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Editorial: Lewis, Power, and Science

Glen GoodKnight

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Editorial: Lewis, Power, and Science

daughter 45 years or so to have a child doesn't necessarily mean that he wasn't aware of the chronology he was setting up or that he expected the reader to be unaware of it. He's right, of course, that the real reason for setting up the age gap between Rilian and Caspian is one of symbolism, but I don't think the symbols in this case go against the literal details.

I'm afraid all the poetry in this issue (including Williams') strikes me as being quite dreadful.

(I'm glad you asked the question about Logres, even though I won't be able to give a definitive answer. - Anyone for writing a full research paper on the history and development of Logres? - Just looking through my library I found reference to Logres in 'Tennyson, and I suspect it goes back further than him. Of course Lewis' uses of Logres in *That Hideous Strength*, even though there is earlier reference, is almost wholly derived from Williams' Arthurian poetry - *Talesian Through Logres and The Region of The Summer Stars*. Williams says in *Arthurian Torso*, page 53, that it was Chrétien de Troyes in his poem *Lancelot* 'that the name of Logres seems first to be first used for King Arthur's land; its derivation is said to be from the Welsh *Lloegor*, a land of faerie which was also Britain or within Britain.' Williams, in his prelude to *Summer Stars*, says that Logres 'is Britain regarded as a province of the Empire with its center at Byzantium.' But what is more directly stated in *That Hideous Strength*, that is the tension or struggle between spiritual Logres and self-serving Britain, is also strongly sensed in Williams' poetry - Arthur struggling, with Merlin's help to establish Logres, with Mordred within and the forces of Plo-l'u without to tear it down.

As to Lewis borrowing from Jessie L. Weston's work, I have seen no reference in Lewis' writings to either disprove or affirm your suggestion. There is certainly much material on the Fisher-King in Weston.

As to "The Noises that Weren't There" being a straightforward novel, I'm not so sure after reading the third chapter, which will appear in the next issue. I can't spoil it for you by saying anything definite, but it is hair-raising, and if Williams called this 'straightforward,' I'm sure he didn't mean it wasn't supernatural! The whole three chapters leave the reader nearly crazed to know what the rest would be.

(continued from page 14)

If I am correct in my assumption about the lineaments of Lewis' geographic imagination, then the basis for geographic criticism of Lewis' fiction has been established. Thus, when Ransom in *Out of the Silent Planet* journeys over high passes to Meldilorn, a critic can say, "This is analogous to Pledge's flight to the garden in *Magician's Nephew*, and to John's journey to the sea-shore in *The Pilgrim's Regress*." But the analogy is only the beginning; then he must decide what Meldilorn adds to the geographic myth, and in what ways it is unique.

Correction to Part I of an Introduction to Narnia: the Chronology of the Chronicles by J.R. Christopher

Since the publication of Part One, I have noticed one major blunder in my essay and one minor omission (why does a writer never find these things before publication?). The minor omission has to do with the Narnian time between *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. I still cannot be much more precise than I was in my essay last issue, but I should have noted that in *The Magician's Nephew* the text twice indicates that the Witch left Narnia alone for "many hundred years" (pp. 134, 181) because of the Shield Tree. "Many hundred years" is vague, but certainly it is different from "many thousand years." I am, of course, assuming that her next attempt resulted in the magical winter in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*: if she made an earlier attack on Narnia, there is no reference to it.

The major blunder has to do with my flat statement (on p. 25) that "There are no instances in the books of Narnian time flowing at a slower rate than earth time." Unfortunately (for me) there is one instance. In *The Last Battle* (pp. 51-2) one week passes on earth before Jill and Eustace are able to get to Narnia, while only ten minutes pass for Tirian, tied to a tree. Thus Lewis' statement in *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* about the uncertainty of the time relationships (which I cite in my essay) is correct.

I wait to see what other errors other readers will find. (I hope not many!)



LEWIS, POWER, AND SCIENCE

The above illustration by Steve McIntosh is very appropriate to this editorial. Sauron's Ring of Power has been rediscovered by the N.I.C.E.

Lewis is sometimes charged with being anti-science. Such a charge seems to me to be a faulty over-simplification. Lewis is often misunderstood by people who haven't read the whole body of his writings. There is much inter-relation of themes and concepts in all his works, and often one book will shed much background information on another. To view Lewis' thoughts on Science from a wider perspective, we should consider what Science is and the human condition.

The word "science" means knowledge. Truly knowledge is power, but it is neutral power, available to be used in constructive or destructive ways. Certainly Lewis was not anti-knowledge, being one of the most well read men of this century. This tool of knowledge is just that, a tool. Any tool is only as good as those who use it; unused, it has no abstract power of itself. Man can and has used this tool of scientific knowledge to both beneficial and disastrous results. I think the real underlying question is whether Man, as Pascal called him - "the glory and shame of the universe," is able to handle the tremendous power made available through the scientific discoveries of modern times. While these discoveries are being made available, less and less have those who used them asked moral questions involved in their use. Science isn't bad or dangerous. What's dangerous is the moral and ethical relativity of those who might use the power of science. The danger can be seen on two levels: that of torture done in the name of science by Nazi doctors in the 40's, and the serious abuse of ecological principles in the "technological" nations of today. I would challenge anyone who might think Lewis is anti-science to read carefully his short book *The Abolition of Man* first. *That Hideous Strength* is only one of many anti-utopian novels that describe the perils of all-powerful governments run by a few men without any ethical standard. Lewis' warning in the 40's seem more and more prophetic today.

The character Weston is often brought forward as the proof of Lewis' anti-Science. But what Weston says in *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*, isn't science at all, it's philosophy. His thought is much like Wells in *ESP* and turns even less rationalistic in *Perelandra*, where he becomes a kind of Shavian worshiper of the Life Force. The N.I.C.E. is run by bureaucrats, not scientist. The only bad scientist, Filostrato, is balanced out by Hengist, the scientist killed by the N.I.C.E. for attempting to leave. A distinction needs to be made between technology and philosophy, since in many minds they are both lumped together in "science."