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Anima Figures in a Demonic Comedy in the Lewis Tradition: E.E.Y. Hales's *Chariot Of Fire*

**Abstract**
Calls Hales's fantasy “a theological novel in the traditions of Lewis’s Ransom novels and *The Great Divorce*.” Sees Lewis as a “link between Hales’ novel and Christian poetic traditions in the epics of Dante and Milton.”

**Additional Keywords**
Hales, E.E.Y.—Influences—C.S. Lewis; Hales, E.E.Y. Chariot of Fire—Critical interpretation; Annette Harper
Chariot of Fire, a 1977 fantasy by E. E. Y. Hales, is a theological novel in the tradition of C. S. Lewis' Ransom novels and The Great Divorce, Lewis' Dante-esque novel about a pilgrim's journey up the mountains of Purgatory, led by the spirit of George MacDonald. Hales' novel is also indebted, to a lesser degree, to Dante, Milton, Vergil, and probably to Shakespeare's Roman plays. But, like The Great Divorce, Chariot of Fire modernizes a Miltonian allegory in sardonic twentieth century imagery, and hence Lewis may be seen as the major link between Hales' novel and Christian poetic tradition as embodied in the epics of Dante and Milton.1

Like Lewis' Great Divorce and Screwtape Letters, Hales' fantasy is pervaded by a spirit of satiric irony, much of which is directed at the narrator, or purported author. Hales' fantasy is presented as a narrative about the sojourn of Henry Brock, an English railway engineer, in Hell after his death. Brock is a no-nonsense sort of Englishman, Brock is a competent railroad man and an unredeemed "natural" man, a twentieth century everyman full of the natural man's interest in everyday sensuality. Taking a boating trip with Beryl, his lover. Brock and his lady were drowned when the boat went down in the Adriatic Sea. In the novel's first section, there is much amusing satire at the expense of Brock and his fellow humans: the way station where destinations are determined is presented as a grand airport, reminiscent of Lewis' depiction of the journey to purgatory as an enormous bus trip; and passengers are forced to fill out numerous forms in order to determine their final destination. Brock is evasive about his fornications with Beryl (he writes "often" on the first set of forms) and is forced by the angels (dressed as nuns) to fill out the forms all over again. Grudgingly, Brock accepts his assignment to the Second Circle of Hell, the circle of the romantic but lascivious lovers, admitting that he wasn't an authentic Christian during his lifetime though baptized into the faith (his view on earth was that religion was all a lot of "damned nonsense"). His girl friend Beryl is assigned to the Fourth Circle, the circle of the greedy because of her fondness for possessions, and feels a mixture of pride and sulkiness, together with some fear at being placed lower in the order of Hell. Both are rather small unimportant sinners, who have chosen their supreme goods in life without much affection and on purely pragmatic grounds.

Along with some incidental humor about the self-deception and bravo of contemporary hedonistic mentality—the departing passengers on one plane are heard to be engaging in defiant cheers for Hell—the early section of the novel satirizes the rewards of guile and fraud. Brock is aided by Jean Marechal, a suave Frenchman assigned to Hell's Eighth Circle, the realm of the guileful and the fraudulent. Marechal, a cheerful con man who enjoys duping and manipulating people, persuades Brock to abandon his girl friend, Beryl, and try to sneak into Heaven under false pretenses. By sleight of hand, Marechal exchanges Brock's boarding pass for a Hellhound plane with a young clergyman's pass to Heaven. Brock thus allows himself to be Marechal's dupe, and frees himself from his annoying lady friend, congratulating himself that he has been clever enough to avoid Hell, which, despite his pose of unconcern, Brock views with apprehension.

With this kind of fraud—and, as in other times, such cleverness is admired today—Brock gets on a plane to Heaven, only to find that he has outwitted himself. His first error is euphoria over his successful escape, inspiring him to pinch the stewardess on the Heavenly flight. But this peccadillo is not the cause of his dismay at the entrance to Heaven. Rather, Hales makes Brock the target of his irony when Brock realizes that Heaven is frightening for an unabashed lecher.

At the entrance to Heaven, an airport terminal, the other passengers begin to change their nature and appearance. Breathing the atmosphere, hearing the music, and responding to the mood of the personnel handling their passports, they begin to become younger and their bodies lose their careworn look. Moreover, they lose their carnal nature:

... I was so astonished I stood up to get a better view—yes, he was naked from the waist downward, stark naked, and his legs were as slim as those of a boy of twelve. Moreover, between his legs I could see nothing at all, nothing save smooth and innocent, hairless flesh.3

 Needless to say, a womanizer like Brock is horrified at this transformation; in fact, the loss of human sexuality is more frightening than the fear of Hell.

His case is considered by Sister Martha, called the "Airport Nun" later; she eventually becomes Brock's good angel, or celestial anima, as Cleopatra in the Second Circle of Hell later acts as Brock's evil angel, or demonic anima.4 A nature unprepared by the right choices for Heaven cannot be comfortable there, Brock learns, and he realizes that he must accept his assignment to Hell. "You would be unable to endure the life up here," Sister Martha tells Brock, explaining the theme of Christian moral thought frequently emphasized by Lewis and other Christian moralists: no matter what guile and deception we use, we finally become what our choices make us.5

So Brock departs from Heaven, after a request to return to earth is denied. At this point, the request repre-
sents pride and human egoism; at least at a point in the book, the same petition shows humility, and is granted provisionally.

To prepare himself for the Second Circle in Hell, Brock buys copies of Dante and Milton—regrettably no Lewis is on sale at the Airport—to read as travel guides and his historical background for the country he is now to visit. Not only does Hales borrow from his great literary predecessors, but his use of them is generous and frequently humorous.

Brock's destination is the Second Circle of Hell, the realm of the lustful and those addicted to Romantic Passion. This circle is characterized by its vulgarity and by ironic contrast with Heaven. Instead of such music as the Faure Requiem and Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" movement of the Ninth Symphony, which Brock heard at the entrance to Heaven, the Second Circle of Hell has no modern art or even any interesting entertainment. The transportation system is decidedly nineteenth century and backward, as Brock, a railway expert, notes with disgust. Hales creates the Second Circle in the image of a dirty, windy little Italian hill town called Angeli Caduti (Fallen Angels), an appropriate metaphor for the world of the Romantic Lovers. In this backwater, rather like an early twentieth century Verona, the plumbing is bad, the food is boring and lacking in variety, and the general level of public behavior is low. Obsessed with love and sex, the citizens do little to improve civic conditions and may be observed as constantly fondling in public. This satirically sketched, tawdry little town seems anti-climactic for Brock, given his grandiose notions of what a world devoted to "romantic passion" should be like. In fact, Brock soon discovers that his is a comic predicament; although he had wanted to be in a world where sexual passion is the dominant force, he finds that such a place is intolerably boring:

Back on my bed for my siesta I reflected that the trouble wasn't so much sex as boredom, I mean boredom was the root of the trouble. Absence of incentive. Immobility. Immobility running right through the universe from Highest Heaven to Deepest Hell, immobility everywhere except on Earth, and maybe in Purgatory... 6

Of course, a static or fixed universe is depressing to the modern mind. But this condition of "immobility" in Hell results, Brock discovers, from the fact that the citizens of Hell, or at any rate the Second Circle, are victims of their own moral inertia. Although they could improve their quality of life, they soon lose whatever ambition they have to do so by yielding to their dominating behavioral motive or ruling passion, the desire for unlimited sex. Thus the people of Angeli Caduti soon forget about improving their situation because they lapse into mindless sensuality after a year or so in the Second Circle. Despite the tradition of Satan as overlord of Hell—and Satan is singularly absent from "Upper Hell"—the Second Circle is indifferent to the intelligent pagans in Limbo. The Vestibule of the Futility, who went along with the prevailing winds on earth, will naturally support such a new order; and the Gluttons in Circle Three and the Avaricious in Circle Four will be easy enough to bring under the domination of a determined leader backed by the competent pagan warriors of Limbo. Of course, the plan involves numerous ironies of which the plotters seem unaware.

Hales probably expects the informed and sophisticated reader—whether Christian or not—not to see numerous flaws in Cleopatra's plotting, although the more naive Brock, somewhat beguiled by Cleopatra's beauty, is not perceptive at first. An informed reader might remember that, in the traditional literature, Satan is not an active evil danger to man after he appears to be bored and inattentive. Similarly, a knowledgeable reader might well surmise that the Christian God will work for the salvation even of a lost soul in Hell, no matter how busy He may be elsewhere. Finally, anyone who knows the best of Greek and Roman literature will be certain to find that a bold leader can form an alliance between the Second Circle and the intelligent pagans in Limbo. The Vestibule of the Futility, who went along with the prevailing winds on earth, will naturally support such a new order; and the Gluttons in Circle Three and the Avaricious in Circle Four will be easy enough to bring under the domination of a determined leader backed by the competent pagan warriors of Limbo. Of course, the plan involves numerous ironies of which the plotters seem unaware.

Brock's moral education continues when he becomes a double agent on a mission to Limbo, representing both Cleopatra and the Airport Nun. Cleopatra recruits Brock as a transportation expert and sends him to Limbo to stir up sentiment for her imperialist ambitions. Sister Martha, the Airport Nun, secretly enlists Brock to investigate Limbo to see if other virtuous pagans besides those released in the Harrowing of Hell have an interest in Heaven. At this point, Brock himself is unwilling to change his allegiance to Cleopatra's scheme, and among most, even less interest in a possible transfer to Heaven. However, Brock discovers a feeling of lost religious hope when he meets a woman whose story identi-
flies her as the "woman at the well" in Samaria in the gospel narrative. Although not interested in Christianity, several of the inhabitants of Limbo, including Julius Caesar, Aeneas, and (amusingly enough), the warrior women from classical epic, Penthesilea and Camilla, agree to journey to the Second Circle for a strategy conference. Brock has tried to serve both of his employers, without wholly binding himself to a final commitment.

The political intrigue at the conference planning for Cleopatra's new empire turns out to be high farcical comedy. The pagan warriors have a diverting time with sports and tournaments; there is much meaningless political rhetoric from Cleopatra, Antony, Julius Caesar and the rest; but all is interrupted by an ambassador from Satan, none other than the guileful Jean Marechal, who had helped Brock enter Heaven illegally earlier.

Bringing a letter from Satan that states that the lord of Lower Hell is also the lord of Upper Hell, Marechal warns that Satan will not tolerate Cleopatra's ambitions in his own dominions. The letter reminds the assembled aristocrats of the laws that govern Hell:

You were ordered, my friends, when you entered Hell, to abandon hope. Obedience to that command remains the only condition of your peace and contentment here. Never forget it. Never let idle dreams of change lead you with false hope into folly and disaster.

Marechal's message is followed by the distant sound of Satan's artillery firing, somewhere beyond the Third Circle. Brock had heard the rumor that Satan's cannon (memorials to his war in Heaven in Milton) were antiques; but this was only one of Satan's pretenses to deceive the foolish. The cannon are actually in working order, and Satan also has a large supply of gunpowder in Lower Hell.

God also acts to counter Cleopatra's grand design, but he does not bother with threatening letters. While Antony and Cleopatra are considering battle plans to combat Satan's artillery and Caesar becomes doubtful about the wisdom of their project, Brock discovers a crowd in the marketplace admiring a strange engine. This is no antique, but a machine from Heaven in splendid working order:

You couldn't stand close to it for the heat it gave out, which seemed to come from the wheels themselves; they looked as though they were alight, though I didn't quite see how they could be. They were no ordinary wheels. Not only were they enormously large—perhaps twice the diameter of the driving wheels of a Flying Scotsman—but they were geared in some way to an elaborate system of inner wheels. They were pale green in color, a pale green that passed into a light blue, yellow, and white at the flanges; and they had what looked like living eyes that flashed at you. As soon as I saw those wheels, I knew, of course, what I was looking at; this unmistakably, was the Chariot of Fire, whose wheels were described by Milton, wheels of beryl set with eyes. It couldn't be anything else because of the superstructure, which looked just like the crystal, surmounted by a driving seat more like a throne, a sapphire throne, inlaid surely with amber, displaying Heavenly patterns all the colors of the rainbow.

It is interesting that Hales' prosaic modern idiom can turn to lyric imagery when it needs to.

Brock, who has read his Dante and Milton, decides that he does not want to be caught in a replay of the clash between Satan and God's chariot that ended the war in Heaven in Milton. On that occasion, with Michael and his angels momentarily routed, God had brought out the Chariot with His Son driving it and swiftly ended the conflict. In Hales' tale, though, God has not bothered to send His Son, but entrusted the chariot to Michael. Although as a railroad man Brock can move the Chariot to the Third Circle to meet Satan's forces, by using the Limbo Line (the rickety railroad line built by an earlier citizen of Angeli Caduti before he lost interest), he steadfastly refuses. Brock is not desirous of aiding a premature Armageddon, for he remembers only too well the awesome power of God's chariot in Paradise Lost. He does not doubt that God will win; he fears only that Michael may not be able to control the chariot sufficiently well.

At last Brock commits himself to a moral choice and to action which is probably the most prudent in the circumstances. Urged by Satan's emissary to aid Satan's troops, and pressured by his Heavenly mentor, Sister Martha, to help Michael demolish Satan forever (as she hopes), Brock avoids both extremes and clings firmly to a policy of moderation, compromise, and peace. He arranges a private conference to ratify the status quo with a few modest adjustments—a typically English solution. Satan will remain lord over all of Hell; Caesar will have the autonomy of Limbo assured; Cleopatra will be proclaimed the queen over the Second Circle, but give up her...
imperialist ambitions; Heaven will be allowed some freedom in taking a few more souls out of Limbo if they wish to leave for a higher world; Brock will gain peace and avoid being anyone's vassal, while Sister Martha will intercede for him to petition for his return to earth. Thus the political intrigue comes to a farcical anti-climax.

Brock's solution is supported by Caesar, the wisest politician in Hell, but resisted by Cleopatra, who makes a bid for Brock's favor and his help. The final confrontation with Cleopatra reveals to Brock what a dangerous person she is, for Cleopatra wants the war no matter what the cost, with the outcome uncertain. Brock remonstrates that no one will be the winner in a war between the "superpowers" of the universe; or rather that God would be the ultimate winner:

"...And if Satan won—as he might, you know, because we can't be sure Michael or anybody else know how to use that chariot in battle—then it would merely prolong the war, because Satan would tighten his grip on Limbo and God wouldn't stand for that. God doesn't lose wars, not in the long run; even when He lost the human race to Satan, He recovered it again, or much of it. He'd send a relieving force, as He did in the War in Heaven, and we would find ourselves in the midst of the bloodiest battle ever. He wins in the end, whatever the cost."12

Cleopatra argues that the mud would dominate the battle; in fact, she has a vision of Hell's mud splattering everything:

"...Their thunderbolts and iron balls and plagues and all the rest of it would be lost in the mud. All they'd do would be churn up the mud, chuck it about, make the air dance with it, till finally they sank down with their chariot and their cannon, engulfed, absorbed, forgotten, finished, having harmed nobody but themselves and the Gluttons. . . ."13

Cleopatra's speech is an unintentional self-revelation, and like most of such revelations, it is ironic. Cleopatra who has fascinated Brock with her charm is now exposed as a destructive dark anima figure.14 The reader perceives not only that Cleopatra is rationalizing about her lack of power, but that her love of power for its own sake is rooted in destructive fantasy: everything that thwarts her, she childishly thinks, will be ruined and destroyed. From this point, her beauty and overwhelming personality cease to fascinate Brock. He realizes that Cleopatra is a willful and dangerous temptress.

In an ironic resolution of the intrigue, Brock and Julius Caesar resolve the political problems of the conference behind the scenes over coffee. Another of Hales' sly ironies is that Caesar is too prudent and wise to want to rule the Second, Third, and Fourth Circles of Hell, with their unpleasant citizens and their physically repulsive terrains. What Caesar wants is the relative autonomy of Limbo, and this has been his real reason for attending the conference, along with the desire to restrain Cleopatra from a really foolish action.

Because of his prudent action in choosing to maintain peace and to help Sister Martha, Brock is granted his desire to return to earth. Earlier, the desire had been motivated by human egotism. Now it represents merely Brock's feeling that earth was the place where he had been most at home in the universe. The condition of Brock's return, however, is that he accompany "the woman at the well" from Samaria, whom he had met in Limbo, and who is now permitted to go on a quest for further news of Christ, whom she recalled as an opportunity missed on earth.

In the final section of the novel, when Brock describes his experiences with the woman from Samaria, the tone of Hales' writing changes from the satirical mode to a more sensitive and devout one. In explaining the shrines and art of Rome—where Brock and the Samarian woman are returned to earth—to the Samaritan woman, Brock's own dormant faith, already partly aroused by his experiences in Hell, undergoes a regeneration, and he finds that he will not be happy in London, where he had longed to go, but wishes to return to heaven, which had frightened him before. Particularly, Brock recovers his childhood faith in God while comforting the Samaritan woman in her illness before she dies a second earthly death:

Yet, oddly, I could only think of God, whom I was re-discovering, as her friend, not as somebody who cared equally for me. It was for her sake I wanted all things to be as good as she believed they would be. . . .15

This kind of selfless devotion and faith makes it possible for Brock to leave on a boat for Purgatory. But the customs officials would not allow him to take the narrative of his adventures with him, so he apparently threw them into the grass beside the dock, where they were found by someone who took them to the publisher.

This section of the novel is written with an intense spirit that provides a counterbalance to the satire of the earlier sections. It is well that after so many spurious or satirically observed emotions in the earlier sections of the novel, Hales shows the ability to write quietly and convincingly about deep religious feeling.

Hales' fantasy uses characters from Shakespeare, Greek and Roman literature, Milton and Dante, to dramatize anew many old ethical and theological insights. By using a bluff, no-nonsense Englishman like Henry Brock, sometimes naive, but frequently shrewd, Hales makes his narrative amusingly comic and perceptively ironic about the nature of human behavior. Particularly in his conception of a conspiracy in hell that nearly brings on Armageddon, Hales employs a satirical conception not unworthy of the author of The Screwtape Letters.

Hales satirizes a number of sins (at least they are sins from the Christian point of view) or perhaps we may call them flourishing contemporary trends. By making Brock a petty sensualist, Hales suggests that the besetting vice of the twentieth century everyman these days is a lack of higher purpose and a ridiculous obsession with sex. Through some of his other characters, Hales satirizes the perennial presence of greed, gossip, and social climbing; but he gives a particular emphasis to satirizing fraud, in the person of Jean Marechal, the devil's ambassador. Hales undoubtedly sees fraud and pretense as dominant forces in our acquisitive Western World (as they no doubt prospered in the High Middle Ages or the halcyon days of the great monarchies).
It would also appear that Hales has chosen an appropriate symbolic figure in Cleopatra for representing the love of power. As an immediate reference, Hales' Cleopatra is not a bad comment on the current situation, when women's liberation has given women as well as men the opportunity to compromise their principles in the quest for political or bureaucratic power. However, on a deeper level, there is ample precedent in Medieval and Renaissance poetic tradition (as well as certain instances in the work of such contemporary satirists as Lewis) for making pride and love of power a feminine character—and these precedents may have less to do with anti-feminism than with psychological allegory. As we have noted, Cleopatra functions as Brock's "dark anima" or temptress, just as Sister Martha is Brock's "white anima" or beneficent guide. The temptation of love of power is a perennial and recurring theme in Christian literature, and Christian treatments of this theme frequently may be read in Jungian terms.

Finally, we must note that in addition to his satire, Hales makes Brock's spiritual regeneration a theme of his novel. It is this emphasis on the development of a pilgrim's spiritual awareness that confirms the place of Chariot of Fire in the tradition of theological allegory practiced by C. S. Lewis. Like Lewis' Ransom novels and The Great Divorce, Hales' novel is not a Sunday school tract, but theology dramatized effectively.

NOTES

1 Hales' debts to Milton and Dante become fairly obvious in the course of this essay and are acknowledged in the novel itself when Brock discusses them. The novel adopts Dante's use of Hell and Milton's conception of Satan. The indebtedness to Lewis is not explicitly acknowledged, but Hales' ironic method of presentation is suggestive of Lewis in The Screwtape Letters and The Great Divorce. Hales' theology appears to be a liberal Roman Catholic variety, and the devotional mood at the end of the novel also seems to be Catholic. It should be noted that a Time reviewer, quoted on the cover of the Avon paperback edition, compares Hales to Lewis.

2 C. G. Jung introduced the concept of the anima, or feminine archetype in his theoretical work. One of Jung's excellent essays on the anima archetype may be found in Alon: Phenomenology of the Self, excerpted in The Portable Jung, edited by Joseph Campbell (New York: The Viking Press, 1971, paperbound edition), pp. 139-162.


4 The anima may take either a demonic or divine form according to Jung. See The Portable Jung, pp. 151-163 for a discussion of the positive and negative side of the anima. The Airport Nun or Sister Martha is a tutelary mother figure, who may be one aspect of the anima. George MacDonald's anima figures are frequently tutelary mother types.

5 This idea hardly requires documentation, and it is scarcely an exclusive property of Christian moralists. Nevertheless, it is a major theme in Lewis' theological writings, and in The Great Divorce where characters are frequently displayed as a captive of foolish habits or obsessions.

6 Chariot of Fire, p. 66.

7 See A Preface to Paradise Lost (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961; original publication, 1942), pp. 94-103.

8 A Preface to Paradise Lost, pp. 95-96.

9 Chariot of Fire, p. 147.

10 Chariot of Fire, p. 161.

11 This action probably indicates the idea that God regards the uprising in Hell as a relatively minor affair not requiring the action of the Son, who has anyhow already acted in human history as Christ.

12 Chariot of Fire, p. 179.


14 The "dark anima" is the fatal woman of Romantic mythology. For another interesting and important discussion of the anima, see "Anima and Animus" in The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung, edited by Violet de Laszlo (New York: Random House, Modern Library, 1959), pp. 158-182. This was originally published in The Relations of the Ego and the Unconscious. In this essay Jung identifies Rider Haggard's She as a novel about the demonic anima.

15 Chariot of Fire, p. 216.

16 For a discussion of the relationship between anima and animus figures and the relationships between the sexes, see the excellent exposition in Jane Singer's study of Jung, The Boundaries of the Soul (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1972), pp. 229-270.

ERRATA

We are still not perfect, alas; once again, apologies for errors are in order. Mary Jane Johnson should have been Mary Janis Johnson. The drawing on page 29 of the last issue should have been attributed to Stephen P. Gaddis; and may the art of both continue to grace our pages. In No. 19, page 39, column 2, line 4, "translation" should have been "transition," and in the last line, same column, "next" should have been "that." Our apologies to the longsuffering J. R. Christopher. Ian McMurdo, poet of "The Lion of Judah," writes that Aslan's mane should have had night in its mass, though he concedes that it has right as well. This poem was penned some years ago and reached us indirectly, with right already in it, so for this error we do not abase ourselves.