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The Host of Heaven: Astrological and Other Images of Divinity in the Fantasies of C.S. Lewis (Part 2)

Abstract
Study of the astrological symbolism present in Lewis’s fantasies. Part 2 covers the Chronicles of Narnia and *Till We Have Faces*.

Additional Keywords
Astrology in C.S. Lewis; Divinity in C.S. Lewis; Lewis, C.S. Chronicles of Narnia—Astrological symbolism; Lewis, C.S. Chronicles of Narnia—Symbolism of divinity; Lewis, C.S. Space Trilogy—Astrological symbolism; Lewis, C.S. Space Trilogy—Symbolism of divinity; Lewis, C.S. Till We Have Faces—Astrological symbolism; Lewis, C.S. Till We Have Faces—Symbolism of divinity; Nancy-Lou Patterson; Edith Crowe
II. The Mountains of Aslan

The world of the interplanetary trilogy is, granting the elements of science fiction in and of the matter of Britain conflated within it, our world. As such it is not by any means a "secondarily created." Narnia too is something of a contingent universe, but in a different sense. In That Hideous Strength, Dr. Dimble tells Camilla that "something we may call Britain is always haunted by something we may call Logres." There is for every people, Ransom adds, "its own haunter." The archetypes are always present, just on the other side of the invisible wall. Something of that dependency exists for Narnia as well: she is created in the presence of human onlookers; humans also witness her end. Her corruptor is a witch from the dead world of Charn but she has been brought to Narnia by human agency. And it is for the sake of a human traitor that Aslan intervenes, is killed, and is resurrected. What is more, Narnia, like Britain, is but a "shadow or a copy of the real Narnia," as Digory explains to Peter in The Last Battle. There is an archetypal Narnia just as there is an archetypal Britain. "It's all in Plato, all in Plato," Digory exclaims. And in the very last chapter of the Narnian Chronicles, "Farewell to Shadow-Lands," we learn that all lands, physical or fictional, primary or secondary, are part of Aslan's country.

Mr. Tumnus explains:

That country and this country, all the real countries—arc only spurs jutting out from the great mountains of Aslan.

Most of what I propose to discuss in this section of my paper is thus dependent upon the elements of Narnian life which reveal these affinities. I will begin, however, with certain differences. Lewis has taken care to provide Narnia with its own astrology. In Prince Caspian, Dr. Cornelius, Prince Caspian's new tutor, tells him: "Tonight I am going to give you a lesson in astronomy. At dead of night two noble planets, Tarva and Alambel, will pass within one degree of each other. Such a conjunction has not occurred for two hundred years." The boy and his teacher observe this splendid sight from a tower, watching as the planets "hung rather low in the southern sky, almost as bright as two little moons and very close together." Dr. Cornelius explains this event to Caspian: "The great lords of the upper sky know the steps of their dance... Their meeting is fortunate and means some great good

for the sad realm of Narnia. Tarva the Lord of Victory salutes Alambil the Lady of Peace."

The tutor has called this lesson "astronomy;" in twentieth-century Britain and North America, it is called "astrology."

Not surprisingly, in a land where animals can talk and even the trees are ambulatory and inhabited by liosome intelligences, the stars themselves are alive. We meet the first of them in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader: he is the magician Coriakin. Lucy (the second of Narnia) "saw coming towards them an old man, barefoot, dressed in a red robe. His white hair was crowned with a chaplet of oak leaves, his beard fell to his girdle, and he supported himself with a curiously carved staff." "This being, we learn later, is a star who "might have shone for thousands of years more in the southern winter sky," but was condemned for some "fault a star can commit," to inhabit a small island and rule over the foolish Duffs. He does so, by what he calls ruefully, "this rough magic"--a term from The Tempest, whose magical ruler Prospero is thus invoked. Lewis remarks of Coriakin, "the Magician himself drank only wine and ate only bread"--as did Princess Irene's father in George Macdonald's The Princess and Curdie, another invocation by Lewis of a white-haired patriarch. Aslan himself says, "Many stars will grow old and come to take their rest in islands."

But the stars in Narnia, or at least their progeny, are not always old. Toward the end of his journey in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, Prince Caspian meets his future bride, the daughter of the star Ramandu:

Now they could see that it was a tall girl, dressed in a single long garment of clear blue which left her arms bare. She was bare-headed and her yellow hair hung down her back. And when they looked at her they thought they had never before known what beauty meant."

She carried "a tall candle set in a silver candle-stick," the flame of which burned "straight and still." Presently we meet Ramandu himself:

... there came a figure as tall and straight as the girl's but not so slender. It carried no light but light seemed to come from it. As it came nearer, Lucy saw that it was like an old man. His silver beard came down to his bare feet in front and his silver hair hung down to his heels
behind and his robe appeared to be made from the fleece of silver sheep. He looked so mild and grave that once more all the travellers rose to their feet and stood in silence.

This "Old Man" tells them, "I was a long way above the air... the days when I was a star had ceased long before any of you know this world, and all the constellations have changed." "He is, as Edmund, says, "a retired star," a star at rest." It is he who gently chides Eustace that a ball of flaming gas is "not what a star is but what it is made of." One day, he says, "when I have become as young as the child that was born yesterday, then shall take my rising again (for we are at earth's eastern rim) and once more tread the great dance."

I have wondered if perhaps there is a third descendent star in Narnia—the Hermit of the Southern March. Lewis describes him in The Horse and His Boy: "In the middle of the gateway stood a tall man dressed, down to his bare feet, in a robe coloured like autumn leaves, leaning on a straight staff. His beard fell almost to his knees." At any rate, there is one more scene in the Narnian Chronicles in which the Narnian stars appear; in The Last Battle, when Pater Ture, at Aslan's bidding, wins his horn, and "immediately the sky became full of shooting stars." This "rain of stars" continues until the sky is empty, for "all the stars were falling; Aslan had called them home." 10

Lewis explains:

... the stars in that world were not the great flaming globes they are in ours. They are people... So now they found showers of glittering people, all with long hair like burning silver and spears like white-hot metal, rushing down on them out of the black air, swifter than falling stones.

These stars, like the animals and trees of Narnia, are indigenous. But there are other beings present, both benign and malign, including divinities. Some of these are patterned more closely than the Narnian stars, upon Tellurian models. Some are even frankly visitors from our world, but in line with the treatments of these images as the "continuum, I will speak of the less earthly first. There is in Narnia an Anti-Aslan, the god Tash.

In the shadow of the trees on the far side of the clearing something was moving... it was grey and you could see things through it. But the deathly smell ["Is there a dead bird somewhere about?"] was not the smell of smoke... It was roughly the shape of a man but it had the head of a bird; some bird of prey with a cruel, curved beak. It had four arms... and its fingers—all twenty of them—were curved like its beak and had long, pointed, bird-like claws instead of nails. It floated on the grass instead of walking, and the grass seemed to wither beneath it.

Aslan, the divine Lion, is opposed by another form of animal being; as the lion is in origin a Mesopotamian image, so Tash seems modelled upon the metamorphic entities of Mesopotamia, often depicted as attendant geni of the Tree of Life in their art. One of the most moving moments in the Narnian Chronicles occurs in The Last Battle when Emeth, the plough young Calormene (his plow name is the Hebrew word for "truth") meets Aslan; Emeth tells the story himself, describing how his life has served Tash, but upon seeing the Lion, he knows immediately to whom his true service is due. Then, he reports, said to him, "Child, all the service thou hast done to Tash, I account as service to me." Emeth continues:

But I said also (for truth constrained me), Yet I have been seeking Tash all my days. Beloved, said the Glorious One, unless thy desire had been for me thou wouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek.

This element in Lewis's understanding of the relationship of Christ—for Aslan is He—to all other religion seems to me one of his most important contributions to the faith he served all his days. And it is his exquisite courtesy in this matter which inspired me to write the present essay, one I would dedicate to Grace Fay Elwood, who first suggested to me that a Christian might learn from astrology as well as from other religions some truths about God. Perhaps it is only in the company of Aslan, however, that these aspects of the creation may be confronted in safety; hence my epigraph.

I have referred above to Phyllis Ackerman's interesting essay, "Stars and Stories." Her most intriguing association is that of Dionysus with a star motif. Plutarch, she says, called him "the Night Sun." Pindar, "the pure stars and Sophocles (in Antigone), "the leader of the fire-breathing stars." The phrase "the leader" was a Babylonian usage for Sirius, the brightest star in the northern heavens and especially noticeable (on the horizon) at the vintage season (his name, Ackerman says, "the stars aflame with fire") of which Dionysus as Sirius was Leader were the Pleiades. 12 She describes a second-century gnostic version of the familiar Matthew 1:12 Epiphany narrative in which there appears the angel in the form of that star. The star in this case was, she says, Sirius, and "the Magian angel of that star, Tishtrya, was himself in direct charge of leading the Magi to see and shower with gifts the infant Jesus—a befitting mission for Tish­trya, a beneficial deity. 12 The Epiphany is the oldest feast of the birth of Christ, and celebrates the coming of the Magi (a title used for the astrologers of ancient Persia) by the leading of a star. This star, Ackerman is saying, was
associated with Dionysus (Bacchus), acting as a herald for the coming of Christ.

In Prince Caspian, Aslan returns to the Narnia he has created and redeemed, a second time. As the children who have summoned his aid stand watching, "low down in the East, Aravir, the morning star of Narnia, gleamed like a little moon. Aslan, who seemed larger than before, lifted his dead, shook his mane, and roared." In response, all Narnia wakens, and in their midst, Lucy sees that

One was a youth, dressed only in a fawn-skin, with vine-leaves wreathed in his curly hair. His face would have been almost too pretty for a boy's, if it had not looked so extremely wild. You felt, as Edmund said when he saw him a few days later, "there's a chap who might do anything--absolutely anything." He seemed to have a great many names--Bromios, Bassareus, and the Ram were three of them. There were a lot of girls with him, as wild as he... And everybody was laughing; and everybody was shouting, "Euan, euan, eu-oil-oil-oil-".

"Bromios" means "The Thunderer." Many of the details of Lewis's description of Bacchus probably come from the Bacchae of Euripides:

Joyful on the mountains--
When from the rushing dancing throng
Sink's he to the ground,
With his holy fawnskin round him,
Pursuing blood, slaughter of goats,
Joy of raw flesh devoured,
Pressing on to the mountains of Phrygia, Lydia,
And the leader is Bromios!
Euo!
And the ground is flowing with milk, flowing
With wine,
With the nectar of bees;

On the conclusion of Lewis's sequence, after a mad romp with the Lion and his companions including these, Susan confides in Lucy:

"The boy with the wild face is Bacchus
And the old one on the donkey is Silenus..."
"Yes, of course. But I say, Lu--"
"What?"
"I wouldn't have felt very safe with Bacchus and all his wild girls if we'd met them without Aslan."
"I should think not."

E.R. Dodds in his The Greeks and the Irrational makes Dionysus (whom the Romans called Bacchus) thus patron of teletic or ritual madness. By the wild dancing and repairing to mountain fastnesses, his followers found a ritual outlet for the "infectious irrational impulses." He gave them the freedom to stop being themselves: "There must have been a time when the maenads or thyriads or [Bacchae] really became... wild women whose personality had been temporarily replaced by another," still, one cannot know if these acts took place in Euripides' time, Dodds says, writing in 1951, before the resurgence of interest in altered states of consciousness made us more likely to expect ecstatic behaviour.

Dodds compares the maenadic behavioural traits with those known to anthropology from many cultures and finds them characteristic of ecstatic behaviour: drumming, head-tossing, baby-stealing, immunity to pain, snake-handling, and the tearing to pieces and eating raw of a wild animal. As Dodds says, "if you want to be like god you must eat god... And you must eat him quick and raw... for 'the blood is the life'."

latter phrase appears as a motif in Dracula, uttered by the madman (not Dracula) who tries to increase his life by consuming other lives, beginning with flies and spiders. Dodds says of the god, "He may appear in many forms, vegetable, bestial, human, and he is eaten in many forms." He makes the final suggestion that there once existed "a more potent... form of this sacrament... the rending, and... the eating, of God in the shape of man." As Edmund says, "There's a chap who might do anything--absolutely anything." The God who gives, not another's body and blood to be eaten, but His own, is He who greets the Pevensie children in the last chapter of The Last Battle, when "He no longer looked to them like a lion."

The calling of Narnia's peoples by Aslan arouses more than Bacchus/Dionysus and his maenads; there are "certain other people" as well. In The Discarded Image, Lewis quotes Martianus Capella's "dancing companies of Longaevi who haunt woods, glades and groves, and lakes and springs and brooks; whose names are Pans, Fauns, Satyrs, Silvans, Nymphs." The first Narnian we meet in all the Chronicles is, of course, Tumnus; anybody who does not remember Lewis's enchanting description of him, which culminates in the laconic assert, "He was a Faun," has not yet read The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, and is advised to do so at once, for the passage is unforgettable.

The Chronicles of Narnia are filled with Longaevi, and it is not part of my study to examine them in detail, except to say that they come from the same world that gave us Dionysus/Bacchus. A famous frieze, "The Retinue of Dionysus" (or "The Triumph of Bacchus"), on a sarcophagus in the National Museum, Naples, shows us exactly the scene described in Prince Caspian, including Silenus transported on a donkey; satyrs, fauns, centaurs, maenads, erotes, and the Lord Dionysus himself, depicted as a beautiful youth lounging in his Car.
Clearly the tree spirits, river deities, nympha, and fauns, are nature spirits, and Aslan has created them along with Narnia. In The Magician’s Nephew we read his creative word... Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake, love, think. Speak. Be walking trees, be talking beasts. Be divine waters. And within moments of this primal event, “Out of the trees wild people stepped forth, gods and goddesses of the wood; with them came Fauns and Satyrs and Dwarfs. Out of the river rose the river god and his Naiad daughters.” On Trajan’s column in Rome, a river god lifts up his bearded head to see a group of Roman soldiers sack a city; how much the more, then, should a river god rise up to see the triumph of Aslan!

In addition to these beings from the cultures of Greece and Rome, the dwarfs and giants of Narnia are modelled upon Norse mythology. H.R. Ellis in her Gods and Myths of Northern Europe gives the tales concerning these beings which were preserved by the Christian writer Snorri in the Prose Edda, of the primal earth giant, the frost-giant, the dwarfs “who bred in the earth like maggots,” and the various affairs of “The Giants and the Dwarfs.” To which she devotes a whole section. I am glossing over these catalogues of beings as if my readers will recognize fauns, centaurs, giants, and dwarfs by the mere mention of them. This recognition is part of my own life because as a child I both studied Classical and Norse mythology, and read the myths for my own pleasure. If children no longer do this, they can still know these beings personally, because they have their life in the Narnian Chronicles. Lewis said of himself that he was the last of the Old Western Men, and that is nowhere more true than in this!

Silenus, a part of the retinue of Dionysus in Greek thought, just as Lewis shows him, is a “cheerful drunkard” who has been the tutor of the gods. His name comes from the Sileni, rural divinities from Phrygia, who personified rivers and springs. Satyrs are forest spirits who combine in their appearance the monkey and the goat; Hesiod remarked on their sensuality and cheer. Satyrs are “the peculiar attendants of Dionysus,” Guerje says; “they come from a past already deep in classical times. They may derive etymologically from warrior dance rites of extreme antiquity. There are whirling male dancers painted on the walls of the earliest Neolithic villages, wearing spotted leopardskins (and Dionysus often rides a leopard in art). Pan, the god of the flocks, is also a part-man, part-goat being, a phallic divinity of the shepherd’s world.” The same physical appearance is shared by these fauns, who were associated in Roman thought with Faunus, a god of field and pasture (conflated with the Greek Pan). Fauns are half-man, half goat too; their upper bodies are human (except for goatish horns), but their lower bodies are those of goats, shaggy limbs, cloven hooves, and all. Out of the dry Roman tradition, Faunus had taught humankind to plant crops and breed stock. The faun Tumnus, described by Lewis, figures as the psychopomp or escort into the world of Narnia for Lucy in The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe. He may derive his name in part from the shape-changing Roman god Vertumnus (the Latin word vertere means “to change”), who was an associate of Silvanus, a forest god often confused with (and hence associated with) Faunus (Roman) and Pan (Greek). Centaurs, part-man and part-horse, were given their “definitive appearance” at the time of Phidias (they were carved in this form on the frieze of the Parthenon) and this is the shape that Lewis gives to them. Nymphs, in ancient Greece, were feminine beings associated with natural objects. Water nymphs were made of stone, Meliae and Dryads were tree nymphs, Naiads were fresh water nymphs, and Nereids were sea nymphs. They were indeed long-livers; there is a fragment of Hesiod suggesting their length of days: it adds up to one hundred thousand years. The race of a dry Roman tradition, probably 43 and trees are indeed the longest-living things.

Jacob Grimm in his Teutonic Mythology made the interesting comment that “Ian’s body holds no bond between those of a giant and the elf.” The dwarf is even smaller than the elf, and is always old, being a grey beard in the seventh year of his life. The race of the dry Roman tradition, which heus 43 and trees are indeed the longest-living things.

Of giants, Grimm says, “By so much of bodily size and strength as man surpasses the . . . dwarf, he falls short of the giant; on the other hand, the race of . . . dwarfs has a livelier intellect and subtle sense than that of men, and these points the giant falls far below mankind.” These traits Lewis uses for his giants (notoriously stupid, but divided between good-hearted and evil-hearted) and his dwarfs, which in The Last Battle are too lively-minded for their own good, sticking to their own opinions to the point of refusing to go into Aslan’s country when Narnia’s end is come.

In contrast with beings from the essentially benign catalogue of Martianus Capella—the longae-vi—Lewis has also written of beings like those in a passage he quotes, in The Discarded Image, from Milton’s Comus: “Blue meagre Hag ... unbridled ghost—Goblin or smart Faery; from Beowulf, “. . . grigges and elves and evil shades and also giants,” and from Reginald Scott, “spirits, witches, urchins, elves, hags, fairies, satyrs, fauns, faunes, sylens, tritons, centaurs, dwarfs, giants, nymphs, Incubus, Robin Good fellow.” One thinks of the god of the grey braces which belong to a “Wer-wolf,” who with a Hag has been summoned by the dwarf Nikabrik in Prince Caspian; all three—dwarf included—are dispatched by the end of the chapter “Sorcery and Sudden Vengeance.”
Lewis gives for the *Longaevi* (which include, beyond the beings already mentioned, the "High Fairies," four "ruins of original species" that they are a third rational species distinct from angels and men.) 2) "that they are angels, but a special class of angels who have been... 'de-moted' [rather like Coriakin]; 3) "that they are dead." 29 and 4) in an answer exasperated under torture, "That they are fallen angels; in other words, devils." The result of the last was that "A churchyard or brimstone smell came to hang about... them" and the High Fairies were "ex- pelled by a dance of destruction." 29 Lewis for his part has illuminated again these lovely peoples, and has given to Arbol's fields, *Oldila* (angels), *Bregas, Sorms, Pifflerics*, Perelandrians (Tor and Tindrill), and humankind, while making Narnia home to animals, *Longaevi*, and stars.

A world in which animals speak, trees walk, and everything is inhabited by or is a manifestation of spirit, is a shamanistic world. I have already quoted E. C. Dodds on elements of the irrational in Greek religion. E. A. S. Butterworth, in his *Some Traces of the Pre-Olympian World in Greek Literature and Myth* has pointed out striking elements of Shamanic cosmology underlying the later rationalizations of Olympian religion. It is not part of my intention to delve deeply into the question of what Greek religion "really" or "originally" was—readers will have seen that I have relied upon the most public, developed, received versions of Greek mythology, for these are the versions handed down through medieval and Renaissance periods to the era of Lewis and ourselves. Nevertheless, Lewis has seized upon precisely the aspects of Greek (and Norse) world view that are oldest, most primitive, most—in the literal sense of the word—pagan (it means "country person"—*ruralis*). As Lucy said, "when trees dance, it must be a very, very country dance indeed." 30 Lewis wrote in an essay quoted in *They Asked for a Paper* that "Christians and Pagans had much more in common with each other than either has with a post-Christian. The gap between those who worship different gods is not so wide as that between those who worship and those who do not." The kind of pagan Lewis had in mind he embodied in Emeth, the follower of Truth. Something of this thought may be seen in Patmore's apotheosis in *Knowiedge and Science*:

> The Pagan who simply believed in the myth of Jupiter, Alcmena, and Hercules, much more, he who had been initiated into the unspeakable names of Bacchus and Persephone, knew more of living Christian doctrine than any "Christian" who refuses to call Mary the "Mother of God." 32

Lewis's expression of this idea is characteristically more elenctic.

The universe of the Narnian Chronicles Lewis has summarized in his introduction to D. E. Harding's *Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth*:

At the outset, the universe appears packed with will, intelligence, life and positive qualities; every tree is a nymph and every planet a god. Man himself is akin to the gods. The advance of knowledge gradually empties this rich and genial universe: first of its gods, then of its colours, smells, sounds and tastes, finally of solidity itself, as soliditiy was originally imagined. 30

Lewis has made it his task to restore these traits to their original position, having concluded perhaps, that he must make his readers good Pagans before he could make them good Christians.
ors were formerly looked for during the Twelve Days [between Christmas and Epiphany—December 25 and January 6]." 53 This sacred period which surrounds the supreme transitional moment when the sun's power ceases to wane and begins to wax, is fraught with peculiar dangers (as that the dead may return or devils break in)—Christmas time is the popular season for telling ghost stories in England. Benign happenings, too, are associated with Christmas Eve, the beginning of this season; especially the Yule or Wictor, a complex of ideas, not is left to the reader to ponder. I only to Tolkien's leu d'esprit for his children, with his letters from the North Pole, but to Lewis's Narnia with its theme of Northernness, is left to the reader to ponder.

I have given above Lewis's description of the reindeer of Father Christmas; as might be expected, the reindeer of the White Witch are vividly evoked as well. "The reindeer were about the size of Shetland ponies and their hair was so white that even the snow hardly looked white compared with them; their branching horns were gilded and shone like something on fire when the sunshine caught them. Their harness was made of silver and covered with bells." 70 The lady these marvellous beasts accompany and transport, owes a great deal to a story with a number of elements of northern shamanism in it, including a Lappish sorceress. The White Witch of Narnia closely resembles the Snow Queen of Hans Christian Anderson's masterpiece. Lewis says of the White Witch's coming "there swept into sight a sledge drawn by two reindeer," 72 and Edmund sees that "in the middle of the sledge sat... a great lady... She was wind-bled in white fur up to her throat," 73 Lewis's description of her is striking:

Her face was white—no purely pale, but white like snow or paper or icing sugar, except for her fiery red mouth. It was a beautiful face in other respects, but proud and cold and stern. 73

In another place, Lucy explains the White Witch's role: "she has made a magic so it is always winter in Narnia," 74 With the arrival of Father Christmas, the light (Aslan) is heralded, and after him, the Spring arrives, in a sequence of heartbreaking beauty.

The parallels between Lewis's description of the White Witch and Anderson's of the Snow Queen are striking. In Kay's first vision of her, she appears to him in a snowflake: "She was pretty and distinguished-looking, but a figure of ice... Yet she was alive like a bright star, but there was no peace of quiet in them." 75 After the magic bits of glass enter his eye and heart, he cares only for snowflakes seen through a magnifying glass, rather like Eustace. Presently, "a large sledge drew up, all painted dead white, with a woman, tall and straight, white and glittering." 76 When Kay is rescued at last from the Snow Queen's grip by the pure maiden Gerda, as they leave the palace together, Spring begins. Readers who know this story in its entirety, rather than from abbreviated or animated versions, will be aware of the Christian elements in it, and will not be surprised at the opposite nature of Lewis's use of it as a source.

III. The God of Love

Lewis's masterpiece, Till We Have Faces, has been analysed by a number of distinguished writers, and I have already mentioned some of its elements, especially his Ungit/Venus. My paper has been devoted to Lewis's use of mythological beings, especially the planetary deities and their associations in shall discuss other figure from this novel, the character of Cupid, who is Eros, the son of Aphrodite/Venus. This divinity is described in Lewis's source, the story within a story in The Golden Ass of Apuleius, as "her winged son Eros, alias Cupid, that very wick'd boy, with neither gods nor respect for the decencies." 91 When Psyche's father offers her up for her "dreadful wedding" she "was left alone weeping and trembling at the very top of the hill, until a friendly west wind suddenly sprang up." The wind bears her to a beautiful valley where in wandering she comes upon a palace, the description of which causes the reader to agree that it is "too wondrously made to be the work of anyone but a god." Enshrouded within, she eventually hears...
"the whisper of her unknown husband," who makes her his wife. Her happiness is to be spoiled by her jealous sisters, and she begs her husband to let her have sight of him; she only knows him by her tactile sense; "these fragrant curls dangling all around your head; these cheeks as tender and smooth as my own; this breast which gives out such an extraordinary heat." Finally her sisters' goadings drive her to the fateful act: by the light of a forbidden lamp she sees her husband with her own eyes: "there lay the gentlest and sweetest of all wild creatures, Cupid himself; the beautiful Love-God."

Our anticipation (by this time as keen as Psyche's) is rewarded:

... she stared at Cupid's divine beauty; his golden hair, washed with nectar and still scented with it, thick curls straying over white neck and flushed cheeks and falling prettily entangled on either side of his head—hair so bright that the flame of the lamp winked in the radiant light reflected from it. At his shoulders grew soft wings of the purest white, and though they were at rest, the tender down fringing the feathers quivered nervously. At the same time, the rest of his body was so smooth and beautiful that Venus could never have been ashamed to acknowledge him as her son. At the foot of the bed lay this great god's bow, quiver and arrows."

Considering the sensual riches of these passages, Lewis has wisely refrained from direct description of the god. His novel is a book for grown-ups; I suspect he may have thought— at least hoped— that his readers, familiar with Apuleius. At any rate, he begins his evocation of the "god of the Grey Mountain" to whom Psyche is to be sacrificed, with the approach of the "West-wind"—as in the novel, the God of the Grey Mountain and West-wind is the same personage. Like Apuleius's "wicked boy," Lewis's "West-wind is a merry, rough god." His appearance is described by Psyche to her sister Orual:

"The wind got wilder and wilder. It seemed to be lifting me off the ground so that, if it hadn't been for the iron round my waist, I'd have been blown right away, up in the air. And then—at last—for a moment—I saw him." "What is it?" "The West-wind." "Was it?" "Not it; him. The god of the wind: West-wind himself." "Were you awake, Psyche?" "Oh, it was no dream. One can't dream things like that. He was in human shape. But you wouldn't mind his face, would you? Oh, Sister, you'd understand if you'd seen. How can I make you understand?"

The Biblical word for spirit is ruach; usually translated 'spirit,' to describe the outstanding mental and physical energy that characterized such men as Elijah. This is that wind that blew where it listed. (John 3:8). Mary's apparitions at Lourdes were presaged by a wind: "Suddenly... Bernadette heard, as she put it, 'a sound of wind as though it were blowing up for a storm,' and 'the wild rose and the branches... were falling and groaning before the topmost opening, but all around there was no movement... In the opening a moment later I saw a girl in white.'" And of course, the "rushing, mighty wind" (Acts 2:2) of Pentecost heralds the coming of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, "The LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet." (Nahum 1:3) Lewis's Psyche says, "And it took me... in his beautiful arms which seemed to burn me (though the burning didn't hurt)" just as Apuleius's Cupid presses Psyche to his breast of "extraordinary heat."

Jung reminds us that "In Thesbes the chief god Khnum, in his cosmogonic aspect, represented the wind-breath, from which the 'spirit' [pneuma] of God, moving over the waters, was later developed," and describes India (and India's deity) as the "psychopomp who delivers souls to the wind, to the generating pneuma, the individual and universal prana [life-breath], to save them from 'repeated death.'" In Psyche's case the West-wind is indeed a psychopomp, for Psyche herself is borne up in him. The magical heat and the magical flight are alike elements of shamanic experience, as is the experience of Orual who descends to the Pillar Room "of living rock" where she is stripped, like Ishtar, of her veil, and understands her identification with the goddess (called Ungit in Lewis's novel).

A proem of the heat, the burning of the "beautiful arms" of West-wind, and the "extraordinary heat" of Cupid's breast, Mircea Eliade tells us, "many primitives think of the magico-religious power as 'burning,' and express it by terms meaning heat; burning of winds. "In modern India, the Mohammedans believe that a man in communication with God becomes 'burning hot.'" As Elijah says in I Kings 18:24, "the God that answereth by fire, let him be God." As to the flight and strange appearance of the plane of primitive religions ecstasy signifies the soul's flight to Heaven... or, finally, its descent to the subterranean world, among the dead."

"He continues, in describing shamanic initiation in particular, how many regions the candidate is believed to visit the sky, while "other initiations involve a descent to the realm of the dead: for example, the future medicine man... is transported underground. Psyche, in Till We Have Faces, functions as a healer, the characteristic shamanic role,"

In Orual's case, of her identification with Ungit, Lewis writes, "Ungit in each must bear Ungit's son." At the end of her revelatory ordeal, Orual perceives that "The most dreadful, the most beautiful, and also the most dangerous, and there was coming, for 'The god is coming into his house.'" At this point, Orual finds that she also is Psyche. In the Eleusinian mysteries at the highest moment, the hierophant announced, "She who is Magnificence has begotten a sacred child, Brimo." In this case, Earth has borne Wheat, for the god was exhibited as a "ripe ear of grain," in a manner similar to the lifting up in Christian rites, of the sacred Host. Indeed, in the Eleusinian mysteries the physical mystery of earth and grain is an image of the spiritual mystery of divinity and humanity. It is almost possible to say that in Till We Have Faces, God is known first in a female form, as Ungit: "Ungit in each must bear Ungit's son." Jung says "certain early Christian sects gave a maternal significance to the Holy Ghost," adding, "It is not without reason that the dove of Aphrodite is the symbol of the Holy Ghost."

This beautiful idea is given vivid expression in an important essay which outlines the maternal imagery of God in the Bible: God reveals himself to us in the Bible not only as the father, and like a husband, but also like a mother— even, by implication, a virgin mother, for God is One and the sole Source of All. God is seen as a maternal bird, as a rock, a tree, the sea, a womb, a watering spring; all motifs of the mother goddess. When God is our mother, we are her sons:
Song of Son, whether male or female, Unig's divine son is in this sense "the god," who is "the only dread and beauty there is." No wonder Lewis refrains from describing him precisely, for "God is love." (I John 4:8) and this god of love is God; He of whom Moses said, "the LORD thy God is a consuming fire." (Deuteronomy 4:24) who, manifesting Himself on the mountainside, burns but does not consume.

Compared to these audacities, the inclusion of planetary divinities as parts of the universe seems almost commonplace, Christ as a sun-lion, almost a platitude. The gods are aspects of God's Creation, but this God is God. The divine pair of Mars and Venus in the interplanetary trilogy are here replaced by the divine Mother and her divine Son, who is the God "so masculine that we are all feminine" to Him, and thus, like Psyche, His brides. Indeed we are all, as members of His one church—or by extenston, one humanity of whatever religion, one solar system, even one universe—one bride, to whom He comes like the Bridegroom in the Song of Solomon (2:11-12), like Asian into snow-bound Narnia: "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle[dove] is heard in our land."

Mothering Sunday
Lent IV, AD 1977

FOOTNOTES

I. The Fields of Arbog
3 Lewis 1964: 96. 4 Ibid.: 96. 5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.: 104. 10 Ibid.: 105. 8 Ibid.: 103.
7 Ibid.: 10. 10 Ibid.: 106. 11 Ibid.: 105.
12 Franz Cumont, Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans (New York: Dover [1912]): 37.
30 Ibid.: 37. 31 Ibid.: 41. 32 Ibid.: 42.
46 Lewis 1964: 106.
48 Ibid.: 33.
50 Cumont, 1912: 64.
52 Lewis 1964: 111. 53 Lewis 1945: 343.
60 Laroque 1960: 120. 61 Ibid.: 56.
62 Ibid.: 221. 63 Lewis 1938: 140.
76 Ibid.: 405. 77 Laroque 1960: 103.
78 Ibid.: 105. 79 Ibid.: 216.
80 Lewis 1964: 105-106. 81 Lewis 1945: 403.
84 Ibid.: 89-96.
87 Lewis 1945: 397. 88 Ibid.: 378. 89 Ibid.
92 Ibid.: 220. 93 Lewis 1945: 392.
96 Laroque 1960: 64. 97 Ibid.: 214.
99 Lewis 1938: 134.
103 Lewis 1945: 391. 104 Ibid.: 401. 105 Ibid.
109 David Lindsay, A Voyage to Arcturus (New York: Ballantine, 1960): 118.
110 Lewis 1943: 228. 111 Ibid.: 222.
112 Ibid.: 230. 113 Lewis 1945: 392.
117 Ibid.: 377.
119 Ibid.: 42. 120 Ibid.: 121 Lewis 1945: 341.
125 Doss 1939: 399. 126 Ibid.
130 Ibid.: 51. 131 Lewis 1945: 72.

II. The Mountains of Aslan

1 Lewis 1945: 459. 2 Ibid.: 461. 3 Ibid.: 459.
4 Lewis 1956: 172.
6 Ibid.: 40. 7 Ibid. 8 Lewis, 1952: 134. 9 Ibid.
18 Ackerman 1956: 96. 20 Ibid.: 97.
21 Ibid.: 100. 22 Lewis 1952: 129. 23 Ibid.: 131.
25 Ibid.: 132.
Matters of Grave Import
continued from page 12

serene young man gazing up into space as he steps toward the edge of the cliff. A flower in one hand, a torn purse hanging from a stick in the other hand, he is clearly living in the immediate moment, which is by ordinary expectations very likely to be his last. A furry dog beside him is in the same dangerous position. Williams’ Fool is deliberately kept a figure of mystery. "There are no writings which speak of the Fool." Somehow this figure is both in motion and at rest, in the center and everywhere else. As represented by Sybill, we know that the Fool has gone through a fearsome ordeal and emerged totally balanced, sovereign.

The chief characteristic Williams’ Fool has in common with other conceptions is that her (Sybill’s) actions and perceptions can be incomprehensible by ordinary prudential standards. But she succeeds. The old bromide “It’s so crazy it just might work” applies to the Fool.

In the first story Luke is sometimes a fool in the Parsifal-like sense of a naive, unripe youth, brought up in the midst of nowhere, ignorant of his identity, who sets out to discover himself. As he begins to use the Force he has to do foolish things such as practice with his lightsaber while blindfolded, and later turn off his computer when zeroing in on the Deathstar.

From the perspective of the magi Ben and Yoda, Luke is a fool when he interrupts his training to go off to rescue Han and Leia. “Reckless is he! Now things are worse.” Yet in following his heart, Luke turns out to be wiser than they. Though he does not succeed in freeing Han, he had not come Han might have been tortured to death; and the distraction created by his presence enables Leia and the others to escape, so that they in turn can rescue him, still uncorrupted by the Dark Side.

Han is even more obviously the Fool; he does not understand himself, acts recklessly on impulse, and often plunges into extreme danger from which he emerges unhurt because the very wildness of his actions upsets others’ calculations. (He also has a furry companion; and their personalities are not completely unlike.) Han charges down a corridor in the Deathstar after twenty stormtroopers, who flee on the assumption that he has a good reason for what he is doing. He courts a princess with insufferable arrogance. He goes out into the arctic night of Hoth on a doomed beast. He plunges into an asteroid field. He speed’s down an unknown asteroid tunnel which turns out to be the belly of a monster. He attacks Darth Vader’s destroyer with his gnat of a ship. And he wins out. It is ironic that when his actions seem to him completely prudent—flying to Bespin—he is unknowingly going into the greatest danger of all, to the place where he will finally fail.

When we meet Han he believes his own bluster; he thinks of himself as mercenary and self-seeking, and only learns that he is really loyal and caring when he finds himself doing loyal and caring things. At the verge of the pit he reaches a new stage in his life. Out of love for his friend he weighs the odds, refuses reckless action, does the prudent thing; he goes gentle into that good night. So when he is undergoing the ultimate descent of the Fool, motionless in the central position of the Fool, he is for the first time not acting like a fool at all.