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The Talking Beasts as Adam and Eve: Lewis and the Complexity of "Dominion"

Jean E. Graham

The College of New Jersey

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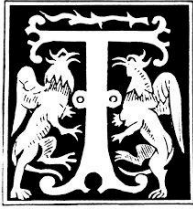


Abstract

Although critics have used the Talking Beasts of Narnia along with Genesis as support for human “dominion” over animals, such usage is not altogether warranted. In *The Magician’s Nephew*, the roles of Adam and Eve are distributed among various characters, including the Talking Beasts. Thus they are not “mere” animals but are the Narnian equivalent of human beings, evolving in an accelerated evolutionary process similar to the normal-speed evolution Lewis describes for the human species in *The Problem of Pain*.

Cover Page Footnote

I would like to thank my colleague Felicia Jean Steele for feedback on this article.



THE TALKING BEASTS AS ADAM AND EVE: LEWIS AND THE COMPLEXITY OF “DOMINION”

JEAN E. GRAHAM

MOST CRITICS HAVE ASSUMED THAT THE TALKING BEASTS of Narnia are beasts. A few have interpreted the *Chronicles of Narnia* as support for animal subordination to humans, since in Genesis, God gives Adam and Eve “dominion” over the animals. Such usage is not altogether warranted. Although correspondences can be found between *The Magician’s Nephew* [MN] and the first three chapters of Genesis, Lewis does not clearly designate the roles of Adam and Eve in his novel. Two human adults are described as the first king and queen of Narnia, but various characters play the roles of Adam and Eve in the temptation portion of the novel, and as I will argue, the Talking Beasts serve as Adam and Eve in the creation narrative. That they do so demonstrates that the Talking Beasts are not “mere” animals but are the Narnian equivalent of human beings, evolving in an accelerated evolutionary process similar to the normal-speed evolution Lewis describes for the human species in *The Problem of Pain*.

THE BEASTS AND THE CRITICS

Criticism focused on Narnia’s beasts (and Beasts), including recent ecocritical approaches, concurs that Lewis was deeply concerned with the relationship between humans and animals. Nicole M. DuPlessis connects ecocriticism with postcolonial criticism, outlining the “colonial control of nature” which starts in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* [LWW] when the White Witch disrupts the seasons, and continues in *Prince Caspian* [PC] when the human Telmarines marginalize and oppress the indigenous inhabitants of Narnia; finally, in *The Last Battle* [LB] “colonial exploitation reach[es] its extreme,” with King Tirian facing the domination, exploitation, and extermination of his people by the human Calormenes (117, 124). Margarita Carretero-González discusses both Narnia’s creation “on the principle of equality among the animals—that is, the Talking Beasts” (taking special note of Lewis’s portrayal of nonhuman perspectives) and the series’ “somewhat patronizing attitude toward the nonhuman” (94). Matthew Dickerson and David O’Hara focus on “creation care,” a reform environmentalism that employs arguments rooted in Judeo-

Christian values and beliefs.¹ Susan Rowland, who takes a Jungian approach, asserts that by donning fur coats, the children in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* "take on animal characteristics," and that despite "the persistence of the human leadership of nature" Narnia "retains a profound continuity between human and animal" (9).² Most recently, Michael J. Gilmour argues that Lewis loved and respected animals and portrayed "species-diverse communities in his writing"; Gilmour devotes to the discussion of "dominion" a chapter of his 2017 book, *Animals in the Writings of C.S. Lewis* (32).

Whatever the critic's attitude toward the relationship between human and nonhuman in Narnia, one common feature is a tendency to see the Talking Beasts as animals rather than as a new and conscious species that happens to have fur and claws. In her book *Animal Land: The Creatures of Children's Fiction*, for example, Margaret Blount consistently refers to the Talking Beasts as "animals"—"The Talking Beasts come, in the end, to dominate the whole narrative, resulting in the wonderful animal characters of Reepicheep, Bree and Puddleglum" is especially condescending, on the level of referring to Margaret Atwood as a "woman author"—despite her admission that "Narnia raises the animals to human heights by turning them into Talking Beasts" (292, 284). Carretero-González's "animals—that is, the Talking Beasts" is another instance. This critical tendency, as I will demonstrate below, is an error, and it affects the interpretation of hierarchy or "dominion" in Narnia.

CREATION BY A TALKING BEAST

Any discussion of beasts (actual or Talking) and hierarchy in Narnia should begin with Aslan. The figure of Aslan, Rowland asserts, is an important part of the "profound continuity between human and animal": "[t]here is an element of Christian transcendence of the body in the death and resurrection of Aslan; yet Aslan dies and returns *as a lion*, not as a human being" (9). As in orthodox Christian theology Christ is both fully human and fully divine, so Aslan is at once lion and God, or as Michael Muth declares in "Beastly Metaphysics: The Beasts of Narnia and Lewis's Reclamation of Medieval Sacramental Metaphysics," Aslan is "the incarnated God-Beast of Narnia" (243).³ Blount is

¹ Cf. Sellars (31).

² Cf. Read (24).

³ In "'They Have Quarreled with the Trees': Perverted Perceptions of 'Progress' in the Fiction Series of C.S. Lewis," Deborah Klein asserts that "[Nancy-Lou] Patterson calls attention to the fact that in Narnia, God even incarnates in animal form" (67), but Klein is mistaken. Patterson's article takes on three works of green theology; in the section in question, she addresses the doctrine of sin, and her actual words are as follows: "[Lewis] tries a hand at a retelling of his own, in which God chooses an animal to be 'the vehicle of humanity and the image of Himself,' and gives it 'a new kind of consciousness' [...].

the sole critic I have found who takes a gnostic position on this issue, and then only on the basis that unlike other lions, Aslan does not hunt and kill other animals for food: "his lion nature is appearance only" (304). In the prelapsarian world of Genesis, however, all animals are vegetarians, so meat-eating is not necessarily an essential part of the definition of "lion" for Lewis: "And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat," declares the Lord after creating animals (Gen 1.30).⁴

More crucially, *The Horse and His Boy* [HB] explicitly rejects the idea that Aslan's leonine nature is figurative. In this novel, the warhorse Bree asserts that "when [people] speak of [Aslan] as a Lion they only mean he's as strong as a lion or (to our enemies, of course) as fierce as a lion"; he scoffs, "[i]f he was a lion he'd have to be a Beast just like the rest of us. [...] If he was a lion he'd have four paws, and a tail, and *Whiskers!*" (14.200). At this point, Aslan makes himself known to Bree, and like Christ facing Doubting Thomas, invites discovery through the senses: "Touch me. Smell me. Here are my paws, here is my tail, these are my whiskers. I am a true Beast" (14.201). Although it is true that Aslan takes the form of first an albatross and then a lamb in *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* [VDT], both are temporary avatars, the former allowing Aslan to serve more effectively as a guide at sea—as well as alluding to Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The experience of Lucy and Edmund in the lamb scene parallels that of Christ's followers, who did not recognize Jesus after the Resurrection until he ate with them: "as he spoke his snowy white flushed into tawny gold and his size changed and he was Aslan himself, towering above them and scattering light from his mane" (VDT 16.246-47). The narrator does not describe him as "Aslan himself" until he has regained his leonine appearance. The only other time Aslan changes form—"as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion"—occurs after Narnia has ended, and the children begin to enter the place where the New Narnia joins with all the other true worlds into one Heaven, a place where no single Incarnation would make sense (LB 16.210). From the beginning of Narnia until the end of Narnia, Aslan the Lion is the only true incarnate form of God. This is particularly evident in the creation narrative, in which God the Creator is a lion before lions exist: Lewis provides no lioness version of the Virgin Mary.

whereupon the creature denies its creaturely condition, falling into the 'danger of self-idolatry' (13). "His own" refers to the creation myth that Lewis discusses in *The Problem of Pain* [PP], and which I will discuss below; and the "animal" is Adam, not Christ, as should be evident by the clause "the creature denies its creaturely condition" and by the reference to "self-idolatry." By definition, God is incapable of self-idolatry.

⁴ All biblical references are taken from the King James Version (*The English Bible*), as the English translation of Lewis's lifetime most readily available today.

In *The Magician's Nephew* the first lion, the self-described "true Beast," uses song to create vegetation and then animals, as in the first chapter of Genesis God creates with the power of his voice. The animals emerge from the ground, as "the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground" (Gen 2.7a). Then, as (later in Genesis) Noah chooses pairs of animals for the ark, Aslan chooses pairs of beasts for consciousness:

He was going to and fro among the animals. And every now and then he would go up to two of them (always two at a time) and touch their noses with his. He would touch two beavers among all the beavers, two leopards among all the leopards, one stag and one deer among all the deer, and leave the rest. Some sorts of animal he passed over altogether. But the pairs which he had touched instantly left their own kinds and followed him. [...] The smaller ones—the rabbits, moles, and such-like—grew a good deal larger. The very big ones—you noticed it most with the elephants—grew a little smaller. Many animals sat up on their hind legs. Most put their heads on one side as if they were trying very hard to understand. The Lion opened his mouth, but no sound came from it; he was breathing out, a long, warm breath; it seemed to sway all the beasts as the wind sways a line of trees. (MN 9.124-26)

The selection process omits some species, which is consistent with Lewis's understanding of hierarchy and preference for "higher" animals; he wrote in *The Problem of Pain* that "we must begin by distinguishing among animals," since an ape is not very like an earthworm, nor a dog like an earwig (131). As Carretero-González notes, "certain species of animals are not eligible to be given the capacity of speech," although she fails to note that one species is given this capacity later (99): the Talking Mice, who are granted speech when they nibble the ropes binding Aslan to the Stone Table, as Aslan tells Reepicheep and his followers (PC 15.209).⁵ Breathing life into the animals also derives from Genesis, when God "breathed into [Adam's] nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen 2.7b). The narrative continues with Aslan calling consciousness into the newly-created animals, as well as into the trees and waters: "Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters" (MN 9.126). Thus, the first Narnians are conscious beings that think and speak, even though they do not assume human form, or at least not fully.

⁵ Lewis had a special love of mice, as Gilmour notes: "He shared a trench with one during WWI and still reflects on the experience forty years later; he laments the cruelty they experience in laboratory experiments; he refuses to set traps for them in his Magdalen College rooms; and of course, he celebrates them in fiction" (69).

EVOLUTION AND DEVOLUTION

The partial anthropomorphism of the newly-created Talking Beasts—"a standard feature of fables, fairy tales, and children's fantasy," DuPlessis writes, before continuing with an assertion that "their status as part of nature is not compromised by their having human and nonhuman characteristics"—convinces some adult readers that these creatures are merely talking animals, designed to appeal to children (116, 117).⁶ In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Mrs. Beaver owns a sewing machine, while throughout the series Reepicheep is portrayed as a knight, complete with a sword. At the same time, Talking Beasts continue to exhibit some animal behavior, especially the dogs, which are "just as doggy as they could be: [...] they all stood up and put their front paws on the shoulders of the humans and licked their faces" (*LB* 11.132). Most importantly for those critics who argue in favor of human dominion, Talking Beasts look like animals, with fur and tails and claws.

However, judging them to be animals on the basis of appearance or even "doggy" behavior is akin to the initial reaction of Ransom, the protagonist of the first two volumes of Lewis's space trilogy, to the first *hross* he meets in *Out of the Silent Planet*: when he sees a being "something like a penguin, something like an otter, something like a seal," he is convinced that it is an animal until it speaks and "a lifetime of linguistic study assured Ransom almost at once that these were articulate noises" (9.54-55).⁷ Regardless of the degree of anthropomorphism, the Talking Beasts possess what Lewis in *The Problem of Pain* terms "a new kind of consciousness," the same type of rationality possessed by the first humans, who could also be considered odd-looking animals who made "articulate noises." His hypothesis of the evolutionary origin of the human race is worth considering in full, as in some ways it parallels the creation of the Talking Beasts of Narnia:

For long centuries God perfected the animal form which was to become the vehicle of humanity and the image of Himself. He gave it hands whose thumb could be applied to each of the fingers, and jaws and teeth and throat capable of articulation, and a brain sufficiently complex to execute all the material motions whereby rational thought is incarnated. The creature may have existed for ages in this state before it became man:

⁶ Cf. Alister McGrath, who in his biography of Lewis asserts: "It is easy to depict the Narnia novels as an infantile attempt to pretend that animals speak and experience emotion. Yet [...] Lewis's portrayal of animal characters in Narnia is partly a protest against shallow assertions of humanity's right to do what it pleases with nature" (276).

⁷ Highlighting the animal appearance of these extraterrestrial races, Blount refers to the *hrossa* as "[hu]man-seal," and the other two species of *Perelandra* as "man-bird" and "man-toad" (287).

it may even have been clever enough to make things which a modern archaeologist would accept as proof of its humanity. But it was only an animal because all its physical and psychical processes were directed to purely material and natural ends. Then, in the fullness of time, God caused to descend upon this organism, both on its psychology and physiology, a new kind of consciousness which could say "I" and "me," which could look upon itself as an object, which knew God, which could make judgements of truth, beauty, and goodness, and which was so far above time that it could perceive time flowing past. (77)

That is, the human animal becomes *hnau*, to borrow a term from the space trilogy: a rational embodied being.⁸ As soon as Aslan calls them, the Narnian creatures begin to demonstrate these characteristics of *hnau*: self-awareness; an awareness of God; the capacity to make judgments about "truth, beauty, and goodness"; and an awareness of "time flowing past." They immediately acknowledge the divine with "Hail, Aslan," adding this series of statements of self-awareness (and allegiance to their divine creator): "We hear and obey. We are awake. We love. We think. We speak. We know" (MN 10.127). The third criterion is met when Aslan calls some of the Narnians to a council to determine how to deal with the witch Jadis, and when the remaining Beasts attempt to identify and assist Uncle Andrew; for instance, the She-Elephant comments that the magician lacks a nose, adding "[v]ery few of us have what could exactly be called a Nose" (11.143). As "[s]he squint[s] down the length of her own trunk with pardonable pride," she shows both self-awareness and (comedic) aesthetic judgment.

Finally, awareness of the passage of time is demonstrated by the cab horse, Strawberry, who despite his other-worldly origin is now a Narnian, and will soon be a flying horse renamed "Fledge." Strawberry remembers that the creatures were all awakened "a few minutes ago," and even possesses vague memories of life "before" he gained consciousness: "I've a feeling I lived somewhere else—or was something else—before Aslan woke us all up a few minutes ago. It's all very muddled. Like a dream" (10.132). Most of the newly-conscious Narnians lack an opposable thumb, but the thumb is an accidental feature of Lewis's pre-human animals, not a requirement for consciousness; and Shift the Ape (in *The Last Battle*) is not more conscious than is Puzzle the Donkey just because he can more easily manipulate a lion skin.⁹ By Lewis's definition, the Talking Beasts are no longer animals any more than the original humans

⁸ The word is first used in *Out of the Silent Planet* (11.68).

⁹ Indeed, although Shift is more intelligent, Puzzle possesses moral and spiritual superiority: since Shift rejects Aslan, and rejects what is true and good, he also rejects his full status as *hnau*, the status that Puzzle fully embraces.

were animals, the former having evolved quickly and the latter having evolved slowly, although Lewis would have confused readers less if he had given the species a new name, just as he did with the *hrossa*. Presumably, he thought using capitalization and prepending “talking” would suffice to distinguish between the conscious race of Narnia and its actual animals; however, since critics have written about the Talking Beasts as if they were animals, I will hereafter underscore his point by referring to them as “Talking Beast-people.” Even the few critics who have recognized that the Talking Beasts are equal to humans nevertheless fail to see the parallel with the evolutionary story in *The Problem of Pain*.¹⁰ In creating the Talking Beast-people as conscious beings in his image, in male and female pairs, Aslan has in fact created Adam and Eve: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1.27). Indeed, the “image of God” is more literal in Narnia than in Genesis, since Aslan has already been incarnated as a Talking Beast-person, whereas in Genesis, God’s outward form is unseen and unknown.

A possible objection against Talking Beast-people as the human-equivalents of Narnia is that their consciousness can be reversed. When Aslan creates them, he warns the new Narnians to avoid the “ways” of the “Dumb Beasts” lest a dire punishment befall them, and they “cease to be Talking Beasts” (MN 10.128). “For out of them you were taken and into them you can return,” Aslan continues, echoing Genesis: “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (3.19b). The parallel resolves the matter: reversal of consciousness is a form of death, a consequence of sin for all *hnau*, whether at the end of the

¹⁰ Rather than recognizing all Talking Beast-people as *hnau*, Blount sees only three Talking Beast-persons reaching this level: Reepicheep (“Lewis’s best animal character”), Bree, and Puddleglum (297). Of Reepicheep, for instance, she writes that “[a]t last, animal creation has taken human status and intelligence” and that his “status [...] is the same as that of the courtly members of the crew” (295). In contrast, Jeff Sellars mentions in passing (in an article on Narnia and ontology) that “in Narnia [...] talking animals are treated as equal to human beings” (33); he does not state that they actually are equal, or if they are, explain the basis of their equality. Even more tantalizing in its brevity is the footnote in Paul F. Ford’s *Companion to Narnia*: “As exemplified by the title of *The Horse and His Boy*, Lewis does not—at least in Narnia—recognize ownership of animals. In fact, they are presented as another sort of people” (48n). “In this secondary world of Narnia,” acknowledges Carretero-González, “the talking beasts are given the same position as humans in our primary world”; nevertheless, she continues with a contradictory assertion of human dominion (discussed below): “Narnia is ultimately built upon the same account of human superiority [...] depicted in Genesis” (99, 97). Without acknowledging that Talking Beast-people are *hnau*, Joe R. Christopher is the only critic I have found who suggests the possibility of evolution in Narnia: “The result of Aslan’s breath in this case is to give the animals a rational soul [...]. If this is a symbol of God-directed evolution, here the events, as is appropriate for a child’s book, are condensed in time” (112, emphasis mine).

individual life or at the end of the world. Thus when Narnia ends in *The Last Battle*, and all *hmanu* approach Aslan, those Talking Beast-people who swerve to the left of the doorway, "into his huge black shadow," first lose their voices and then become "just ordinary animals" (14.175). This last judgment is foreshadowed by the fate of the cat Ginger, who is terrified from speech into caterwauling by Tash, the evil god of the Calormenes, to the distress of the other Talking Beasts:

And then the greatest terror of all fell upon those Narnians. For every one of them had been taught—when only a chick or a puppy or a cub—how Aslan at the beginning of the world had turned the beasts of Narnia into Talking Beasts and warned them that if they weren't good they might one day be turned back again and be like the poor witless creatures one meets in other countries. (10.124)¹¹

Moreover, throughout the *Chronicles* Lewis provides numerous indications, referencing classical mythology, that humans can be reduced to the state of mute animals just as easily as can the Talking Beast-people. At the end of *Prince Caspian*, for instance, the children follow Bacchus, Silenus, and the Maenads, who are under orders from Aslan to set things right in Narnia. They see a classroom of piggish boys transformed into a herd of pigs, or at least so "it was said afterward (whether truly or not)" (14.202). These, of course, are Circe's swine from *The Odyssey*. Similarly, a man transforms into a tree, straight from Ovid: "At a well in a yard they met a man who was beating a boy. The stick burst into flower in the man's hand. He tried to drop it, but it stuck to his hand. His arm became a branch, his body the trunk of a tree, his feet took root" (*PC* 14.201).¹² Furthermore, in a nod to the folly and pride of Midas and of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Bottom, Aslan transforms the Calormene prince

¹¹ This nationalist sentiment refers to the absence of Talking Beast-people in nations such as Calormen and Telmar. The ruler of Calormen, the Tisroc, alleges that Narnia "is chiefly inhabited by demons in the shape of beasts that talk like men, and monsters that are half man and half beast," while Aslan is "a demon of hideous aspect and irresistible maleficence who appears in the shape of a Lion" (*HB* 8.113). Bree, who has spent his life in Calormen, says: "All these years I have been a slave to humans, hiding my true nature and pretending to be dumb and witless like *their* horses" (*HB* 1.12; cf. *PC* 5.71).

¹² Another reference is to George MacDonald's novel *The Princess and Curdie*, in which Curdie is given the gift to feel the beast within a human's hand. Under the Telmarines, so many of the Talking Beast-people have changed into ordinary animals that when a bear attacks Lucy, Susan hesitates at shooting it in case it might be a Talking Beast-person gone wild, prompting Lucy to ponder aloud to Susan: "Wouldn't it be dreadful if some day in our own world, at home, men started going wild inside, like the animals here, and still looked like men, so that you'd never know which were which?" (*PC* 9.122).

Rabadash into a donkey, suggesting that his true nature is similar: "And to this day in Calormene schools, if you do anything unusually stupid, you are very likely to be called 'a second Rabadash'" (*HB* 15.221).¹³ Similarly, when in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* Eustace falls asleep on a dead dragon's treasure, filled with greedy thoughts, he becomes a dragon until Aslan transforms him back into a boy. In short, although in Narnia Lewis does not describe humans evolving from animals, as he does in *The Problem of Pain*, he does show that there is no distinction in terms of devolution: both Talking Beast-people and humans can turn from *hmanu* into animals, a transformation which (if permanent) constitutes a death of the intellect.

DOMINION OVER NARNIA

"To his credit," Carretero-González writes, "Lewis created a secondary world where the nonhuman animals could achieve a sort of agency [...], thereby rendering the reader more aware of the intrinsic value of animals," but "Narnia is ultimately built upon the same account of human superiority and responsible stewardship [...] depicted in Genesis" (97). "[H]uman superiority and responsible stewardship" is a fair definition of Lewis's interpretation of "dominion," which derives from the creation story in Genesis:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (1.26)

¹³ In addition to the other literary sources, Lewis is influenced by Milton, who in *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle* (or *Comus*) describes human souls corrupted from their original state:

[...] when lust
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by leud and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite loose
The divine property of her first being. (lines 463-69)

Milton visually represents this Platonic idea in *Comus's* followers, who in their love of pleasure drink from *Comus's* cup and are transformed (according to the stage directions at line 93) into "a rout of Monsters headed like sundry sorts of wilde Beasts." Lewis makes a similar point without the literal animal heads in *The Problem of Pain*, when he says that "one result of man's fall was that his animality fell back from the humanity into which it had been taken up but which could no longer rule it" (135). Similarly, in *Out of the Silent Planet*, the Oyarsa who rules Malacandra/Mars says of Devine that Satan "has left him nothing but greed," so that "[h]e is now only a talking animal" (20.139).

In his nonfiction writings Lewis expresses a belief in human responsibility for non-human nature, writing in *The Problem of Pain* (for instance) that "[m]an was appointed by God to have dominion over the beasts, and everything a man does to an animal is either a lawful exercise, or a sacrilegious abuse, of an authority by divine right" (138).¹⁴

Although Lewis uses the term "dominion" nowhere in the *Chronicles*, in the creation of Narnia Aslan gives to the Talking Beast-people responsibility for the true animals:

"Creatures, I give you yourselves," said the strong, happy voice of Aslan. "I give to you forever this land of Narnia. I give you the woods, the fruits, the rivers. I give you the stars and I give you myself. The Dumb Beasts whom I have not chosen are yours also. Treat them gently and cherish them but do not go back to their ways lest you cease to be Talking Beasts. For out of them you were taken and into them you can return. Do not do so." (MN 10.128)

The command to "[t]reat them gently and cherish them," encouraging us to read "dominion" in Narnia as managing, bearing responsibility, and providing, as opposed to owning, dominating, or exploiting, is consistent with Lewis's explanation of "dominion" in *The Problem of Pain*, with one notable difference: in Narnia, Aslan's command is directed not toward humans but toward the indigenous inhabitants of the world.¹⁵ Yet several critics equate the Talking Beast-people with animals to support assertions concerning Lewis's beliefs about human dominion. The most recent of these are Deborah Klein and Michael Gilmour. In her 2014 anti-ecocritical article "'They Have Quarreled With the Trees,'" Klein states that "[h]umans in Lewis's fiction retain primacy over animals, even Talking ones," and she condemns both Carretero-González and DuPlessis as "anti-Christian" because neither fully endorses her view of Lewis's commitment to human sovereignty over animals (74, 76). Gilmour also deals directly with the question of dominion, using *The Magician's Nephew* along with other support from Lewis's writings in his chapter "Genesis and Humanity's Dominion." According to Gilmour, the novel's plot is based both on "the Christian doctrine of the fall" and on "humanity's dominion over the

¹⁴ In the space trilogy, Lewis uses the term "dominion," but only to describe a political realm, when King Tor invites the Oyarsa (ruling angel) to assist him in managing the world: "Not till we have gone many times about Arbol [the sun] shall we grow up to the full management of the dominion which Maleldil [God] puts into our hands: nor are we yet ripe to steer the world through Heaven nor to make rain and fair weather upon us" (*Perelandra* 17.207).

¹⁵ The mythological creatures—nature gods and goddesses, Dwarfs and Giants—seem to be included in the charge even though they are not "Beasts."

earth," which gives humans "opportunity to undo the damage introduced by the powers of evil" (87). Thus, he asserts, "[t]he Kings and Queens of Narnia are always human because humans introduced evil to Aslan's creation [...]. This includes a hierarchy over animals" (93). Like Klein, Gilmour considers Talking Beast-people as animals, adding: "The moral status of talking animals is contingent on their relationships both to Aslan and Narnia's rightful, human dominion-bearers. Animals maintain their ability to speak, their personality and *ego*, only if they serve and submit to those human Kings and Queens" (116). Like Carretero-González, Gilmour finds this type of dominion regrettable, and thus would most likely find his book condemned by Klein. Thus, like Klein, Gilmour reads the *Chronicles* simplistically, with the roles of Adam and Eve restricted to human monarchs.

It is true that Lewis reserves the throne for a pair of human outsiders, Frank the London cabbie and his wife Helen: "You shall rule and name all these creatures, and do justice among them, and protect them from their enemies when enemies arise" (11.151). Aslan's words indicate that monarchy, for Lewis, includes not only the functions of judging and protection but also of naming; the power of naming comes from Genesis, where God gives it to Adam alone, before Eve's creation: "And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof" (2.19). According to Gilmour, Adam giving names to the animals "indicat[es] his benevolent, welcoming authority over them" (61).

After Frank and Helen, rule over Narnia is granted to four children from England: Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy Pevensie. Later still, even though Caspian's Telmarine line of monarchs descend from pirates who blundered into Narnia rather than being brought in by Aslan, Caspian is a legitimate ruler. In each case, Aslan describes the humans as "sons of Adam" and "daughters of Eve"; for instance, Aslan tells Caspian, "you might have known that you could be no true King of Narnia unless, like the Kings of old, you were a son of Adam and came from the world of Adam's sons" (*PC* 15.217). In *The Last Battle*, Lewis explicitly compares Frank and Helen with Adam and Eve: "Tirian felt as you would feel if you were brought before Adam and Eve in all their glory" (16.206). An analogy does not make Frank and Helen the sole Adam and Eve, however.

Not only have we already seen that the Talking Beast-people are Adam and Eve for the initial part of the Creation narrative—before Aslan acknowledges Frank's presence or brings Helen into Narnia—but also neither Frank nor Helen undergo temptation. Indeed, those who are subject to temptation, the third Adam-and-Eve set, have been variously identified. If Jadis is "a tempter (the serpent) already lurking in [the garden]," as Salwa Khoddam

writes in "From Ruined City to Edenic Garden in C.S. Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew*," Digory and Polly are of necessity Adam and Eve, although only Digory succumbs to temptation (37).¹⁶ Benita Huffman Muth, on the other hand, argues in a 2018 article, "Paradise Retold: Lewis's Reimagining of Milton, Eden, and Eve," that Lewis "spreads the characteristics of Milton's Eve among several characters, rather than presenting a single Eve-figure," with Polly, Helen, and Jadis each demonstrating certain aspects of Eve, but none combining all aspects into one figure: "none move from Eve-like innocence through temptation to disobedience" (32, 33). To my knowledge, no one has argued that humans have dominion over Narnia on the basis of Digory or Polly—that is, on the basis of enduring temptation. (Nor has anyone argued that Jadis, who is neither human nor a native of Narnia, has a legitimate claim on Narnia.) Because of the impossibility of pinpointing a single pair of figures as Adam and Eve, we must conclude that Lewis's depiction of the Genesis story is more complex than critics such as Gilmour or Klein would have it, and that it is likely that this complexity extends to the issue of dominion.

When considering Aslan's command to Frank and Polly, we must also distinguish between dominion and monarchy. As I have demonstrated, no matter their appearance, the Talking Beast-people meet all of Lewis's own criteria for consciousness and thus are not "mere" animals but *hnau*. Nor, for the most part, are they treated as inferiors on the basis of their outward form. Before they are crowned, the Pevensie children do not give orders to the Beavers. Eustace is not Reepicheep's superior. Glimfeather the Owl does not obey Jill. Trufflehunter the Badger is a trusted advisor to Caspian. The differences in status are connected to class: Mr. and Mrs. Beaver are commoners, Reepicheep

¹⁶ The temptation in the walled garden is borrowed from Genesis (among other sources), including a forbidden fruit in a garden and a temptress who is Satan offering the fruit to Digory: "Do you know what that fruit is? I will tell you. It is the apple of youth, the apple of life. I know, for I have tasted it; and I feel already such changes in myself that I know I shall never grow old or die. Eat it, Boy, eat it; and you and I will both live forever and be king and queen of this whole world" (*MN* 13.175). However, Digory rejects the temptation to unlawfully take the fruit for himself, and Polly (unlike Eve) is not involved at all. Nor does Digory remain as Adam; in sending Digory for the fruit to protect Narnia, Aslan transforms Digory from a fallen Adam into an assistant second Adam: "And as Adam's race has done the harm, Adam's race shall help to heal it" (11.148). It is the temptation in Charn, to wake Jadis from her enchanted slumber, to which Digory (but not Polly) succumbs, and which harms Narnia. This time, as Carretero-González points out, Polly serves as the unheeded voice of Digory's conscience (98). Aslan refers to this earlier act of Digory as bringing evil into Narnia. Concerning this point Sellars is mistaken, for he writes that "humans (albeit young ones) [...] are charged with healing the wound that *other* humans have created in Narnia," as if the blame lies not with Digory but with Jadis, who is not human (34, emphasis mine).

is a knight, and Caspian is a king. They are not equals, but it has nothing to do with whether or not they have fur or claws. They are not equals because they live in a monarchy, and Lewis was an avid monarchist (Carretero-González 104-105; Rowland 9). That is, Lewis confuses the issue of dominion by presenting one of his Adam-and-Eve pairs as the first monarchs.

In *Perelandra*, by contrast, he combines the roles by making Tor and Tinidril simultaneously the mother and father of their race and the first rulers of Perelandra.¹⁷ In addition to receiving the naming function of Adam and Eve, Frank and Polly and their descendants will also serve in the traditional ruling-class roles of judge and warrior, which are not explicitly mentioned in Genesis's Creation story: "You shall [...] do justice among them, and protect them from their enemies when enemies arise," Aslan charges them (11.151). Again, however, not all humans in Narnia inherit these roles from Frank and Polly: not all Telmarines can sit on the throne. In the end, the question of why Lewis imports his ruling class from another world is one of imperialism rather than of biblical dominion: it is equivalent to an assumption that India is best ruled by the British, not to an assumption that Babar, just like a non-talking elephant, may require a human trainer. For Lewis, not all *hnau* are equal, in our world or in Narnia, but all *hnau* are superior to all animals, and Talking Beast-people are *hnau*.

Most critics who write about hierarchy conclude that (as Klein writes) "Lewis advocates a hierarchy of creation, with mankind at the apex, and he does not condemn judicious, sometimes necessary use of natural resources" (65). What these critics have failed to realize is that the Talking Beast-people are at the apex from the birth of Narnia, as they are created in the image of Aslan, the incarnate God-Beast. Later, they are not displaced but joined by non-indigenous humans (as well as by a variety of mythological figures) for a world that is even more rich in varieties of *hnau* than is Malacandra. That not all individuals of these races are equal reflects the class system of Narnia. Every race and every individual *hnau* is superior to those animals and trees that cannot talk, and in Lewis's view is entitled to use them but also responsible for protecting them.

¹⁷ When Tinidril asks Ransom to greet Eve for her when he returns to Earth, he realizes that "[s]he knew at last that she was not addressing an equal. She was a queen sending a message to a queen through a commoner" (*Perelandra* 5.67).

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JEAN E. GRAHAM is professor of English at The College of New Jersey. Having grown up reading C. S. Lewis, it was perhaps inevitable that she become a scholar of early modern British literature like him. In addition to publishing on Milton and other early modern writers, she has previously published on the *Narnian Chronicles*.

