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Abstract
Examines Mark Studdock’s heroism in learning to be virtuous, in exercising the four cardinal and three Christian virtues.

Additional Keywords
Heroism; Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Mark Studdock; Lewis, C.S. That Hideous Strength; Virtues (Cardinal) in literature; Virtues (Christian) in literature
Lewis's concept of heroic conduct is not a new one; literature possesses the characteristics of a long heroic tradition that is often connected with the word humanism. Entering England as it did through the court and the university, the term itself implies "thought and training more than... spontaneous emotion, or borrowing from Italy, France, and Germany more than... native impulse" (Baugh 326). As one becomes aware of Lewis's background and of his imaginative, critical, and theological writings, he realizes how fully aware of the tradition Lewis actually is. But it is in order first, to explore the tradition by considering other approaches to it, if only to affirm the general tradition in which Lewis wrote.

Ernest A. Baker, an established literary historian, asserts that the GrecoRoman concept of the hero is not only that of a man who possesses inherent ability to protect and lead but also a man who possesses innate nobility and virtue (1:66). The concept in turn is fused with similar Teutonic and Hebraic concepts. As several critics point out, an early picture of the fusion is seen in Nordic literature. For example, in Beowulf, an Anglo-Saxon epic poem, the hero is portrayed as a noble protector of his people as he emerges victor of the battle against Grendel, the vicious man-eating monster, and against Grendel's mother. Several critics also establish that the Arthurian legends of the early medieval period emphasize the dauntless courage and bravery of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table as they protect their kingdom from invasions, their womenfolk from danger, and their pure religion from harmful influences. Also, as evidence of their virtue, several of the knights seek the Holy Grail, a quest requiring undying faith and pureness of heart. Another concept generally accepted is that the Arthurian legends probably led to the chivalric code of the latter Middle Ages which consists of a respect for women, sometimes involving a glorification of womanhood, as expected in the cult of the Virgin, and an observance of the cardinal and Christian virtues (Baker, et al).

One may next observe the contributions of the Renaissance. In that age there abound courtesy books—such as Castiglione's The Courtier, Lily's Euphues, Heroism, the precedent is established that the hero's worth can be measured by his ability to combat evil both on the physical and spiritual plane. His genuine strength, though, is tested through temptation or a moral decision he is forced to make. In most of the Christian epics, especially in Paradise Lost, the hero succumbs to the temptation and to the fall from grace. He usually then goes through a period of great suffering, which ends in his being reconciled through repentance (Kurth 31). Closely related to the Renaissance concept of the hero, this seventeenth-century concept emphasizes the individual personality and a balance between thinking and doing, between the spiritual and the physical world. Too, the writers of both eras strive for the ideal or the perfect in their hero portrayals (Kurth 34).

From Baker's point of view, during the latter part of the seventeenth century John Dryden, with his emphasis upon reason over emotion or cold rationality over idealized sentiments, paves the way for the eighteenth-century concept of the hero. Thus evolves a satirical, literary anti-hero, which writers employ to initiate social and political reform. Examples of the often vicious satire used are Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels and A Modest Proposal and Alexander Pope's Dunciad. The Romantics of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century rebel against what they see as the cold reason of Dryden and his contemporaries in an extreme about-face manner. They stress emotion, imagination, and the individual, thus reopening the way in literature for the idealistic concept of the hero. Too, the chivalric code for heroes is again established by Sir Walter Scott in works such as Ivanhoe (Baker 6:330).

In the Victorian age, Thomas Carlyle in On Heroes and Hero-Worship sets the measure for the hero of the late nineteenth century. The first principle he sets down, among the traits of every hero, is that great men possess an innate, overwhelming concern for their fellow man:

I should say sincerity, a deep, great, genuine sincerity is the first characteristic of all men in any way heroic: The great man's sincerity is of the kind he cannot speak of, is not conscious of... yet he cannot help being sincere! The great fact of existence is great to him. wonderful, real as death, is this universe to him (52).

Carlyle further asserts that the primary responsibility of the hero is, through bravery and valor, to protect the people; for of course he must be the ablest and also the "truest-hearted, justest, the Noblest man" (Carlyle 251). Hence, the hero naturally is God-appointed, his greatest destiny being the healer and savior of mankind:

The great man, with his free force direct out of God's own hand, is the lightning. His word is the wise healing word which all can believe in... The Great Man is the indispensable savior of his epoch (Carlyle 10).

Now it is quite apparent, and it is so mainly through his own works, that C. S. Lewis fully understands and leans heavily on this humanistic tradition—this tradition of the
Great Man—in portraying the hero in his space trilogy. To test this affirmation, one may well compare the facts variously assembled above with parallel matters in Lewis’s Allegory of Love, Discarded Image, and English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama. They include prudence, or practical common sense; temperance, or going to the right length in partaking of any kind of pleasure; justice, or “the old name for everything we should now call ‘fairness’” (62); and fortitude, or facing danger and bearing pain. The first of the Christian or “theological” virtues, as Lewis refers to them, is faith, which he defines on two levels: first, as a belief in or an acceptance of the Christian doctrines, and second, as a complete dependence upon God, “realizing the while “that everything given to God is already His” (111-12). The second virtue is hope, or a continual anticipation of the eternal world, and charity, the third is “that state of the will which we have naturally about ourselves, and must learn to have about other people” (100). All seven virtues, then, could readily be considered standards for measuring the conduct of noble heroes. The measure is easily applied to Lewis’ space trilogy; for his hero possesses or learns to exercise the virtues until he eventually reaches magnanimity. Thus, Lewis’ standards for Christian conduct, which he thoroughly explores elsewhere, will serve as a rigorous measure for his hero’s conduct in the trilogy. For our discussion here, however, we will limit our examination to the third book of the space trilogy That Hideous Strength.

In That Hideous Strength Ransom, who appears as the hero in the first two novels of the trilogy as well, is in this third book, the recognized essence of virtue; thus he possesses prudence on a high level. Here see Lewis’ discussion of the four levels of virtue in The Discarded Image. Therefore, a symbol of the human attributes must be brought into focus for Mark and Jane Studdock. The emphasis is on Mark, however, for at the outset of the book he, unlike Jane, possesses virtually no common sense or foresight. He is a man of impulse, governed totally by his emotions; indeed, had he perceived Lord Feverstone’s sentiments and fear are both chemical phenomena” (THS 297), but Mark’s “new insight into Belbury kept him resolved not to believe one word Frost said, not to accept (though he might feign acceptance) any offer he made” (THS 298). From this time onward, Mark exercises his newly developed virtue more and more. For example, Wither and Frost have instructed him to do two things: 1) to sit at intervals with the tramp, and 2) to notify them immediately if he should speak. Mark obeys the first order but not the second, and as a result, establishes a friendship with the tramp, an association which helps him later. Finally, with the real Merlin’s help. Mark escapes from the Institute and is reunited with his wife, Jane, at St. Anne’s.

The second virtue, temperance, is in That Hideous Strength worked out in the steps whereby Mark’s inner nature is redirected from an intemperate passion to be a part of the “in” group both at Bracton and Belbury to his intense longing to be with temperate people such as Jane and the Dimbles. At first, he loathes being an outsider, so that whatever group of people or society he happens to be associating with receives his undivided attention. He devotes all of his efforts to becoming an insider, a member of the inner circle, therefore making the initiation itself the center of his life — the center of his emotional focus. This fact is illustrated by Mark’s thrill on becoming “one of the boys” in the Progressive Element at Bracton College:

Mark Studdock was himself a Sociologist and had been elected to a fellowship in that subject five years ago. He was beginning to find his feet. If he had felt any doubt on that point... it would have been laid to rest when he found himself meeting Curry just outside the Post Office and seen how natural Curry found it that they should walk to College together and discuss the agenda for the meeting (THS, 6).

This observation is further supported by his agonizing efforts to become one of the Circle at the Institute headquarters. When he finally does achieve his goal, he looks back with disdain on the petty circle at Bracton. Not until his imprisonment at Belbury does he see exactly on what he has wasted his life. He reflects on his childhood days and realizes that even at such a young age, he deserted true friends to become a member of some select group of people who usually turned against him. Now, the group at the Institute does the same. Frost visits him in his cell to tell
him that he has “been selected as a possible candidate for admission to the Circle.” He goes on to say, “if you do not gain admission, or if you reject it, it will be necessary to destroy you.” (THS 299). Then Frost explains in more detail that the Circle takes its orders from macrobes, Mark, who has heretofore resolved not to trust Frost or anyone else at the Institute, is gripped with a ravenous longing to believe him at any cost for he feels that

here, here surely at last... was the true inner circle of all, the circle whose center was outside the human race—the ultimate secret, the supreme power, the last initiation. The fact that it was almost completely horrid did not in the least diminish its attraction (THS 303).

At this point Wither calls Frost from the room, leaving Mark to his fears. In the very throes of his fears, however, “a strange sense of liberation had sprung up. The relief of no longer trying to win these men’s confidence, the shuffling of miserable hopes, was almost exhilarating” (THS 313). Already in mind and heart he had joined the “straight” side, Jane’s side. And he has learned temperance.

When one considers the third cardinal virtue, justice, it is quite obvious that Mark depends on no one and thinks of no one but himself. Thus, at first, he, unlike Ransom, makes no attempt at ‘fair play” or honesty. On seeing Hingest at the Institute headquarters, Mark says, “I was sorry not to see you at the College Meeting yesterday” (THS 55). He is fully aware that he has lied, for the Progressive Element had always found Hingest’s presence at the meetings an embarrassment. Yet he wants to be treated fairly as is evidenced by his resentment about being placed in a false position in the Institute. Later, when he goes to inquire about a portion of the report that he and Cosser have drawn up together, he finds that his partner in the project was simply doing something to fill spare time. Mark explodes, “I think we’d better understand one another. Am I to take it that this report was simply a private hobby of Cosser’s? And if so, I should like to have known that before I spent eight hours work on it” (THS 102). In other words, Mark wants people to be honest with him even though he is dishonest with them, as is illustrated by his consent to write two distorted newspaper articles reporting on the engineered disturbances in Edgestow.

There is a struggle, though, and rightly so when Miss Hardcastle, Chief of the Institute police, accuses him of murdering Hingest. She and Wither both are eager to hush up the groundless charge that she has just made, but Mark will not hear of it. He voices his feelings by loudly proclaiming that he is an innocent man and that he wants to take the charge to the ordinary police and be tried like an ordinary man. In the end, though, he does not go to the ordinary police. Rather, he escapes from Belbury only to be arrested by the N.I.C.E. police for the murder of Hingest within an afternoon’s time. In his cell he experiences much conflict of soul. For the first time he tries to make a decision not for his own benefit, but simply for the sake of being right, of doing the right thing. The harder he tries, though, the worse becomes his struggle. He goes so far as to blame the universe for letting him down at a time when it should be supporting him (THS 400). From this point rationalization takes over his mind to such an extent that he finally cries out in desperation to Something or Someone for help—and his cries are answered.

Courage, the fourth virtue, is also worth examining in That Hideous Strength. In this book Ransom, appearing for the last time, is completely fearless; the main character Mark is not. One may observe from the beginning of the narrative that Mark Studdock is a coward. His first desire is to be included in the inner circle whether or not he agrees with or even understands the views held by the other members of the circle. For example the reader first sees him joining Curry the sub—warden and head of the “Progressive Element” at Bracton College. Mark has only recently been admitted to this esoteric group and so derives great pleasure from Curry’s use of the pronoun we. At last he is “in”; he is “one of the gang.” And it is this flaw, this drawback in Mark’s personality which eventually drags him down into the blackest pits of despair.

Mark next investigates a position with the Institute. Upon meeting Wither, the Deputy Director, he immediately perceives that his supposed position is not actually secure at all. At one point in the interview “he took his courage in both hands and endeavored to bring Mr. Wither to the point by saying that he was still not quite sure at all. At one point in the interview “he took his courage in both hands and endeavored to bring Mr. Wither to the point by saying that he was still not quite clear in what capacity he would be able to assist the Institute (THS 50).” But after many more vague replies from the Deputy Director Mark asks no more direct questions for fear that if he does he will be excluded from “the warm and almost drugged atmosphere of vague yet heavily important confidence in which he was gradually being enfolded” (THS 52). After his introduction to the Head, the guillotined Alcasan whom the Institute has kept artificially alive, Mark is partially brought to his senses. He realizes that if he disobeys the Head and does not bring his wife, Jane, to Belbury his life is in danger. His first thought is to get Jane at once and thus continue to pander to Wither and remain in the inner circle; his next is to bolt for Edgestow. He is making his escape when suddenly his way is barred by old Wither himself, sauntering down the path toward him, “and in one moment all that brittle hardiness was gone from Mark’s mood” (THS 217). The next day he tries to escape again, and again Withers’ image appears before him. But this time he meets the obstructor head—on, directing a blow at his head with full force. There is no impact, though, for the shape has vanished, and Mark, though surprised, proceeds on his way to Edgestow.

There he finds his house locked and his wife gone. His only clue to her whereabouts is a letter from Mrs. Dimble. Enraged, he goes to see Dr. Dimble at his office, and the
professor, who is a member of the company under the direction of Ransom at St. Anne’s, offers him help on the condition that he will leave the Institute. But Mark refuses on the pretense that he must have time to think it over. Ironically, he has no time at all, for he is immediately arrested and later imprisoned by the officials of the very Institute of which he craves to be a part. In the cell, regeneration takes place when Mark sees himself as he really is — “a blasted babyish, gullible fool,... the odious little outsider who wanted to be an insider, the infantile gull...” (THS 285-86).

Henceforward, he resolves not to believe one word spoken by his enemies, though at the same time he desperately struggles with his old desire to be a member of the inner ring at Belbury. His final victory over cowardice and gullibility is won when he absolutely refuses Frost’s command to trample and abuse in other ways the wooden crucifix in the Objective Room. Though he knows full well the probable consequences of this refusal, he stands firm. Mark, then, a veritable coward at the opening of the book, emerges a would-be martyr at the end.

Moving then from a consideration of the outworking of the cardinal virtues in That Hideous Strength we can now examine the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love. In Mere Christianity Lewis defines the Christian virtues collectively through the overarching concept of selflessness:

But there must be a real giving up of self. You must throw it away ‘blindly’ so to speak. Christ will indeed give you a real personality: but you must not go to him for the sake of that...
The very first step is to try to forget about the self altogether. Your real new self (which is Christ’s and also yours, all yours just because it is His)—will come when you are looking for -- Him... Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it (175).

One must take note at this point that Lewis does not see man as innately good or virtuous. Rather he sees man, as having the potential for goodness or virtue but only through submission of his will to Christ’s. Let us take up the Christian virtue of faith then, in the third book of Lewis’ trilogy. One might consider Mark, at first, as faithless. He has no regard for any thought or action that cannot be reasoned out logically. There is no place in his life for dependence on something or someone more intelligent or more powerful than himself. Indeed, when Mr. Straik, the “Mad Parson” at the Institute, lustily proclaims that the powers of science are an instrument in Jesus’ hands, Mark finds himself very embarrassed at the mention of Jesus’ name, for “this was exactly the kind of conversation he could not endure; and never since the well remembered misery of scripture lessons at school had he felt so uncomfortable” (THS, p. 82). The night following Mark’s first attempt to escape from Belbury, horrible fears assault him. He reasons that this cannot be happening to him because he, being a materialist, does not believe that there are unseen things that can frighten a grown man in his bed. Too, he thinks he is past the age at which he can be frightened at night. But the truth remains; he is frightened and his materialism offers him no protection.

Not until he is imprisoned at Belbury does he take his first step of faith. He has been going through much conflict of soul, even feeling once as though he has sustained some sort of attack. Finally, upon realizing that what he has experienced is in truth an attack, he cries out with every fiber of his being, “’Oh, don’t, don’t let me go back into it...don’t, don’t” (THS 316). An indescribable peace overwhelms him, he relaxes his tense muscles and sleeps. From this time forward, he rests in the knowledge that the One to whom he cried will in the end guide him to the group at St. Anne’s, thus uniting him with Jane and the others.

The second Christian virtue, hope, cannot easily be separated from the other two, faith and love, as the three naturally complement each other. In That Hideous Strength Mark Studdock might be observed as being a very hopeful individual indeed—but hopeful about the wrong things. He has hope that he will soon be one of the most influential members of the Progressive Element at Bracton College. He has hope that he will fit in at the Institute and will eventually become a member of that esoteric group known as the Circle. Little does he know, of course, that Wither and the others are using him, playing upon his emotions so that he absolutely cannot “hold back and live” (THS.205) as Mr. Straik refers to initiation into the Circle. Also one of the Institute’s purposes in getting its clutches on Mark is eventually to secure his wife whose second sight will be valuable to them if they are to succeed in sustaining their diabolical mission. If Mark has any optimistic strands to his nature they are destroyed at the Institute for he finds himself continually in and out of favor with Wither and finds that even to retain his sanity he must placate the Deputy Director. Of course he does not hear that he is out of favor directly from Wither but from some other inferior though powerful member of the Circle such as Miss Hardcastle who accosts him frequently with such statements as: “Here we’ve been working on your behalf and soothing him down and this morning we thought we’d finally succeeded. He was talking about giving you the appointment originally intended for you and waiving the probationary period... you have five minutes’ chat with him...and in that time you’ve managed to undo it all” (TS 195).

Mark’s hopes are still false when upon imprisonment he realizes he is not in an ordinary police station but at Belbury. Only for an instant however does this revelation offer him any consolation for he is finally coming to his senses and reasons that the Institute is simply planning to murder him in private instead of referring him to the ordinary police. Until his conversion he is completely without hope—for survival or for anything else. Afterwards his hopes are redirected in his desire to see Jane and the group at St. Anne’s; he begins thinking on things eternal.

One has already observed that Mark is a very selfish person. This fact may be proven in so many ways that I will
limit my remarks to Mark's selfishness in relation to his wife. On his return from dining with Curry and Feverstone Mark "[finds] himself on the doormat embracing a frightened half-sobbing Jane" (THS 40). Yet instead of comforting her and inquiring as to the nature of her fear he is irritated that this has happened on a night when it is so late and he is so tired and so intoxicated. After feigning an interest in Jane's well-being the next morning Mark dashes off to Belbury with Lord Feverstone.

Once at the Institute Mark is eventually introduced to the Head who demands the turning point; for the first time in his life Mark thinks about someone's welfare other than his own. He wishes, for Jane's sake that he had never married her; for she too apparently must be included in the horrible Institute. As Mark is attempting his first escape from Belbury only two things matter to him: to get out of the house and to get back to Jane for "he was devoured with a longing for Jane which was physical without being at all sensual: as if comfort and fortitude would flow from her body, as if her very skin would clean away all the filth that seemed to hang about him" (THS 219). But his way is barred with Withers' image and he goes crying back into the house. His escape is finally made good though and he is virtuous as does Mark. No doubt Ransom's role in the Institute is an affirmation of virtuous conduct; hence the next representative on Earth. Mark is humbled at the very thought of this possibility; Mark has truly become a hero.

Lewis' reason for shifting heroes between the second and third novel of his trilogy is clear; surely he means to categorize this conduct into the cardinal and Christian virtues in his theological study, _Mere Christianity_. There he defines the cardinal virtues as "those which all civilized people recognize." (60).