C.S. Lewis Dances among the Elves: A Dull and Scholarly Survey of *Spirits in Bondage* and ‘The Queen of Drum.’

Joe R. Christopher
(emeritus) Tarleton State University, Stephenville, TX

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Abstract
Scholarly Guest of Honor address, Mythcon 12. Discusses references to elves and fairies in the poetry of Lewis. Faerie provides a romantic streak in nature, and/or psychological symbols of escape, in the early poems. Faerie and Christianity vie in “The Queen of Drum,” and Faerie is virtually absent from his later poems.

Additional Keywords
Faerie in C.S. Lewis’s poetry; Lewis, C.S. Poetry—Symbolism; Lewis, C.S. “The Queen of Drum”; Lewis, C.S. Spirits in Bondage; Edith Crowe
C.S. Lewis Dances among the Elves

A Dull and Scholarly Survey of Spirits in Bondage and "The Queen of Drum"

Joe R. Christopher

Scholarly Guest of Honor at the 12th Annual Mythopoeic Conference

I. An Introduction

Strange as it may sound, when individuals are invited as scholarly guests of honor, they are expected to read dull and scholarly papers to prove they were appropriately chosen. Even when the theme is something as lively, as mercurial and hard to hold onto, as faerie, these individuals are expected to produce dull and scholarly papers. As C. S. Lewis said under an analogous circumstance, I will do my best.²

The mention of Lewis comes in appropriately for I want to consider his poetic references to fairies and elves. We often think of Tolkien as being the expert on elves. Indeed, being Mythopoeic Society members, we probably always think of Tolkien, whether or not it is about his connection to elves. But C. S. Lewis was born in Ireland, back before it was politically divided into Northern Ireland and Eire, and the Irish, as everyone knows, are born with second sight. (And if Lewis did not have second sight, I'm sure he had third.) What I want to consider are his few poetic examples of that sight.

But first, a warning. Dr. Johnson—the appropriate man to issue warnings—writes in his forty-third Rambler essay:

There seem to be some souls suited to great and others to little employments; some formed to soar aloft and take in wide views, and others to grovel on the ground and confine their regard to a narrow sphere. Of these the one is always in danger of becoming useless by a daring negligence, the other by a scrupulous solicitude. The one collects many ideas but confused and indistinct, the other is busied in minute accuracy, but without compass and without dignity.

I assume that bibliographers are an example of the latter. We are concerned with page numbers and whether we are supposed to punctuate our listings by the University of Chicago style or the MLA style—a matter, most of the time, of a colon vs. a comma. Only rarely do we lift our heads from our stacks of books and Xeroxes of articles to contemplate the world outside our studies.

But you have summoned me to this strange world away from my desk where three large paper sacks are filled with journals and copies of articles I haven't gotten to yet, where a cardboard box holds large-sized books awaiting reading, where I have a stack of doctoral dissertations in Xeroxy copies purchased by a grant and not yet read, where I slowly but inevitably get further and further behind on the flood of materials appearing. What am I doing here? I should be reading and annotating!

Nevertheless, you have summoned me, and I emerge like an owl into the light, blinking, nervous, unhappy. What a strange world you have. An oriental dancer at your masquerade, a vampiress who reads a scholarly paper, a
poet in a Scottish kilt. And, strangest of all, an initiation into the Grail Mysteries. You seem to take the wide views, while, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, I grovel on the ground and concern myself with minutiae. Let me share my littleness, my scholarly point of view, with you.

II. Elves in Bondage and Elsewhere

Before I consider the work I am primarily concerned with, "The Queen of Drum," let me offer a brief survey of Lewis's other poetic references of faeries and elves. I start with the obvious place, Spirits in Bondage, published in 1919 under the pseudonym of Clive Hamilton. First, a limitation. I really am just interested in Lewis's references to elves and fairies. There are fascinating things in this first book—Lewis's view of Ireland and one poem about an Irish god; two poems about girls with red hair. There are references to supernatural beings, some of whom may be related to the elven kind. But these are not to my present purpose.

Even with these limits, there are eleven poems in my category. One of these may be eliminated at once. "Tu Ne Quaesieris" (No. 37) uses elf in the eighteenth-century poetic meaning of man. In this case, Lewis is speaking of himself.

... what were endless lines to me
If still my narrow self I be
And hope and fail and struggle still,
And break my will against God's will,
To play for stakes of pleasure and pain
And hope and fail and hope again,
Deluded, thwarted, striving elf...

But this leaves ten poems. Only one of the others uses the term elf, but it obviously uses it in the sense I am after. This is "The Autumn Morning" (No. 21). In it Lewis writes that he is

One that has honoured well
The mystic spell.
Of earth's most solemn hours
Wherein the ancient powers
Of dryad, elf, or faun
Or leprechaun
Oft have their faces shown
To me that walked alone
Seashore or haunted fen
Or mountain glen.

This is typical of several poems in that it mixes the classical beings (the dryad, the faun) and the Anglo-Irish (the elf, the leprechaun). Lewis, of course, continued to mix his myths in this later life, specifically, in Narnia.

Another poem with a catalogue may be considered with this one. In "Victory" (No. 4), the poem begins three stanzas of the decay of ancient matters, only to contrast their loss with man's spirit which goes on striving; here is the second stanza:

The faerie people from our woods are gone,
No Dryads have I found in all our trees,
No Triton blows his horn about our seas
And Arthur sleeps far hence in Avalon.

It is also obvious that these last two poems, at the surface level, contradict each other. In one case, Lewis has seen an elf and in the next, the faeries are gone. It's a mysterious world.

Most of the rest of the poems, I would suggest, treat the faeries basically as a symbol of the mysterious, the Romantic, the dream of escape. In short, they are psychological symbols. This has already been seen in "Autumn Morning." For another example, in "Our Daily Bread" (No. 32), Lewis writes of his experiences of Sehnsucht; he begins with the mysteries around people, whether or not they hear the call of "living voices" as he has:

... some there are that in their daily walks
Have not met archangels fresh from sight of God,
Or watched how in their beans and cabbage-stalks
Long files of faerie trod.

For Lewis in these early years, angels as well as faeries could be only considered psychological symbols.

Even clearer is this psychological projection in the poem "In Praise of Solid People" (No. 24). In this poem, Lewis, in contrast with the unimaginative, suburban people he praises, is a dreamer:

And soon another phantom tide
Of shifting dreams begins to play.
And dusky galleys past me sail,
Full freighted on a faerie sea;
I hear the silken merchants hail
Across the ringing waves to me.

And then, suddenly, he awakes from the dream and is back in his room.

Two others which belong in this class are "Ballade Mystique" (No. 28) and "Night" (No. 29). In the former, Lewis contrasts (or, at least the speaker contrasts, for it is not so obviously Lewis this time) his contentment in an isolated house with his friends' worry about him. He describes the visions he has seen, and "L'Envoy" concludes:

The friends I have without a peer
Beyond the western ocean's glow.
Whither the faerie galleys steer.
They this human friends do not know: how should they know?

In "Night" Lewis describes a "Druid wood" in which he would spend the titular period; there the owls

Hear the wild, strange, tuneless song
Of faerie voices, thin and high
As the bat's unearthly cry. . .

A very odd comparison. The owls also hear the sound of the faery dance all night long. The faeries seem to be the group called "The windy
people" in this poem; at any rate, Lewis further identifies them with supernatural beings living under the sea, probably in a borrowing from Irish myth. The here in the second line of this excerpt may refer to the grove with which the poem began or it may, by this time, refer to "some flowery lawn" where the faeries dance:

Kings of old, I've heard them say,
Here have found them faerie lovers
That charmed them out of life and kissed
Their lips with cold lips unafraid,
And such a spell around them made
That they have passed beyond the mist
And found the Country-under-wave....

This poem, after beginning with the psychological wish for escape, it sounds like, turns more descriptive than thematic: the details are elaborated, rather than the theme stated—which is, after all, one of the bases of art.

One more poem belongs to this dream of escape I have been tracing. In "Song of the Pilgrims" (No. 25), the speaker is on a journey to escape back of the North Wind, to reach that mysterious far land far to the North. For Lewis this Hyperborean dream may have come partially from George MacDonald's children's book, although we are more likely to think of an "invented" myth in Ursula K. LeGuin's The Left Hand of Darkness. At one point Lewis describes this land and presents...

...poets wise in robes of faerie gold [who]
Whisper a wild, sweet song that first was told
Ere God sat down to make the Milky Way.

So far, all of these poems of escape have associated faerie with the place of escape. But Lewis is not consistent. In one poem, "World's Desire" (No. 39), Lewis describes a castle which the speaker and his love will flee to, a place with gardens and "lovely folk"—but

Through the wet and waving forest
with an age-old sorrow laden
Singing of the world’s regret
wanders wild the faerie maiden,
Through the thistle and the briar,
through the tangles of the thorn,
Till her eyes be dim with weeping
and her homeless feet are torn.
Often to the castle gate up she looks
with vain endeavour,
For her soulless loveliness to the castle winneth never.

Here, obviously, is a touch of the later Lewis. The important term is the faerie's "soulless loveliness." Despite the fact that Lewis was antitheist at this time, as is clear in many of the poems which I have not discussed and as is clear from his summary of his life in Surprised by Joy, nevertheless the faerie is excluded from this castle of the world's desire because she has no soul. Of course, it is given to philosophers to be consistent, if they can, while poets have often been known to sing as the Muse's impulses move them.

Perhaps we gain something by calling the Muse the poet's inner psyche, perhaps not. But for this study, the important thing is that this foreshadows the division of realms found in "The Queen of Drum."

Three of these early poems remain to be considered. Two of them present arguments, "Song" (No. 26) and "Hymn (for Boys' Voices)" (No. 31). The first begins:

Faeries must be in the woods
Or the satyrs' laughing broods—
Tritons in the summer sea,
Else how could the dead things be
Half so lovely as they are?

Thus, it says, only through the participation of lesser spirits can nature be given its beauty in the eye of human beholders. Probably this should be read in a very Romantic context: the only way out of an egotistical position, in which the Romantic observer projects meaning into nature, is an affirmation of a spiritual essence in nature. Wordsworth, in "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," found "A motion and a spirit, that... rolls through all things". Lewis writes later in the poem:

Atoms dead could never thus
Stir the human heart of us
Unless the beauty that we see
The veil of endless beauty be...

The other poem with an argument is more like Shelley than Wordsworth. In "Hymn (for Boys' Voices)", Lewis begins:

All the things magicians do
Could be done by me and you
Freely, if we only knew.
Human children every day
Could play at games the faeries play
If they were but shown the way.

This is something like the thesis of Prometheus Unbound: the revolution can be produced by a change in mental attitude. In his usual identification of faerie—who are mentioned in the foregoing passage—with the land of desire, Lewis writes later in the poem:

We could reach the hidden land
And grow immortal out of hand
If we could but understand!

The parallelism of the stanzas provides the identification.

Finally, there is a curious poem--"The Satyr" (No. 3). It begins with two stanzas on the setting and action:

When the flowery hands of spring
Forth their woodland riches fling,
Through the meadows, through the
Goes the satyr carolling.

From the mountain and the moor,
Forest green and ocean shore
All the faerie kin he rallies
Making music evermore.

After three stanzas describing the satyr--Freudians will be interested in the emphasis on his horns in the third of these--the poem
ends with this stanza:

Faerie maidens he may meet
Fly the horns and cloven feet,
But, his sad brown eyes with
Seeing—stay from their retreat.

As with all sexual poems, it is tempting to read the verse in terms of Lewis's sexual biography—so much are we influenced by Freud. But, despite the temptation, I think something else is of at least equal interest here. The emotional appeal of the satyr here is various: an image of energy, of singing, at the first; a combination of the humane and bestial in the description I have omitted; and a sadness at the flight of the faerie maidens at the end. It is no doubt tempting to draw analogies to the humanization of the fauns in Narnia, but that too I find misleading.

What I see here is a typical Victorian split between the sexes, which I assume Lewis catches out of his childhood environment. That is, men are half intellects and noble emotions, and half beasts below. But women, if we read this poem within the context of Spirit of Bondage, are ideals, for they are called faeries; further, they do right to flee men, but they may be caught—with all of the bestiality that implies—by their sympathy for the man's psychological pain. This is very Victorian, and most of us, if not all of us, would say it is very wrong. But it shows Lewis as a product of his time, and for my purposes it has the proper emphasis on the faeries as ideal figures. The women here are not erotic sylphs.

III. A Brief Comment on

"The Nameless Isle"

This survey of eleven poems in Spirits in Bondage has, I believe, established the land of faerie as an ideal of Romantic escape and the faeries, with one or two clear exceptions, as the attractive inhabitants of this golden realm. This still applies to "The Queen of Drum." But first I would like to briefly mention "The Nameless Isle" (written in 1930 and published in Narrative Poems in 1969). The reason I briefly mention it is that I must either say almost nothing or a great amount. I have an unpublished paper at home on it, saying the latter. Here, I will have to pass it over quickly. At the end of this poem, which is Lewis's retelling and modification of Mozart's The Magic Flute—and one of the most archetypal works Lewis ever wrote, outside, perhaps, of Perelandra—at the end of this poem, a dwarf who has been involved in the action of the poem turns into an elf with feathery wings. I quote some passages:

He laid his lip to the little flute.
Long and liquid—light was waning—
The first note flowed.

...it sang so well,
First he fluted off his flesh away
The shaggy hair; and from his
Shoulders next
Heaved by harmonies the hump away;
Then he unbanded, with a burst of
Beauty, his legs.

Standing straighter as the strain
Loudened.

... Either shoulder
Was swept with wings; swan's down
They were,
Elf-bright his eyes.
(11. 516-518, 528-533, 536-538)

He is later called an elf by the magician in the story (1. 683) and by the narrator (1. 711), even though in the last reference to the elf he is called "that winged boy" (1. 727). I trace these references—fulfilling my promise to be thorough and scholarly—but I do not think they add much to my theme. Lewis here is doing something very special with the elf figure, and he is not pure elf. Indeed, to be brief, he is half angel, as the wings show; at the end of the poem he is playing the role of the angel guiding the ship of saved souls to Mount Purgatory in Dante's Divine Comedy. As I said, I have to say much about this poem or very little; what I need to say in this paper is only this: the elf does not function here as the emblem of escape. This poem is dated, as was said, in 1930, which was in the midst of Lewis's return to Christianity; he is trying to reshape the elf figure to his new beliefs. I will return to this point later.

IV. "The Queen of Drum"

I finally reach "The Queen of Drum." Let me give a summary of the poem for those who have not read it recently.

After a brief opening section suggesting dreams and waking (Narrative Poems, p. 131), the rest of Canto I tells of the King of Drum being gotten up, of his meeting the Queen in the halls of the castle, she being just back from a night of roaming the countryside and of him calling her a Maenad (p. 133), which is the first of several classical references. Later, the King's Council meets, at the end of which the Chancellor denounces the Queen; she appears, and says that they have all so wandered away from their dreams (Canto I, pp. 131-140). Canto II. That afternoon the King and Chancellor meet, drink wine, and discuss the Queen, who was taken from the meeting by the Archbishop, the King and the Chancellor saying she travelled bodily rather than just in dreams. For their own political purposes, they decide to get Jesseran, a fortune-teller—or his corpse—out of the dungeons beneath the castle (Canto II, pp. 141-147).

Canto III. As the King and Chancellor descend into the dungeons, the Queen and Archbishop talk in a tower; with her insistence on his information about another realm of experience, he has to abandon his worldliness and speak of the Christian understanding of Hell and Heaven. She rejects his views, but before the argument is settled, guardians appear to conduct them to the General (the General who first appeared in the Council meeting) who has taken over Drum (Canto III, pp. 148-55). Canto IV. The General has locked the door of the dungeon behind the King and Chancellor—so they will stay down there—and he informs the Queen she will
become his wife; she says that she cannot submit in front of all his men--but will discuss the matter later. He sends her under guard to her tower, and she knocks down the one guard and escapes from the palace. Meanwhile, the General asks the Archbishop to run a state church, supporting his rule; the Archbishop refuses and is killed--beaten to death--by the General's men (Canto IV, pp. 156-165). Canto V. The Queen flees, pursued by men with dogs; she finally reaches the mountains, after having offering herself to Artemis; there, where three roads diverge in a valley, she meets an elf who urges her to take the center path--in a vision she sees the Archbishop, who urges her to submit herself to God, but she refuses, and takes the middle path to the realm of the elves (Canto V, pp. 166-175).

In this summary, brief and inadequate as it is--if I had more time I would read passages from the poem to give you its flavor--in this summary, you will have caught the essential points in the pattern we have been following. The Queen goes to the far hills in a quest for some sort of night-time meaning. Finally, chased by men and dogs, she goes toward them in the daytime but reaches them in the night. I will quote the significant passages in a moment from the conclusion.

First, the poem needs a context of Lewis's life. Walter Hooper has traced the sequence of the poem's composition, from its first mention in Lewis's diary in 1927, which traced it in various forms back to 1918, when Lewis was twenty-one. Walter Hooper thinks the poem was completed about 1933-34 (Narrative Poems, Preface, p. xiii); certainly it was finished by 1938 when Lewis read parts of it at a summer program in Oxford. Thus it was written during the period of Lewis's conversion but over a longer period than with "The Nameless Isle." In this poem, however, Lewis treats religion differently than he does before or after.

Let me begin with the identification of the Queen's search with those I have traced in Spirits in Bondage. In the conversation between the Queen and the Archbishop, the connection is clear. It is the Archbishop who identifies it with the elves:

'How can it profit us to talk Much of that region where you say you walk. We are not native there: we shall not die Nor live in elfin country, you and I.' (p. 149, 11. 59-62)

The Queen, in a reply to his presentation of Christian other realms, identifies her search with the call of beauty:

'Where is my home Save where the immortals in their exultation, Moon-led, their holy hills forever roam? What is to me your sanctity, grave-clothed in white, Cold as an altar, pale as altar candle light?'

Not to such purpose was the plucking at my heart Wherever beauty called me into lonely places, Where dark Remembrance haunts me with eternal smart, Remembrance, the unmerciful, the well of love, Recalling the far dances, the far-distant faces, Whispering me "What does this--and this--remind you of?"

How can I cease from knocking or forget to watch--'

(p. 153, 11. 190-201)

She calls them "immortals" because the elves lived until the Day of Judgment (at least, in most accounts). The call of beauty here is earlier called by the Queen an "unbounded appetite for larger bliss / Not born with me, but older than my mortal birth" (p. 150, 11. 75-6). Bliss may not be quite the same as Lewis's use of joy in Surprised by Joy, but I believe he is pointing to the same phenomenon.

The Queen's actual moment of decision, of final decision, when it comes in Canto V, is established with a traditional image. She reaches a moonlit valley:

Down into it, and straight ahead, A single path before her led,--A mossy way; and two ways more There met it on the valley floor; From left and right they came, and right And left ran on out of the light. (p. 171, 11. 163-8)

The "elfin emperor" who meets her there identifies them for her:

'Keep, keep,' he bade her, 'in the midmost moss-way, Seek past the cross-way to the land you long for. 

Heed not the road upon the right--' 'will lead you To heaven's height and the yoke whence I have freed you; Nor seek not to the left, that so you come not Through the world's cleft into that world I name not.' (pp. 172, 11. 199-200, 201-4)

These three roads are the same three the Queen of Elfland points out to Thomas in the Scottish ballad "Thomas Rymer" (Child Ballad No. 37):

"O see not ye yon narrow road, So thick beset wi' thorns and briers? That is the path of righteousness, Tho after it but few enquires.

"And see not ye yon braid braid road, That lies across yon lilly leven [glade, lawn]? That is the path of wickedness, Tho thesome call it the road to heaven.

"And see not ye that bonny road, Which winds about the fernie brae [hillside]?
That is the road to fair Elfland, Where 'twill you and I this night maum gae."

Lewis combines this with another motif—the eating of supernatural food which keeps the mortal (or immortal, for that matter) in the supernatural realm. The most widely known use of this motif in the West is the myth of Persephone. Here the elf gives the food to the Queen:

'Eat, eat,' he gave her of the loaves of faerie. 'Eat the brave honey of bees no man enslaveth.'

(p. 172, 1. 201-2)

And later the reader is told, "She has tasted elven bread" (p. 175, 1. 290). Just as, in "Thomas Rymer," Thomas tastes the bread which the Elvish Queen carries:

"But I have a loaf here in my lap, Likewise a bottle of claret wine, And now ere we go farther on, We'll rest a while, and ye may dine."

Presumably, as with Persephone, once Thomas and the Queen of Drum have eaten of the supernatural food, they are tied to elfland—although, for Thomas, the binding only lasts seven years.

I mentioned the Archbishop in the summary and his ghostly reappearance at the end of the poem, urging the Queen to choose the path to Heaven instead of that to Faeryland. The Queen, after the urging of the elf, is at the moment of decision of which of the three paths to take. She feels as if she is being pulled apart:

Yet to the sagging torment of that dissolution She clung, contented with the vanishing If only the fear'd moment never would arise Of being commanded to lift up her eyes And to see that whose dissimilitude To all things should, in the first stares Of its aloofness, make the world despair."

(p. 173, 1. 232-8)

In other words, she fears to see God's face. The Archbishop's face she sees instead, and he urges her the traditional repentance, which she rejects:

'You would not see if you looked up out of your torment That face—only the fringes of His outer garment ... Run to it, daughter; kiss that hem.' She answered, 'No. If you are with Him pray to Him that He may go, Or pray that He may rend and tear me, But go, go hence and not be near me.' (p. 174, 1. 263-8)

The Archbishop's appearance here is as what Charles Williams later called "a God-bearing image." But the Queen's rejection of Christianity is final, and she is allowed to have her will. That emphatic "No" at the end of the line shows her clear decision; a refusal of the Christian position with a full understanding of the implications.

The Archbishop, in his speech to the Queen in Canto V, mentions a danger in her choice:

'Daughter, turn back, have pity yet upon yourself ... Go not to the unwintering land where they who dwell Pay each tenth year the tenth soul of their tribe to Hell.'

(p. 174, 1. 256-8)

And this motif is repeated at the end of the poem:

And so, the story tells, she passed away Out of the world: but if she dreams to-day In fairy land, or if she wakes in Hell, (The chance being one in ten) it doesn't tell.

(p. 175, 1. 291-4)

The source is again a Scottish ballad—this time "Tam Lin" (Child Ballad No. 39); in the ballad Tam tells his lover, Janet:

"... pleasant is the fairyland, But, an eerie tale to tell, Ay at the end of seven years We pay a tiend [tax, tithe] to hell; I am sae fair and fu o flesh, I'm feard it be mysel."

The reason that Tam is "full of flesh" is that he is a human who has been taken by the elves; presumably they prefer to pay over humans rather than their own kind (an unquieting thought for the Queen of Drum, but in Lewis's poem she seems to have the same odds as the elvish born). Why Lewis shifted the seventh year to the tenth year is not certain; possibly to reinforce the idea of the tithe, possibly for the rhythm and parallelism of the line.

What, then, is a reader to make of Lewis's ballad-haunted narrative? Obviously Lewis does not see Sehnsucht as leading to God, as he will in Pilgrim's Regress and Surprised by Joy. In light of his earlier poems, one would tend to identify Lewis with the Queen; in light of his later Christian essays, with the Archbishop. It is probably it is safest to say that Lewis in "The Queen of Drum" projects the Romanticism of his youth against his new-found Christianity, not in the sense that he had found them at odds ultimately, but as a projection of what he had felt during his years of atheistic Romanticism. This, of course, is reading the poem in the authorial terms which Lewis disparages in The Personal Heresy. But it would just as easy to read the poem in terms of the history of ideas: the Queen of Drum stands for the type of nineteenth-century Romanticism found in Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and the Archbishop for the traditional, orthodox, supernatural Christianity. Or it would be possible to read
the poem in terms of personality types: the dreamer vs. the moralist, both projected in terms of the supernatural. Lewis later, in The Great Divorce, will again picture souls being urged to seek salvation and (all but one) refusing it: but never again will he show so clearly one who denies God for the sake of an alternate ideal, and who does it (while with some fears) with such a clarity of understanding of what she is refusing.

However one considers it, "The Queen of Drum" is an odd work in Lewis's career. Never again will he admit a third pathway: all roads hereafter will lead to Heaven or Hell; Lewis is a great writer for making sharp distinctions. But somehow, in this poem, he was moved to follow the model of a ballad: "And see not ye that bonny road, / Which winds about the fernie brae?" Only for a moment is it visible. Even the name of the country—Drum—is unexplained. Perhaps Drum suggests that just under the surface of the world—under the drumhead—lies dark, resonating mysteries? (Most people are content with surface knowledge.) Or did Lewis pick it because of its consonance with dream? Let us conclude by printing the passage in which the faery lord appears to the Queen: I will stress the internal rhymes in the lines with underlining, thus somewhat distorting them; but these many internal rhymes, with enjambment, tend to make the ear lose the line pattern in the welter of echoing sounds anyway—which was presumably Lewis's intention, since he does not rhyme the lines, using only feminine endings to them:

And lo! it was a horse and rider, 
Breathing, unmoving, close beside her... 
More beautiful and larger
Than earthly beast, that charger,
Where rode the proudest rider;
--Rich his arms, bewitching
His air—a wilful, elfin
Emperor, proud of temper,
In mail of eldest moulding
And sword of elven silver,
Smiling to beguile her... (ll. 181-91)

Whatever we say about Lewis's intentions in this poem, his verse shows the emotional appeal of the faerie.

V. Afterwords

I have reached and now have passed the high point of my paper. But a legitimate question remains: what does Lewis do afterwards about faerie? We now have him converted. He has used faerie as a symbol of Romantic Longing for many years, even through "The Queen of Drum"; he has tried to Christianize the faerie people in "The Nameless Isle." As we know, in such books as The Pilgrim's Regress and Surprised by Joy, Lewis shifts from the three-fold path of "The Queen of Drum" and says that such longing leads to God, ultimately. But surely faeries make poor symbols of God.

The answer to my rhetorical question, so far as Lewis's poetry is concerned, is that Lewis drops faerie from his poetry. In reading through Poems (1964), I find only two uses of elf or faerie—and it is probably no error both of these are the word elf. In "The Day with a White Mark" (1949) Lewis describes an extremely happy day and asks what caused it: "Was it an elf in the blood? or a bird in the brain?" (1. 2; see also 1. 23).

This is making an elf psychological in the extreme! But it does not seem to be taking elves very seriously qua elves. Again in an epitaph (No. 13), Lewis describes a woman who on the Day of Judgment will be startled to see her virtuous speech praised; Lewis describes the woman with her old woodland air (That startled, yet unflinching stare, Half elf, half squirrel, all surprise). This may be even worse than the former, for the parallelism with the squirrel suggests Lewis in thinking of the small, diminutive elves of literary tradition—and, it must be admitted, of some folk tradition. But it is more cute than dangerous.

Therefore, when we see what Lewis made of faeryland early and his near suppression of it later, outside of scholarly writings, we can only conclude that the suppression was deliberate. He could encourage Tolkien who knew much about that land, but surely Lewis decided that for himself, faeryland was too dangerous for further visits. His Romantic blood could not be trusted within the edges of that place. Instead, he would create his own realms—Malacandra, Perelandra, Narnia—perhaps something like to but never to be identified with faerie; he would not take that third road again. His dance with the faerie was over.

Footnotes

1 This introduction was written for Mythcon, but it was cut at the last minute. I had only forty-five minutes for my paper, and in revising the paper in the airplane on the way to California and in spare minutes (usually late at night) at Mythcon before it was read on Monday morning, Mythcon XII's last day, I had filled up my time.

2 Dull and scholarly papers always have many footnotes. In this case, cf. the opening to Lewis's "The Inner Ring."

3 The Rambler, Everyman Library, No. 994, 1953, p. 98.

4 In this line—"without a peer"—a punning explanation of why Lewis does not address the envoy to a "lord" (one of the two meanings of peer) as is traditional? It sounds like the cleverness a young poet might appreciate.

5 It is true that the poems in the third section of Spirits in Bondage tend to be more orthodox than those in the first section; but, unless Lewis being completely hypocritical in the last section—writing poems to project a false, more traditional image of his beliefs—they must reflect some vagrant moods of orthodoxy in his attitudes of the time.

6 The island in the poem, left by the continued on page 47
8 At Mythcon the movie based on "Tam Lin" was shown and of course one of Dr. Elizabeth Pope's novels — The Perilous Gard — was based on the ballad.

9 Edmund Spenser in The Faerie Queene turned elves into moral beings, but they ended up being much like human.

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