* 9:479-492.

as the male Digory is picked immediately by Jadis as the more useful and perhaps easier "mark," while Polly is largely ignored.<sup>20</sup>

Likewise, Digory would be weaker without Polly, who, while lacking Adam's maturity and patience, has the potential to provide stability and corrective logic for Digory as Milton's Adam did for Eve.<sup>21</sup> While Polly's arguments for not ringing the bell, delivered in the midst of a squabble, have little effect, the stabilizing effect of Polly's friendship is felt most in time of crisis and grows as their relationship does. When Digory realizes the threat Jadis poses, he does not jump home on his own and abandon Polly. They confer with a look, "aghast" (5.69), and put on their rings when Polly draws Jadis's ire, making their escape together. Milton's Adam suggests to Eve that one's mere presence would increase the other's strength during a trial of faith; he would be "best witness of thy [Eve's] virtue tried" (9.317). So his companion's presence proves for Digory. Jadis's proposal that Digory abandon Polly cements his rejection of Jadis's advice to steal an apple, because "the meanness of the suggestion that he should leave Polly behind suddenly made all the other things the Witch had been saying to him sound false and hollow" (13.178). Digory, like the Green Lady of *Perelandra*, was resisting temptation on his own; but as Ransom's intervention ensured the Lady's safety, Polly's presence provides the touchstone Digory needs to reject Jadis's suggestion entirely.

Jadis more clearly displays some of Eve's characteristics. She is mature, beautiful, and regal, qualities of Milton's Eve and Lewis's Green Lady. For several chapters, she is called "The Queen." Like Eve, her beauty is distracting. Milton's Adam is so in awe of Eve's beauty that, to Raphael's consternation, he admit that her "loveliness [is] so absolute" that her will and actions seem "wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best" and above all higher knowledge (8.547-552). Likewise, Digory is impressed by Jadis's beauty; he too excuses pronouncements his own better judgement otherwise rejects. When hearing in Jadis's words the same hubris he earlier criticized in his uncle, his reaction is more tolerant; the words and opinion "sounded much grander when Queen Jadis said them; perhaps because Uncle Andrew was not seven feet tall and dazlingly beautiful" (5.66).<sup>22</sup> Jadis also demonstrates qualities ascribed to Eve

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<sup>20</sup> Twice Jadis speaks to Digory in response to a comment Polly makes, helping to establish the idea that Digory is her primary focus (5.59 and 5.97).

<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, *Paradise Lost* 4.481-491, 4.657-688, and 5.95-128. For Adam's discussion of how they are stronger together, see 9.308-317.

<sup>22</sup> The impression of her beauty lingers; even as an old man, Digory "said he had never in all his life known a woman so beautiful" (4.53). Uncle Andrew is also affected by Jadis's beauty. Her bearing and appearance repeatedly cause him to ignore her callous treatment of him. At first he imagines her as a love interest (5.83), and even years later excused her temper, saying "[S]he was a dem fine woman, sir, a dem fine woman" (15.202).

by other, non-Miltonic traditions: she tempts and uses men, specifically Digory and his uncle, toward their downfall.<sup>23</sup> Most obviously, Jadis maintains one key characteristic of the Biblical, as well as the Miltonic, Eve: she is this book's apple-eater, who takes a forbidden fruit, gaining both what she sought and the regret inherent in its negative consequences. Having done so, like Milton's Eve, she offers the fruit to a male, knowing it will lead to his downfall.

However, although possessing these Eve-like characteristics, Jadis has stronger associations with Milton's Satan. Jadis's prideful royalty is differentiated from the innate nobility of Milton's Eve or *Perelandra's* Lady; she is cruel and uninterested in the fate of her subjects, concerned only with her own power. Like Satan, Jadis has a backstory; Digory and Polly find her imprisoned in a kind of self-imposed and self-created Hell, frozen as a statue waiting for opportunity to regain power. Elizabeth Baird Hardy also discusses this connection to Satan, emphasizing that Jadis too prefers reigning in Hell to serving (30). She, like Satan, has fought over a throne for which we have only her word she deserves. In defeat, like Satan who runs over the edge of Heaven taking his followers with him, she speaks the Deplorable Word, turning Charn into a dead world rather than submitting to another's rulership. Like Satan, she now seeks another realm to control and to mar a new world to thwart the Creator.<sup>24</sup> Readers of course recognize Jadis as the White Witch, whose hold on Narnia Aslan's Christ-like sacrifice breaks in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Although possessing aspects of the regal, beautiful, tempting Eve, Jadis is no legitimate queen, an important quality of Eve for both Milton and Lewis, and certainly no innocent who falls to temptation by succumbing to the persuasion of another to deceive herself.

Queen Helen more closely resembles the unfallen Eve of *Paradise Lost*, as she is a wife possessing the beginnings of true royalty, unlike either the child Polly or the corrupt, un-mated Jadis. Like Milton's Eve, her purpose in Narnia is two-fold: companionship for its king, and sovereignty as its first queen. When Aslan asks Frank, the London cabbie, his opinion about staying in Narnia, Frank admits he would like to stay, provided his wife were there, and Aslan's call pulls

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<sup>23</sup> Michael Ward notes Ishtar as another source for Jadis (178). Ishtar, the Babylonian fertility goddess, has connections to Venus/Eve figures.

<sup>24</sup> Jadis hates Aslan's music and magic: "She hated it. She would have smashed that whole world, or all worlds, to pieces, if it would only stop the singing" (8.109). After her attack on Aslan with the lamppost arm does nothing, she retreats and attacks indirectly by trying to thwart Digory's mission in the garden. Such action is reminiscent of Lewis's interpretation of Milton's Satan, whose initial fight for liberty has degraded into "the design of ruining two creatures who had never done him any harm, no longer in the serious hope of victory, but only to annoy the Enemy whom he cannot directly attack" (*Preface to Paradise Lost* 99).

Helen into Narnia. She then stands with her husband, hands linked, as he responds to Aslan's offer of kingship. Frank's comments show concern with Helen's opinion, which he seems to know without asking, and he speaks for both. Aslan tells Frank his role includes "us[ing] a spade" and "rais[ing] food from the earth" (11.151), naming the creatures, ruling them fairly, and raising children with the same values. He's clearly a new Adam, and Helen stands beside him a new Eve.

Besides embodying a loving, silently supportive helpmate, Helen demonstrates honest, direct simplicity: she half-curtsies to Aslan "as some country girls still knew how to do in those days" (11.150), and she looked "rather nice" in her washing-day dress, her natural look, rather than "dreadful" (11.150), as the narrator describes the artificial, contrived finery of her likely cheap and tacky "good clothes." At her coronation, Helen exhibits the promise of true royalty; when accepting their subject's acclamation, "the royal pair looked solemn and a little shy, but all the nobler for their shyness" (14.187). Besides queen, she will also become the mother of Narnian humanity, providing future kings for a golden world protected from Jadis's corruption for many hundreds of years.

All three female characters exhibit some of the qualities of Milton's Eve, yet other characteristics resist such categorization. Polly, the heroine who acts as partner to the male Digory, holds firm against the temptation to make the wrong decision in Charn and does not exhibit Eve's penchant for willful self-deception; her role is more like Milton's Adam than Eve. Beautiful Jadis knowingly eats forbidden fruit, but has far more similarities with Satan than to an unfallen Eve. Of all the characters, Helen connects most with Eve, as a human queen exhibiting Miltonic wifely ideals ruling an as-yet protected world. Yet she remains blameless and faithful to her role, untempted and without culpability for Narnia's fall; she nevertheless is not innocent, but a woman from a fallen world, renewed in the younger Narnia, which itself lives on borrowed time. Together, these characters signal a reassessment of Eve. In this particular reimagining of the Eden story, two of these women do not precipitate a fall. Also, instead of a direct translation of Eve, as seen in *Perelandra's* Green Lady, important components of Eve are divided among various characters, yet each of these female characters, by including details which resist an "Eve template," are allowed a subtlety of character and individuality, breaking the traditional equivalent between "Eve" and "Woman" while retaining what Lewis sees as important qualities.

The next mark of Lewis's reassessment of Eve's role is assigning the most damaging aspects of Genesis's and Milton's Eve to a male character: Digory. Instead of Polly, Jadis, or Helen, Digory ultimately allows evil entrance into Narnia through his bad choices. Despite warnings from a sign and from

Polly, Digory wants to strike the bell in the Hall of Kings on Charn, so he does. Although he claims he will be “driven mad” wondering what will happen if he does not ring the bell (4.54) and that he feels “the Magic [...] work[ing] on me already” (4.55), he is inflating his desires through dramatics and fancy to justify doing what he wants, as he admits later to Aslan: “I was only pretending” (11.147). Indulging in self-dramatization and placing fancy above reason are strategies Weston promotes with the Green Lady and Milton’s Satan promotes in Eve.<sup>25</sup>

He also acts impulsively to score points on Polly, with whom he is arguing about ringing the bell. This argument degenerates into gender stereotypes; Polly has accused him of acting “exactly like a man” and he declares he would not call a “kid” like her a woman (4.55). His response is a demonstration of his superiority over Polly and an assertion of his will over hers. As Polly threatens to use her ring to return home, Digory grabs her hand and strikes the bell, winning the argument. Eve, too, claims achieving supremacy over Adam as benefit for transgressing.<sup>26</sup> Digory’s indulgent actions wake Jadis. Although his admiration of her beauty and strength fades as she tells her story, attempts to be rid of her ultimately lead first to London and ultimately to Narnia, giving the future White Witch a foothold there.

It is Digory, too, who, in a garden, is tempted by the Satan character to disobey by eating forbidden fruit. Like the snake in Genesis, Satan in *Paradise Lost*, and Weston in *Perelandra*, Jadis appeals to both Digory’s lowest and highest impulses. While Digory easily dismisses the temptation of endless youth for himself, he finds it more difficult to dismiss Jadis’s suggestion that stealing the apple could save his mother’s life, allowing him to become his family’s hero-savior. Thus, Jadis plays on both Digory’s real love for his mother and his tendency to self-dramatization, that quality he shares with Eve and *Perelandra*’s Lady, as well as his penchant for doing what he wants despite (or perhaps because of?) contrary warnings.

Like Milton’s Eve, Digory is also given a primary role in saving the world damaged by his mistake. Digory’s first interaction with Aslan focuses on his culpability. As Aslan says to the council of animals, “This is the Boy who did it” (11.146), and he commands Digory to explain why “there is an evil Witch abroad” (11.146). After Digory’s confession, he is assigned a key role in

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<sup>25</sup> After hearing Satan’s flattery of Eve and peon to the fruit, Eve muses through a number of self-serving, sophisticated reasons to justify eating the fruit despite knowing it was forbidden (9.745-779).

<sup>26</sup> The serpent suggests to Eve, second in the human hierarchy below Adam, that she will be a goddess is she eats; after eating, she suggests withholding the fruit from Adam would make her “Without copartner, so to add what wants / In the female sex” (9.821-822), rendering her “more equal, and perhaps, / [...] / Superior” (9.823-825).

alleviating the damage: "'Son of Adam,' said Aslan. 'Are you ready to undo the wrong that you have done to my sweet country of Narnia on the very day of its birth?'" (12.153). His successful quest for the apple allows him to sow the seed that will protect Narnia for years to come. In *Paradise Lost*, in a reflection of Genesis 3:15,<sup>27</sup> Eve takes on this role, although her "seed" is more bodily than the vegetative one Digory sows. As Eve says, "Infinite in pardon was my judge, / That I, who first brought death on all, am graced / The source of life" (11.167-169) and "though all by me is lost, / Such favor I unworthy am vouchsafed / By me the promised seed shall all restore" (12.621-623). In *Paradise Lost*, Eve's repentance after her fall makes possible for her to be the tool of the covenant's renewal; likewise, in *The Magician's Nephew*, Digory's acceptance of responsibility for Jadis's presence leads to his role in protecting Narnia by finding and sowing the seed from which a protective tree shall grow. As Aslan says, "as Adam's race has done the harm, Adam's race shall help to heal it" (11.148). Later, Digory's parallel with Eve's regenerative role continues as he bears a healing apple to his mother. While this apple heals a bodily ailment (and does not give immortality or spiritual redemption), it restores a sick woman to health and youthful activities. The parallels between Digory and Milton's Eve, who repents of her own mistakes and is assured she will now be the source of life, is gentle but clear.

But despite strong associations between Digory and Eve, as with the female characters, the clear parallels with Eve Lewis has created are nevertheless—and deliberately—not exact. Like the other fictional Eve-figures in *The Magician's Nephew*, he is not innocent and already affected by original sin, and more specifically by his own mistakes. He has already learned from these bad choices; after having interpreted the sign in Charn as an excuse to justify transgressive desires, he readily obeys the garden's sign to enter by the gate, with the practical, Polly-like comment, "Well who'd want to climb a wall if he could get in by a gate!" (13.171). Also, although Digory triggers Narnia's fall, he does so through a series of bad choices, self-deception, and misadventures, rather than, like Eve, through fully-informed, deliberate disobedience to a law

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<sup>27</sup> "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise you head, and you shall bruise His heel." This verse has traditionally been seen as prophesy of Jesus's birth by a woman, Mary. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> century on, Christian thinkers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaus, Ambrose, and Jerome viewed Mary as "the new Eve." As Irenaus writes, "And thus also it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by Mary's obedience" (3.22.4). See "Mary in the Early Church" (41-49) in Mark Miravalle's *Introduction to Mary: The Heart of Marian Doctrine and Devotion* for an overview of this tradition.

of known consequences.<sup>28</sup> Finally, when faced with the “big temptation,” stealing fruit for his own benefit, he withstands and resists, rejecting Jadis’s attractive fantasy to remain obedient to Aslan’s directions. Thus he provides Narnia with long-lasting protection.

If in *Perelandra*, Lewis creates an Eve and a world which does not fall, in *The Magician’s Nephew*, he spreads characteristics of Milton’s Eve among at least four characters, who yet resist exact identification with her, in a world protected from the immediate consequences of evil. While one female character, Helen, shows Lewis’s continued attachment to the idea of a Queen-helpmeet happy under the guidance of her husband, he intermixes the Eve-like qualities of Polly and Jadis with roles previously given in Milton’s epic to male characters, and he presents a male tempted into disobedience in Digory, denoting that gender is not a defining quality of who supports and who follows or who falls and who stands.

Some may automatically resist the idea that Lewis would, in a positive way, assign a male character a traditionally feminine role. But the strong parallels between Digory and Milton’s Eve show him willing to demonstrate a more nuanced ideal of gender roles than in earlier works, as does his incorporating qualities of Milton’s male Adam and Satan into female characters, such as Polly and Jadis. Digory is also not the only male character in *The Magician’s Nephew* to be granted through literary allusions “typically feminine characteristics alongside or within typically masculine ones” (Ward 186). Michael Ward argues in *Planet Narnia* that Aslan “brings Narnia to birth like Venus” (186) and sees him representing the generative force represented by that goddess.<sup>29</sup>

These gender refigurations also support more fully Lewis’s consistent commitment to free will, and his imaginative recreation of Eden in *The Magician’s Nephew* address one problem critics have seen throughout Milton’s

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<sup>28</sup> Milton repeatedly demonstrates that both Adam and Eve knowingly transgress and that Eve, in offering the fruit to Adam, intends his death. Lewis also saw this point as important. Lewis writes, “I am not sure that critics always notice the precise sin which Eve is now committing, yet there is no mystery about it. Its name is English is Murder” (*Preface to Paradise Lost* 125). Lewis would see Digory’s offense to Narnia, though born of pride, as having a different quality than Eve’s.

<sup>29</sup> See “Venus” in Ward’s *Planet Narnia* (164-189) for further discussion of how Venus provides a guiding principal for *The Magician’s Nephew*. Ward also discusses the connection between Venus and mothers, and an addition to and extension of his thesis could be the connection made between other Christian writers of Venus with Eve. Milton explicitly compares Eve to Venus in *Paradise Lost* twice (5.379-383; 8.60-64) and implicitly at least once (4.304-307). For more on this connection, see “‘Goddess Humane’: Eve as Venus, Queen of Graces” in Mandy Green’s *Milton’s Ovidian Eve* (99-122).

*Paradise Lost*. If Adam and Eve have no direct experience with the consequences of sin, while they may be "sufficient to stand" against it, how do they appreciate their bounty? Adam knows death is the result of disobedience, but he does not comprehend the blessings of his unfallen state until after his fall and the Archangel Michael's enumeration of the many forms of death. Earlier, Adam's only supposition of death was theoretical: "whate'er death is, / Some dreadful thing, no doubt" (4.425-26).<sup>30</sup> Separation from paradise is so unthinkable that neither he nor Eve do think of it until Michael comes to expel them from the garden (11.2563-273). Freed from a justification of traditional gender roles and a purely Miltonic Eve, Lewis's later refiguration of the Eden myth in *The Magician's Nephew* addresses such concerns.

If *Perelandra* explores the possibility of a world maintaining paradise, *The Magician's Nephew* offers a world that falls without its inhabitants' culpability. It also posits a world where consequences of sin and evil will apply only after the world enjoys a protected period, a golden age in which the inhabitants are insulated from the fall's consequences. Thus, while as free-willed as inhabitants of other Edens, the first Narnians can enjoy paradise, the world as it was created to be, while simultaneously, because of its finite quality, fully appreciating its blessing and living in grace, unlike Milton's Adam and Eve, who may not fully appreciate their blessed state or attain grace until their paradise is gone. In *Perelandra*, Lewis simultaneously affirms traditional gender roles and female spiritual self-sufficiency, but he balances a different set of potentially conflicting ideals in *The Magician's Nephew*: the ability to live in an unfallen world while simultaneously being the recipients of redemptive grace and recognizing the full extent of its beauty.

*The Magician's Nephew* complicates the temptation to categorize Lewis as a knee-jerk sexist and reveals a more complex notion of gender relations that Lewis developed over the intervening years. Certainly the Green Lady and Queen Helen display traditional gender ideals, idealizing the woman who voluntarily yields to a husband's support and authority, in clear harmony with Milton's ideals. We may also see Helen and Jadis working out a Madonna-Whore or (as this is a children's book) a Good Queen-Bad Queen dichotomy. However, in the role reversal between a male Eve-figure in Digory and a female Adam in the outspoken, logical, and level-headed Polly, as well as the fact that Narnia's fall results from male, not female, actions, makes Lewis's views on women and their roles more nuanced than some critics admit. His various literary Edens attempt to accommodate hierarchical ideals with an affirmation

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<sup>30</sup> Lewis comically echoes this innocent inability to comprehend death in *The Magician's Nephew* when the Talking Animals, warned their world is threatened by evil, do not immediately understand what is meant by the "Neevil" (10.130).

of women's value as individuals. The change between the early 1940s and 1955 shows support for Van Leeuwen's idea that his views moderated over time. At the very least, his view of humanity's fall seems not rooted in a peculiarly female weakness, as many others had traditionally seen it.

Yet in all his retellings, Lewis focuses not only on humanity's role in the fall, but also in human participation in redemption, the "pattern of events" to which his mythmaking returns. Both men and women together work toward this renewal. Just as the Biblical Christ, born of Mary, becomes the new Adam to redeem the world and as Milton's Adam and Eve go out to begin a race that will bear the Son, so do Lewis's fallen humans, here and elsewhere, participate in the redemption of other worlds. Ransom supports the Green Lady's resistance and kills the Un-Man, and Digory with aid and companionship from Polly sows the tree that protects Narnia for hundreds of years. Finally, Lewis's multiple versions of the Eden myth demonstrate the strength of his belief in the divine gift of humanity's participation in redemption, and by the time of *The Magician's Nephew*, gender becomes less determining, in Lewis's view, of the role in redemption a character may play.

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