10-15-1980

The Host of Heaven: Astrological and Other Images of Divinity in the Fantasies of C.S. Lewis (Part 1)

Nancy-Lou Patterson

Follow this and additional works at: https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore

Part of the Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons

Recommended Citation


This Article is brought to you for free and open access by SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.

To join the Mythopoeic Society go to: http://www.mythsoc.org/join.htm
The Host of Heaven: Astrological and Other Images of Divinity in the Fantasies of C.S. Lewis (Part 1)

Abstract
Study of the astrological symbolism present in Lewis's fantasies. Part 1 covers the Space Trilogy.

Additional Keywords
Lewis, C.S. Space Trilogy—Astrological symbolism; Lewis, C.S. Space Trilogy—Symbolism of divinity; Nancy-Lou Patterson
"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," said Lucy.

C.S. Lewis, Prince Caspian

The sources from which C.S. Lewis took the motifs of his fantasies included Mesopotamian, Greek, Roman, and Norse mythology, as they are filtered through Medieval Christian culture. He has thus used the Western past as a deep well from which to draw motifs as he needs them, dipping from level to level as he chooses.

The fantasies of C.S. Lewis can be divided into three parts. First is the interplanetary trilogy: Out of the Silent Planet (1938), which takes place on Mars; Perelandra (1943), which takes place on Venus; and That Hideous Strength (1945) which takes place on Earth. Second are the Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (1950); Prince Caspian (1951); The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (1952); The Silver Chair (1953); and The Horse and His Boy (1954); The Magician’s Nephew (1955); and The Last Battle (1956). Third and last is the novel Till We Have Pages (1956), which takes place in the Kingdom of Glimle. Narnia is an alternative world to Earth, but Earth is part of its story; Glimle is a barbaric kingdom not too distant from ancient Greece.

I have not included The Screwtape Letters and The Great Divorce, which deal with infernal and supernal themes, because they are not quite of the same genre, though they do contain a narrative element. The eleven works listed above are clearly stories, and all of them draw upon the wellsprings of Western mythology. They do this, as I have said, in the Medieval manner, fitting the pre-Christian mythologies of northern and southern Europe and the Near East into the grand structure of Christianity as sculptural details are fitted into a Gothic cathedral.

I. The Fields of Arbol

"Medieval thinkers," Lewis wrote in The Discarded Image (1964), "attributed life and even intelligence to one privileged class of objects (the stars) which we hold to be inorganic." This attitude may be contrasted with the one most in favour today, expressed in the following conversation from The Voyage of the Dawn Treader.

"In our world," said Eustace, "a star is a huge ball of flaming gas."
"Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but what it is made of."

In the Medieval world there were only five planets, as we define planets, but with the sun and moon they made seven: Moon-Mercury-Venus-Sun-Mars-Jupiter-Saturn. Each rolled majestically about the central Earth, on transparent globes revolving one within the other. Outside of these was the Stellatum where the fixed stars dwelt, and outside of that was the Primum Mobile. Of the exact position of earth in this model, Lewis says, "the earth is really the lowest place; movement to it from whatever direction is a downward movement." In his pithiest expression of this model he says, "The Medieval Model is vertiginous."

The life attributed to the stars by Medieval thinkers came from their origins: "planets ... had, after all, been the hardest of the pagan gods," as Lewis says, but "they were planets as well as gods." As planets, they exercised an effect, called technically an "influence," upon the earth and its inhabitants. This effect is precisely the subject matter of astrology. Lewis explains, "Astrology is not specifically medieval. The Middle Ages inherited it from antiquity and bequeathed it to the Renaissance." Its basic principle was not in doubt. "Orthodox theologians could accept the theory that the planets had an effect on events and on psychology, and, much more, on plants and animals." The problem lay elsewhere: what the church fought against was: 1) the practice of astrologically grounded predictions; 2) astrological determinism. The doctrine of influences carried so far as to exclude free will; 10) and 3) "the worship of planets."

The origin of these proscriptions is of course the Bible, where again and again God's people were called to account for having "worshipped all the host of heaven." (II Kings 17:16 and 21:3) Jeremiah had complained of his people: "they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods." (Jeremiah 19:13) In Deuteronomy God explains His ways to Moses: "Ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire." (Deuteronomy 4:15) He has not shown Himself in visible form, God says; the "nueta" really the lowest place; movement to it from whatever direction is a downward movement." (Deuteronomy 4:19)
VENUS

The most attractive members of the heavenly host besides the Sun and Moon were those whose graceful dances assumed so elaborate a pattern: the planets. Franz Cumont in his classic work *Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans* (1912) gives the history of planetary association most succinctly by saying that "the names of the planets which we employ to-day, are an English translation of a Latin translation of a Greek translation of a Babylonian nomenclature." Lewis added to this sequence their names in Old Solar: I am referring to his wonderful inventions in the interplanetary trilogy, especially as they make their appearance in *That Hideous Strength*: Virtrilbia (Mercury); Perelandra (Venus); Malanendra (Mars); Thalimandra (Earth); Glund (Saturn); Lurga (Jupiter); Arbor (the Sun); and Sulva (the Moon). His descriptions of these powerful beings are superb evocations of traditional imagery combined with his own visionary genius. I will trace the history of the system he has used and then give his descriptive passages together with the traditions upon which he has drawn, to demonstrate the splendours he has distilled.

Originally the Greeks called Venus "Herald of the Dawn," Mercury "the Twinkling Star," Mars the Fiery Star," Jupiter the "Luminous Star," and Saturn the "Brilliant Star," according to Cumont. But after the fourth century, the planets became the stars of Hermes, Aphrodite, Ares, Zeus, Kronos," because "in Babylonia these same planets were dedicated respectively to Nebo, Ishtar, Nergal, Marduk, and Ninib." *Astrology*, however, was not imported along with these designations, Cumont says. He quotes Eudoxus of Cnidus's dictum: "No credence should be given to these new conceptions." 20

Falkieliters had been able to keep accurate records of lunar phases by carving tally marks in bone; the builders of Stonehenge had constructed an observatory capable of predicting both lunar and solar movements, some authorities believe. 22 With their long history of astronomical observations and their lunisolar calendar, the Chaldeans could predict a wide range of celestial phenomena, and since these elegant patterns traced on the pristine sky were to them the doings of high divinities, it became possible to predict the ways of the gods to men.}

The *Sidereal Cult* as Cumont calls it, was foreign to Greeks and to Romans: Aristophanes remarked that the barbarians sacrificed to Sun and Moon while Greeks addressed personal divinities. Nevertheless, "the common people" regarded the stars as "It was a shock to popular belief" when Anaxagorus (like Eu- stace) declared the stars to be "merely bodies in a state of incandescence." Plato called him an "atheist for such a rash statement." 26 and declared the stars to be "living gods in which He [the supreme Being] animates with his own life." In all this there is demonstrated an "indispensable" borrowing from *Somitic* [Mesopotamian] sources, Cumont says. Cumont is writing with reference to the problems raised by Alfred Jeremias, whose excesses regarding the role of the solar zodiac in the ancient world had cast, and according to Phyllis Ackerman, still casts, a shadow upon "the Babylonian doctrine" as a source for astrology.

The Greeks "owed to the observations of Mesopotamia . . . the ecliptic, the signs of the zodiac, and the major planets," says Cumont. This first influx of positive knowledge corresponds a first introduction into the Greek system of the mystical ideas which the Orientals attached to them. Cumont says. This occurred during the Orientizing Period when "the commercial cities of Iona opened their gates to Asiatic influences" and brought in addition a great influx of motifs into art including the winged beings, the various metamorphs including the griffin and the dragon, and the vegetable palmette. The end result of these trends was that "this sidereal theology, founded on ancient beliefs of Chaldaean astrology, transformed in the Hellenistic age . . . [was] promoted, after becoming a pantheistic Sun worship, to the rank of official religion of the
Roman empire. At its best, Cumont says, "the common creed of all pagans came to be a scientific pantheism, in which the infinite power of the divinity that pervaded the universe was revealed by all the elements of nature." I daresay this faith is held by many of the religious people of our own day, whatever name they give their beliefs.

Such was the hardness of this world view, that it has managed to maintain itself even into the present day. Jean Sènec, in his great monograph The Survival of the Pagan Gods (1953) made it his general argument that "the ancient gods survive during the Middle Ages by virtue of interpretations of their origins and nature propounded by antiquity itself." These interpretations included numerous categories; the one which concerns this paper he calls "The Physical Tradition," which declared, as he flatly states, that "The heavenly bodies are gods." His description of this apprehension in the "last centuries of paganism" accords well with the role they play in Lewis's fantasies: The stars have found a recognized appearance, a name, a character, which their names alone suffice to evoke." It was this final identification of planets with gods, Sènec says, that assured the gods of survival. He calls this this piece of good luck for the Olympians a "providential shelter," which arranged matters so that "though...dethroned on earth, they are still masters of the celestial spheres." It was in this role that they passed into Christianity, despite the initial hostility. Sènec refers to St. Paul, who reproached the Galatians for observing "days and months and times and years" (Galatians 4:9-10). Among the survivals were the names of the days of the week and the adoption of the sun's birthday as Christ's nativity. The physical world of the early church was that of Hellenism; this world continued to exist into the Renaissance.

Sènec outlines the evolution of astrology in the Middle Ages; until the twelfth century the focus was Byzantine. The Crusades brought Europe the Greek texts with their Arab commentaries, in Latin translations for the most part made by Jews." This eclectic melange resulted in "an extraordinary increase in the prestige of astrology." An adjunct of this development was the adoption of the concept of: the Obir (in Arabic) which became the Patrix (in Latin) was frankly "a treatise on the practice of magic," and included prayers like the following evocation of Saturn, which is to be read with That Hideous Strength (to be discussed below): "O Master Saturn; Thou, the Cold, the Sterile, the Mournful, the Pernicious...the Sage and Solitary...the old and cunning." This work shows "the ascent and even the very terms of a Greek astrological prayer to Kronos."

One of the major elements in the physical tradition was the association of planets with aspects of human life: both physiology and psychology. Sènec states that "the Renaissance saw no contradiction between astrology and science; rather the dominion of the heavenly bodies over all earthly things was viewed as the natural law par excellence, the law which assures the regularity of phenomena." Even in the sixteenth century, he says, "astrology continued to keep alive the veneration for the gods which it had served as shelter since classical times." Indeed, some astrological elements may be seen in the words of a hymn by Bishop Thomas Ken, written in 1692, and sung at an Anglican church service during the period when the present paper was being written:

Let thine own light to others shine.
Reflect all heaven's propitious rays
In ardent love and cheerful praise.

In this verse, astrological elements revealed in the words "influence" and "propitious" serve as a metaphor for God's direct and divine role in human affairs.

Two factors in twentieth century thought have most assisted modern astrologists in adapting themselves to their era: one is the newly developing science of periodicity in the physical world: the case is cogently (and wittily) argued by J.A. West and J.G. Toonder in The Case for Astrology. The other is Jung's sympathetic treatment of astrological insights in his psychology. I have thus chosen Jeff Mayo, whose writings particularly take account of Jungian interpretation, as a resource for contemporary astrological thought. I base this choice on the suggestion of Stephanie K. Walker, B.A., B.L.S., D.F.Astron., who has been Mayo's student and my consultant in astrological matters regarding the present essay. In his Astrology (1969) Mayo calls the Planets "Life-Principles" and says they symbolise "basic human functions" and are "focal points of unconscious energies." He discusses the planets (ten, including the sun and moon and the planets unknown to the ancients), through a series of brief formulae: those germane to this paper are as follows:

Sun: Principle of self-integration.
Moon: Principle of rhythms, through instinct-asimilation, reflections.
Mercury: Communicative principle through mental and nervous co-ordination, transmission.
Venus: Uniting principle through sympathy, evolution, feeling.
Mars: Principle of activity through enterprise, self-assertion, energetic understanding.
Saturn: Formative principle through restriction, discipline, rigidity.

Mayo is at pains, in his The Planets and Human Behaviour, to disavow the "personification of the planets." Pointing out that "to the uninformed
or skeptics this method of interpretation only continues to depict astrology as . . . full of mysticism and black magic." He states flatly, "The planets are not the prime creators of the human form and psyche. The origins of the human race are . . . deeply rooted in the origins of the planet Earth."

Having traced the historical development of these ideas, I propose to give Lewis's two treatments of planetary symbolism--from his expository study, The Discarded Image, and from his inter-planetary trilogy--side by side, along with an outline of the mythological motifs and divine personalities with which they are associated. I shall begin with the Sun. Lewis says of it (or him) in The Discarded Image, "Sol . . . produces the noblest metal, gold, and is the eye and mind of the whole universe. He makes men wise and liberal and his sphere is the Heaven of theologians and philosophers . . . Sol produces fortunate events." This is the medieval model. But listen to Lewis's description of the Sun's light as viewed from outer space in Out of the Silent Planet:

The light was paler than any light of comparable intensity that he had ever seen; it was not pure white but the palest of all imaginable golds, and it cast shadows as sharp as a floodlight. The heat, utterly free from moisture . . . produced no tendency to drowsiness; rather, intense alacrity.

Ransom comments upon this new apprehension:

"I always thought space was dark and cold," he remarked vaguely.

"Forgotten the sun?" said Weston contemptuously.

They are travelling through the Fields of Arbol, as the solar system is called in the primordial tongue, Old Solar, which is spoken by the unfallen inhabitants of its planets as well as by their guardians, the planetary eldils known as Oyrsu (singular: Oyarsa). Lewis explains: "Even the Oyrsu aren't exactly angels in the same sense as our guardian angels are. Technically they are Intelligences."
passed whole into the Roman pantheon without losing his name; when in the third century BC that pantheon was transformed by the introduction of Greek influence, a process complete by the second century.

For Mesopotamia, Sin/Moon was chief of the astral trio of divinities; Gilgame and Shamash/Sun were his children. He was conceived as an old man with a beard of lapis-lazuli who roamed majestically across the night in the barque of the crescent moon which, like our moon, has a "man" in it, for the Greeks Selene/Moon was the sister of Helios/Sun, and she illuminated the night with her golden crown. Her most famous love was for Endymion, a youth of extraordinary beauty who had been granted eternal youth and life by Zeus on condition that he remain forever asleep. Selene watched over him through the eternal round of nights, unable to consummate her love. This virginal motif is expanded in the Greek association of the moon with Artemis, a goddess of the chase and of forests: she is symbolized by the she-bear. Her close association with Apollo (she was his sister) made her also a slight goddess. Thus she was present on her brow and bears a lance. It is the militant virginity of Artemis, the huntress, associated sometimes with the Amazons, that has perhaps been chosen by Lewis, who makes the moon not the model of triumphant chastity but of malignant sterility. The moon was not a benign entity to him: witness his childhood memory in *Surprised by Joy.* To the Romans, Artemis was associated with Diana, an Italic deity who was a goddess of light, mountains, and woods. It was she whose temple on Lake Nemi was to spark the writing of the pioneer work on mythology, Frazer's *The Golden Bough.*

Before turning to the planets proper, I will give Lewis's images of Earth: she is called Thulcandra by the gymnastics of Malacandra (Mars). That being tells Ransom, the voyager who has come out of the silent planet, Earth, "We know nothing since the day when the Bent One sank out of heaven into the air of your world, wounded in the very light of his sight." In Peregrina earth's planetary ruler is described as "that supreme and original evil in Man, all the Bent One." The Bent One is, of course, Satan, whose fall from heaven is detailed in *The Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost.* Jesus says, in St. Luke 10:18, "I behold Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Despite its evil reputation and the interplanetary silence to which it has been submitted, Earth is portrayed with aching tenderness as Ransom remembers his native planet in *Out of the Silent Planet.* Wild, animal thirst for life, mixed with homesickness longings for the sights and smells of earth—for grass and meat and beer or tea and the human voice awoke in him."

Describing Ransom's return, Lewis builds image on image: "Oh God! he sobbed. Oh God! It's Earth!" He was on earth. The earth turned pastel, "drinking great draughts of air," and then he "slipped in mud, blessed the smell of it." Even in the "pitch-black night under torrential rains," he wept "the smell of the soil about him—a patch of his native planet where grass grew where cows moved, where presently he would come to hedges and a gate."

This same sense of bucolic intimacy and nostalgia recurs in *That Hideous Strength* when Merlin, newly awakened, speaks of his relationship with "the fields and I, this wood and I," a place of mould, gravel, wet leaves, weedy water, "where are sensed the "rustling of mice and stoats, thumping progressions of frogs, the small shock of falling hazel nuts, cracking of branches, runnels trickling, the very growing of grass." The magician has begun to conjure with Earth: Ransom smells "that sweet heaviness, like the smell of Hawthorn." He abjures the magus: "Whatever of spirit may still linger in the earth... You shall not lift your little finger to call it up... It is in this age utterly unlawful." The position of Earth in Western mythology shares the curious ambivalence of this jewel-like planet ruled by a fallen archon: for the Babylonians, the great gods divided the Universe in a manner resembling the demystified world of Genesis 1:6-10. For the Mesopotamians, according to one text, "Kingdom descended from heaven.

The orderly arrangement is in total contradiction to the creation story in Hesiod's poem, the *Theogony,* which recounts Greek mythology in a systematic form, while reflecting the popular beliefs of the eighth century before Christ. In the beginning, Gaia (Earth) emerged from Chaos, followed by Eros through whom all things were made. Among many other births was that of Uranus, the starry sky; a mating between sister Earth (Gaia) and brother Sky (Uranus) produced the twelve Titans. The story progresses bloodily; its details belong under the section on Cronos/Saturn below. Gaia's role in Greek mythology was minor; Earth to the Romans was Tellus Mater (hence the term "Tellurian" for earthly things): she was a goddess of fecundity, and both marriages and fertility came under her sway.

In contrast to the *Theogony,* the Babylonian creation story, which is entitled the *Enuma Elish* from its opening words, "When above," is
concerned with the doings of the creator, Marduk (Jupiter), who was the high god of Babylon. The 
Enuma Elish was discovered in the form of frag-
ments on tablets in the ruins of the library of 
Ashurbanipal, 668-c.630 BC. In this creation 
epic, Marduk triumphs over Tiamat, the female 
sea, and organizes the universe from her slain 
body, both earth and sky. The Enuma Elish 
calls Marduk “the wisest of [the gods]” (Tablet 
III, line 113) and says, “his countenance shone 
exceedingly, [like] the day.” (Tablet VI, line 56)

He created stations for the great gods; 
The stars their likeness(es) . . . he set up. 
Thus, he himself “installed the stars” which were 
images of the gods, and regulated their 
courses.

This divinity, Marduk/Jupiter, appears in 
That Hiduous Strength when the planetary gods 
descend to earth: I have put him first because 
the Babylonians did so, but he appears in his 
medieval position (the same one we give him) in 
the novel: “It seemed to each that the room was 
full of lights, with kings and goblins at the wish 
of their dancers expressed heroic energy.” At 
his approach, “Kingship and power and festal 
pomp and courtesy shot from him as sparks fly 
from an anvil.” The company sensed “bells . . . 
trumpets . . . bawdes.” For this was great 
Glund-Oyarsa, King of Kings, through whom the 
joy of creation principally blows across these 
fields of Arbol, known to men in old times as 
Jove.”

Zeus, as the Greeks called this divinity, 
is named for the sky and the light of day.” Indeed, 
his name appears throughout the Indo-
European speaking world, as Zeus, as Deva as 
Dya, in a word, as God. He is repre-
sented in classical art as a mature man of grave 
demeanour with scythe and thunderbolt in hand 
(the latter bearing a notable resemblance to the 
Tibetan dople), his head crowned with oak-leaves 
(the oak is related mythologically to thunder-
storms) and an eagle at his feet. In his 
Roman form he is called Jupiter, a name derived 
from the same root as Zeus: the Indo-European 
di or div, “celestial light,” from which we 
have our word “divine.” He was the god of all 
celestial phenomena: light, thunder, rain, and 
finally, of the Roman Empire itself. Lewis’s 
term “Jove” is a reminder that the character of this 
celestial creator god chimes for Christians 
(in this role only, needless to say) with 
Jehovah or Yahweh, that is, with God the Father 
Himself. But, of course, all these beings repre-
sent aspects of God’s activity: they are agents, 
servants, made, like us, in His image.

Lewis wrote of Jupiter in The Discarded 
Image:

Jupiter, the King, produces in the earth, 
rather disappointingly, tin; . . . the 
character he produces in men . . . [is] 
very impressively expressed by the word 
“jovial.” . . . the jovial character is 
cheerful, festive, yet temperate, tranquil, 
magnanimous. When this planet dominates 
we may expect halcyon days and prosperity.

This benignant deity of medieval thought is far 
removed from the gleaming Creator of Babylon, and 
even farther from that God who answers by fire, 
who followed His flesh in a burning bush, 
taking care, understandably as we now see, not 
unto show any “manner of similitude.”

As I have mentioned Jupiter, I will complete 
the materials associated with Heliod’s Theogony, 
and discuss Lewis’s Saturn, who precedes Jupiter 
in both That Hiduous Strength and The Discarded 
Image: I am leaving till last the deities Mal-
candra/Mars and Perelandra/Venus for reasons I 
hope will become apparent later. Lewis’s treat-
ment of Saturn is perhaps the most evocative por-
tion of the sequence “The Descent of the Gods” 
which forms Chapter 15 of That Hiduous Strength. 
The outer planets (to be discussed below) have already 
arrived. Now, “These would be mightier 
energies: ancient eldile, steersmen of giant 
worlds which have never from the beginning been 
subdued; to the sweet humiliations of organic 
life.” There is an impression of “stiff grass, 
hen-roosts, dark places in the middle of woods, 
graves,” of “the earth gripped, suffocated, 
airless cold, the black sky full of the “utter 
and final blackness from which Nature knows no return.” This is “Saturn, whose 
name in the heavens is Lurga.” Lewis says “His 
spirit lay upon the house, or even on the whole 
earth, with a cold pressure such as might flatten 
the very orb of Tellus to a wafer.” He is the 
“lead-like burden” of “a mountain of centuries,” 
characterized by “unendurable cold.”

When I first read this passage (I knew noth-
ing at the time of astrology) I was particularly 
struck by the reference to stiff grass and hen-
roosts: the passage begins with these familiar 
but chilling images, which echo John Keats’s 
poem The Eve of St. Acmes:

Ach, bitter chill it was! 
The owl, for all his feathers was a-cold; 
The hare limp’d trembling through the frozen 
grass and proceeds to evocations of intolerable empi-
ness, pressure, and sterility. In The Discarded 
Image Lewis expands the medieval view of Saturn:

In the earth his influence produces lead; 
in men, the melancholy complex; in his-
tory, disastrous events. He is connected 
with sickness and old age. Our traditional 
picture of Father Time with his 
scythe is 

derived from pictures of Saturn.

In Babylon, Ninib/Saturn was worshipped at 
Lagash as Ninurtsag or Ninurta, and was a god of 
fields and canals as well as hunter and warrior. His 
baleful emblem was a lionness-headed eagle. 
Saturn was also an agricultural god to the 
Romans as his season, which begins December 17, was 
a cycle of rural festivals lasting until December 
23; the Saturnalia. He was represented with a 
sickle in his hand as well as a spray of wheat. 
Stiff grass and hen-roosts are explained here, 
but what of the intolerable pressures?

In the Theogony we come to the source: to 
the Greeks, Saturn was Cronus. He was one of 
the twelve Titans born to Gaea (Earth) by her brother 
Uranus (Sky). In this Aweful story Cronus con-
spired with his mother to use her attribute (re-
representing the harvest of earth’s bounty)—the 
sickle—to castrate his father. The Titan’s 
genitals, thrown into the sea, raised a foam 
from which Aphrodite was born. The Titans 
were a divine race and by this ultimate Freudian act, 
Cronus became their chief; in his turn he be-
came a terrible father who devoured his own 
children. His attribute has become the scythe, for 
he is, as Lewis says, the counterpart of Father 
Time. Only when Zeus was born did one of Cronus’ 
children escape, for Zeus’s mother hid him (at 
Uranus’s overt) in a castrated Titan (to be discussed 
in the next section), where his grandmother (Gaea) gave him to the care of 
the nymphs of Mount Ida. Zeus grew up to over-
throw Cronus in his turn, as well as the other 
Titans, aided by the other young gods of the 
Olympian pantheon. Cronus was imprisoned 
beneath the earth.
This combination of motifs appears in Lewis' Narnian Chronicles in The Silver Chair, the children have found their way into the Narnian Underworld:

... here, filling almost the whole length of [a smaller cave], lay an enormous man, fast asleep. He was far bigger than any of the giants, but noble and beautiful. His breast rose and fell gently under the snowy beard that covered him to the waist.

When Puddleglum enquires about this figure, the Warden of Underworld replies, "That is old Father Time, who once was a King in Overland... they say he will wake at the end of the world. And indeed, in The Last Battle, Father Time and "the great giant raised a horn to his mouth... they heard the sound of the horn, high and terrible, yet of a strange deadly beauty." The immediate result of this act is that "the sky became full of shooting stars" (see below). Finally, at Aslan's word, "The giant threw his horn into the sea. Then he stretched out one arm--across the sky till his hand reached the Sun... and instantly there was total darkness." This is that "utter and final blackness of nonentity" which Lewis first evoked in That Hideous Strength.

Before turning to the god and goddess (Mars and Venus) of whom Lewis has most to say, I will give his description of the first of the planets, Virgil's Mercury, who appropriately heralds the arrival of the gods in That Hideous Strength:

Now of a sudden they all began talking loudly at once, each, not contentiously but delightedly, interrupting the others. A stranger coming into the night would have thought they were drunk...87

The allusion to Pentecost is no accident: "These men are full of new wine" (Acts 2:13) was the response of some hearers when the Spirit-filled apostles began to "speak with other tongues" (Acts 2:4) so that every man heard them speak in his own language (Acts 2:6). The doom of Belbury is to be the confusion of tongues, and this ensorceling freedom of speech in St. Anne's "on-the-Hill is the first note of the coming triumph of the planetary rulers over the macrobes who have been infesting the earth.

There are "plays upon thoughts, paradoxes, fancies, anecdotes, theories laughingly advanced," while upstairs, "a rod of coloured light, whose colour no man can name or picture, darted between them." At the approach of Virgil's Mercury, "needle-pointed desires, brisk erriments, lynx-eyed thoughts" dart among them, "For the Lord of Meaning himself, the herald, the messenger, the slayer of Argus, was with them: the angel that spake nearest the eye, Virgil, who men call Mercury and Thoth." Lewis described this deity in The Discarded Image: "Mercury produces quicksilver. Venus, goddess of the Evening"--clearly the morning and evening star, for her very name is "Star"--was both a war goddess and a goddess of love. It was she who descended into the underworld and escaped again, divesting and inventing herself of her splendid attire in the process. I cannot help but think of her (as well as of Our Lady) in association with the passage in The Song of Solomon 6:10: "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

The Greek Ishtar/Astarte was a fertility goddess, Aphrodite. Traditionally, her son was her primordial precursor, Eros, who was also the youngest of the gods. He was the husband of Psyche ("soul") and it is her myth, taken from The Golden Age of Apuleius, that Lewis tells in Till We Have Faces. The god's role will be discussed below in the context of that novel. The Roman Venus was a goddess of spring, very minor in her original, Troian, Mars, "the most Roman of all the Gods," was the father of Romulus and Remus, founders of Rome, and a god both of agriculture and of war.

Together these deities play for Lewis the roles of archetypal male and female; he had been deeply moved by Coventry Patmore's writings on love, marriage, and the religious dimensions of human sexuality. In Aurea Dicta XIII, Patmore writes: "Loved ones, put out the light and draw the curtains, when they wish to see the god and the goddess." "That Lewis wrote with a knowledge of this passage is suggested by Jane's visionary perception of a young married couple; as if the god and goddess in them burned through their...
bodies and through their clothes and shone before her in a young double-natured nakedness of rose-red spirit that overcame her." I would suggest, in the last simile, a touch of Charles Williams' sensibility. He too wrote extensively of the sensual element in divine love. The particular theme of Fatmore's that moved Lewis most deeply I shall refer to below in my discussion of Lewis' Venus, but as he begins with Mars—in Out of the Silent Planet—I shall discuss him (one cannot say "it") first.

That novel's highest moment occurs when the Oyarsa of Malacandra arrives in person: we share Ransom's perception of him:

Every visible creature in the gorge had risen to its feet and was standing, more hushed than even, with its head bowed; and Ransom saw (if it could be called seeing) that 'Oyarsa was coming up between long lines of sculptured stones. Partly he knew it from the faces of the Malacandrians as their lord passed them; partly he saw—he could not deny that he saw—Oyarsa himself. He never could say what it was like. The merest whisper of light, no, less than that, the smallest diminution of shadow—was travelling along the uneven surface of the ground; or rather some difference in the look of the ground, too slight to be named in the language of the five senses, moved slowly towards him. Like a silence spreading over a room full of people, like an infinitesimal coolness on a sultry day, like a passing memory of some long-forgotten sound or scent, like all that is stilllest and smallest and most hard to seize in nature, Oyarsa passed between his subjects and drew near and came to rest, not ten yards away from Ransom in the centre of Medlorn. Ransom felt a tingling of his blood and a pricking in his fingers both and his heart, and body seemed to him to be made of water.

Here the mysterium tremendum appears with the slightest of sensory signals, as in I Kings 19:11-12, when "the LORD was not in the wind . . . not in the earthquake; . . . not in the fire," but rather, in "a still small voice." Rudolf Otto discusses one of the Upanishads which "seems to be making perceptible . . . that before which all words turn back," that, as he says, "in whose presence we must exclaim "aasaram!" The Sanskrit phrase of wonder that he translates, "that unthing . . . is this?" in the sense [of] a thing of which no one can say what it is or whence it comes, and in whose presence we have the feeling of the uncanny." In Lewis' scene, he who approaches is "the Oyarsa of Malacandra, the great archon of Mars," "the Lord of Malacandra," or sometimes, simply, "Malacandra."

It was natural for Lewis (perhaps for most Christians) to depict the first divinity encountered by Ransom as male. Beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it," he writes in That Hideous Strength. This deity can be, despite his first appearance, important, jealous, present indeed in wind, earthquake, and fire (as on Sinjil): "the masculine itself; the loud, irruptive, possessive thing—the gold lion, the bearded bull—which breaks through hedges and scatters the little kingdom of your prilness"—thus Aslan, the golden lion in the last scene of The Silver Chair, when Jill and Eustace (who began the book crouching for cover behind a laurel hedge) return to triumph over their tormenters after Aslan knews down the wall of Experiment House. Thus Jesus, riding the Temple of "thieves" with a whip of cords.

When Malacandra/Mars approaches the upper chamber in That Hideous Strength, "Merlin saw in memory the wiry grass on Badon Hill, the long banner of the Virgin fluttering above the heavy British-Momian, the yellow-haired barbarians." There are impressions of "fires . . . blood . . . eagles . . . sky." Then, "They felt themselves taking their places in the ordered rhythm of the universe, side by side with the punctual seasons and patterned atoms and obeying Seraphim." Thus "Ransom knew, as a man knows when he touches iron, the clear, taut splendour of that celestial spirit that now flashed between them; vigilant Malacandra, captain of a cold orb, whom men call Mars and Mavors, and Tyr who put his hand in the wolf-mouth."

But to know the male is not to know the completeness of the divine. In the great epiphany at the end of Perelandra, the god and goddess attempt to show themselves. Their usual appearance is "The very faint light—the almost imperceptible alteration in the visual field—which betokens an eldil." They appear as pillars, flames, "talons and beaks," snow, cubes, heptagons, wheels (in Ezekiel)—and at last:

. . . suddenly two human forms stood before him on the opposite side of the lake. They were taller than the Sorns, the giants whom he had met in Mars. They were perhaps thirty feet high. . . . They were burning white like white-hot iron.

Lewis says of the divine pair: "their long and sparkling hair stood, cut straight behind them as if in a great wind," and adds, "the flush of diverse colours began at about the shoulders and streamed up the necks and flickered over face and head and stood out around the head like plumage or a halo." This image perhaps owes something to David Lindsay's A Yea's Queen, of which Lewis much admired; Lindsay wrote of the woman on the planet Tormance, Joiwind:

Her skin was not of a dead, opaque colour, like that of an earth beauty, but was opalescent; its hue was continually changing, with every thought and emotion, but none of these tints was vivid—were delicate, half-toned, and poetic.

As with Mankill's inability to describe the special colours—jale and ulfire—shone upon Tormance by its double suns, Ransom "could in a sense remember these colours—. . . but, he cannot by any effort call up the visual image of them nor give them any name."

Before Ransom's amazing vision, "The Oyarsa of Mars shone with cold and morning colours, a little metallic—a drab bronze. . . . the Oyarsa of Venus glowed with a warm splendour, full of the suggestion of teeming vegetable life. The faces were "primitive," as unnatural . . . as those of archaic statues from Ægina, bearing an expression of absolute "serenity."" Pure spiritual, intellectual love shone from their faces like barbed lightning. Although their naked bodies were free from any sexual characteristics, either primary or secondary, they were clearly "Masculine and Feminine."

Since "there is a terrestrial as well as a celestial Venus— the feminine deity of That Hideous Strength brings us the earthly goddess of love in two forms, just as Jung says 'the Mother Archetype' will be, both the loving and the terrible mother." Jane encounters her in a bedroom at St. Anne's House:

A flame-coloured robe, in which her hands were hidden, covered this person from
the feet to where it rose behind her neck in a kind of high rufflike collar, but in front it was so low or open it exposed her large breasts. Her neck was a typically Greek and Southern and glowing, almost the colour of honey. Some such dress Jane had seen worn by a Minoan priestess on a vase from old Chnosos. The head, poised motionless on the muscular pillar of her neck, stared straight at Jane. It was a red-cheeked, wet-lipped face, with black eyes—almost the eyes of a cow—and an enigmatic expression. 114

The cow image is from the Egyptian goddess Hathor who was, in a sense, a divine cow. Even the "pillar of her neck" is appropriate, since the Minoan goddess was represented by a pillar in some of her shrines. Jane sees that there was an almost ogreish gleem in the face"115—"the gleem of the Hindu goddess Kali in her necklace of skulls, or the Mesopotamian Anath hip-deep in the blood of battle. And she is not alone: "fat dwarfs in red caps with tassels on them, chubby, gnome-like little men, quite insufferably familiar, frivolous, and irrepressible," make a shambles of the goddess in her earthy form.

The strange woman had a torch in her hand. It burned with a terrible, blinding brightness, crackling, and sent up a cloud of dense black smoke, and filled the bedroom with a sticky, resinous smell.116

In Proverbs, "a strange woman" (6:24) is, frankly, "a whorish woman" (6:26; see also 2:16); the Solomonic speaker admonished his "son" in verses 5:35, "the lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil. But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell." The words of these passages may not be describing an ordinary woman of the streets, but a temple prostitute, whose profession was thus, to the writer, doubly abominable: temple prostitutes were women temple attendants in Mesopotamian culture who engaged in sexual intercourse with male worshippers in order that they might inquire, interrogate, interrogate, interrogate the goddess. The lady so worshipped had, precisely, gone down to death, for it was Ishtar who had walked in hell and returned according to Mesopotamian myth. The motif recurs in T ill We Have Faces, when for the early Church, Rome was perceived as the Whore of Babylon. Lewis gives a compassionate portrait of this cult in T ill We Have Faces where the goddess in her chthonic form is called Ungit. "In the furthest recess of her house where she sits it is so dark that you cannot see her well, but in summer enough light may come down from the smoke-holes in the roof to show her a little. She is a black stone without head or hands or a face, and a very strong goddess."

The motif of the goddess's handlessness—"her hands were hidden," Lewis writes of the earthly Venus, above—"reminds one of the Venus of Willendorf and other Paleolithic sculptures which are indeed handless, and even faceless. Ungit has her servitors; Orual says, I had seen their kind before, but only by torchlight in the house of Ungit. They looked strange under the sun, with their gilt paps and their huge flaxen wigs and their faces painted till they looked like wooden masks."

The torchlight of Ungit's house will have burned with the light and smoke of the torch in the strange woman's hand. Orual continues: "The girls stood stiffly at each side of [the Priest's] chair, their meaningless eyes looking always straight ahead out of the mask of their painting. The smell of old age, and the smell of the oils and essences they put on the girls, and the Ungit smell filled the room. It became very holy."120 Ungit is holy because her divine son is Eros—love—Dante's Lord of Terrible Aspect, to whose part in T ill We Have Faces we shall return at the end of the present essay.

When Jane appeals to Ransom to explain the presense of "that He tells her "I have long known that this house is deeply under her influence. There is even copper in the soil. Also—the earth-Venus will be specially active here at present. For it is to-night that her son only appears, and I have given all the other parts, brings Venus into the presence of the watchers, as with the others, by a gradually increasing crescendo of imagery. "How warm it was . . . to-night the smell of logos seemed more than ordinarily sweet."122 There was "the smell of burning cedar or of incense," of "harsh and cassis's balmy smell and all Arabia breathing from a balsam fruit that is the same odour, perhaps, as that which wafted from Ungit's girls. Ransom senses a presence "like ripe fields in August, serene and golden with the tranquility of fulfilled desire." The descending goddess has her masculine attendants: "not the gross and ridiculous dwarfs . . . but grave and ardent spirits, bright winged, their boyish shapes smooth and slender like ivory rods."126 The phallic element is not absent from this passage. The olfactory motif continues: there is a "ponderous fragrance of night-scented flowers, sticky gums, groves that drop odours, and with cool savour of night-time fruit."127 Finally, the goddess herself, in her most ultimate form—as the consuming fire"—is present:

It was fiery, sharp, bright, and ruthless, ready to kill, ready to die, outspeeding light; it was Charity . . . the trans-lunary virtue, fallen upon them direct from the Third Heaven . . . They were blinded, scorched, deafened. They thought it would burn their bones . . . So Pere-landra, triumphant among planets, whom men call Venus, came . . .

This lady is that goddess who, with the god, is seen by lovers who "put out the candles and draw the curtains." What is more, to continue the passage from Coventry Patmore: "In the higher portion, the night of the night is the light of perception." It is this light which shines in this lady's hand, for she is the Holy Wisdom of Proverbs and, in the Apocalypse, Wisdom, Sophia, God's own feminine self. Patmore wrote: "The external man and woman are each the projected simulacrum of the latent half of the other,"129 and, more specifically, "The woman is the man's glory, and she naturally delights in the praises which are said to that soul-filling her function."130 Finally, Patmore explained, "You may see the disc of Divinity quite clearly through the smoked glass of humanity, but no otherwise." Lewis had learned well from Patmore: he makes Jane find the following passage in a book at St. Anne's House:

The beauty of the female is the root of joy to the female as well as to the male, and it is no accident that the goddess of Love is older and stronger than the god.131

When I wrote about this passage in "Anti-Labels: Images of the Divine Centre in That Hideous Strength," I was unable, as was Walter Hooper
Her femininity is thus a necessary to her divinity as Mars/Malacandra's is to him.

Each of the three interplanetary novels culminates in an epiphany: Out of the Silent Planet with the coming of Gyarsa who is Malacandra/Mars; Perelandra with a manifestation of Malacandra/Mars and Perelandra/Venus; and in That Hideous Strength, Venus is a female deity, not because men invented the mythology, but because she is.

Her femininity is thus as necessary to her divinity as Mars/Malacandra's is to him.

We all owe Gracia Fay Ellwood a debt of gratitude for all she has done as Editor for Mythlore and the Society. She has devoted much time and concern in these last eight issues. When someone takes on a job such as this it is not for "fame or fortune." The reward is deeper and more personal. If there is any recompense, it is the satisfaction of knowing one has been of service to things especially important to them, and that one has striven to do as well as they have the power to do. If we appreciate what Gracia has done, then we should all encourage her to continue to contribute her individual talents to the fullest extent possible. It is a sad characteristic of human nature to remain silent when we are pleased or when we approve, but to become quite vocal when the opposite is true. It would be a courtesy to let Gracia know your appreciation of her work. Editors do appreciate kind words at times, since they are usually dealing with procedure and problems.

Much has happened, arisen, and changed since the Mythopoeic Society began 13 years ago. The Inkling stories are known and appreciated to a much greater degree, on many levels than they were when the Society was formed. We have the continuing challenge to study, analyze, discuss, review, comment on, and share the new ideas and things that seem to appear with near dizzying frequency.

I see the readers of Mythlore as a community of persons who share exciting and involving interests with each other. Most of us are geographically distant from each other, and therefore find Mythlore an appreciated vehicle for communication, opinion, and information. Intellectually, this is the finest community I know and am excited to be involved in the advancing of its shared interests.

I am an "evolutionary" rather than a "revolutionary" in disposition. Change to adapt to altering circumstances is often needed, but too rapid a change can cause feelings of unpleasant dislocation, and the community's long-term interests may not be best served. With this in mind, I would like to see Mythlore become a somewhat more "well-rounded" publication by combining the best features of a literary journal along with those of a magazine. To bring this about, I would like to solicit:

A. Articles of literary analysis and discussion on the works of Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams.
B. Articles that give a broader appreciation of TLW, such as reminiscences, historical or biographical aspects, not usually known information, etc.
C. Other authors and genres of literature that influenced TLW (e.g. MacDonald, Norse and Celtic mythology, etc.)
D. Articles that deal with the general nature of myth, fantasy, and imagination.