

Mere Love: The Theology of Need and Gift-Love
in the Fiction of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien

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ABSTRACT

Mere Love: The Theology of Need and Gift-Love in the Fiction of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien

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This thesis explores the role played by love in the works of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Need-love and Gift-love, as Lewis identifies them, are circular and interconnected. To reject one aspect would be to reject the entire human condition. More importantly, as creatures made in the image of a Creator, a Creator identified as Love, the ultimate Need and Gift-love can be found in God. Through a study of Lewis and Tolkien's fiction, particularly *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings*, this dissertation seeks to highlight the way in which love is portrayed as a central emotion for these authors. It will also highlight the role of free will, the ability to freely choose who to love. For both Lewis and Tolkien, it is this freedom which makes humans relational beings. Not only can we connect with one another, but it is only through this freedom that we can truly turn towards our Maker. Having established this important theological framework, emphasis will also be placed on the appropriation of stories like those of Cupid and Psyche and Orpheus and Eurydice to show how both thinkers attempted to connect their fiction to well-known stories. For the value and importance of stories are not only to entertain, but to also teach moral lessons. These lessons can be found scattered within the depictions of the worlds of Narnia and Middle-Earth.

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Ai miei nonni e bisnonni

*Some natural tears they dropt, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.*

-John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, XII: 645-649.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Overview, Methodology and Contents	1
Part I: About this Thesis	1
General Overview	1
Methodology	4
Division of this Thesis	6
Part II: Brief Background of Love in Western Theology	7
Foundations: The Bible, Plato and Augustine	7
Chapter 1: J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis and the Role of Stories	17
J.R.R. Tolkien's Life before Oxford	18
The Early Life of C.S. Lewis	20
The Inklings and Scholarship.....	23
Charles Williams (1886-1945).....	25
George MacDonald (1824-1905).....	28
The Role of Joy and Fairy Stories.....	30
The Later Lives	37
Chapter 2: C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)	40
Anders Nygren (1890-1978) and the Rejection of Augustine	44
C.S. Lewis: A Study of His Works – God's Love for His Creation	49
C.S. Lewis: A Study of His Works – Creation's Freedom to Love.....	65
Case Studies in the Chronicles of Narnia	71
The Cosmic Trilogy	82
Till We Have Faces and Possessive Love.....	93
Lewis' Theology of Love: Always, Freely, Upward	102
Chapter 3: J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973)	107
The Role of Theology in Tolkien's Literature	107
Love, Hope and Faith as Foundations for Tolkien	109
Fëanor and the Silmarils, Aulë and the Dwarves.....	111
Self-Sacrificing Love: Beren and Lúthien	115
Thingol and Melian: A Positive Outcome from Negative Actions.....	118
The Free Will of Tolkien's Characters	123
Arwen and Aragorn.....	129

Éowyn and Faramir: Self-Sacrificing Love	135
Tom and Goldberry	139
Frodo and Sam	141
Tolkien's Understanding of Love	143
Chapter 4: Orpheus, Looking Forward and Gift-Love	146
Brief History of Orpheus: Argonaut, Musician, Lover.....	147
Virgil's Georgics.....	149
Ovid's Metamorphoses	152
Boethius Heeded: Sir Orfeo and the Consolation of Philosophy.....	154
J.R.R. Tolkien and Orpheus.....	163
C.S. Lewis and Orpheus.....	169
Lessons of Orpheus.....	174
Conclusion: "You Shall Love the Lord Your God with All Your Heart"	177
C.S. Lewis' Selfish Humans	178
J.R.R. Tolkien and Gift-Love	179
Orpheus and Eurydice, Cupid and Psyche – Love and Loss	180
Free We Were Made and Free We Remain	181
Works Cited	183
Primary Sources	183
Secondary Sources	188

Introduction: Overview, Methodology and Contents

Part I: About this Thesis

General Overview

“Yet, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed,” so begins the tenth poem in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s (1809-1861) *Sonnets from the Portuguese: A Celebration of Love*.¹ A sentiment felt by all, love can at times be fulfilling and beautiful or work against better judgement. It can elevate humanity, as in the tales of medieval courtly love, or drive the soul to insanity, best illustrated by the narrators in many of the short stories by Edgar Allan Poe. As an experience, love is an extremely difficult concept to define. Each time period, gender, culture, ethnicity and demographic has its own understanding of this human feeling, an understanding which can also vary within each group.² This thesis will seek to unravel the views on love presented by two professors, J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973) and C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), while also engaging with the sources, both theological and literary, which inspired these thinkers.

While both Lewis and Tolkien present unique literary examples of love, they share a common thread: a Christian perspective on the right order of love, an order which may begin in the realm of human things, but which must inevitably return to the Creator. There are three general stages to this love. The first stage involves the recognition of beauty in the object or person. Once beauty is recognised, we must utilize our free will,³ albeit tainted by Original Sin and continually present, to move beyond the object or person towards the perfect form found in the divine. This second stage, actively moving beyond, can in some cases be problematic. For both Lewis and Tolkien, God cannot force us to look towards him, the Prime Mover. Instead, we must freely

¹ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Sonnets from the Portuguese: a Celebration of Love* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986).

² See, for example, Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy, *Sensible Moyen Âge: Une histoire des émotions dans l’Occident médiéval* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2015).

³ Free Will is necessary in the created order. Arguing against the notion of theodicy, and subsequently predeterminism, Lewis vehemently rejects the view that humans have no freedom. In fact, just as human agency exists within the world, the system created by God, the world in which we live, also has freedom established by the Creator. See, for example, C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 25: “So it is with the life of souls in a world: fixed laws, consequences unfolding by causal necessity, the whole natural order, are at once limits within which their common life is confined and also the sole condition under which any such life is possible. Try to exclude the possibility of suffering which the order of nature and the existence of free wills involve, and you find that you have excluded life itself.”

choose to gaze at him and recognize the source of humanity and its creativity. This freedom implies that some can remain fixated on the beauty of the object or person they desire. This form of love, which holds a fetishistic⁴ nature, is a corrupt form according to the authors. For both Lewis and Tolkien, like many Christian thinkers before them, worldly things are fleeting and can be taken away by the whims of others and the passage of time. This is described by Charles Baudelaire in *Les Fleurs du mal* (1861), where he argues: “*Que bâtir sur les cœurs est une chose sotte; Que tout craque, amour et beauté, Jusqu’à ce que l’Oubli les jette dans sa hotte Pour les rendre à l’Éternité!*”⁵ While the fetish may sustain an individual for a moment, time will decay the object of desire, leaving the lover longing for days gone by. The passage of time is central to the natural state of the world, and any focus on worldly goods or people will never truly satisfy humanity.

On the other hand, those who can freely choose to recognize that no earthly object or being holds beauty in its own right, and that the only source of beauty which is both infinite and unyielding to change is the Godhead, are able to move beyond the worldly objects towards the Divine. These individuals reach the third stage of love, a perfect form, where humanity seeks out what is beautiful, recognizes the fleeting nature of beauty in this world and moves towards the infinite, the Maker of all. The true objective of love, then, is to recognize beauty, freely choose to move towards the source of beauty and then attain a new form of love that is perfect and unending. The theologian Christos Yannaras identifies love “...as the existential impetus towards transcending the boundaries of individuality, towards abrogating temporal continuity and inevitable decay.”⁶

But how do we define love? Such a complex human experience can be difficult to describe. Over time Western thinkers have used four main Greek terms to help express the various forms and C.S. Lewis highlights them in his book *The Four Loves*. The first of these is *storge*: affection which grows in us for others. *Storge* exists in all types of love and is not sexual in nature.⁷ Next, is *philia*: a love between parents and child, siblings, or friends.⁸ The third type is *eros*: a love which

⁴ Fetish here is defined as “A form of sexual desire in which gratification is linked to an abnormal degree to a particular object, item of clothing, part of the body, etc.” (Oxford English Dictionary).

⁵ “[t]hat it’s foolish to build anything on human hearts – for everything cracks, yes, even love and beauty, till oblivion flings them into its hod and gives them over to eternity.” See Charles Baudelaire, *The Complete Verses*, trans. Francis Scarfe (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2012), 129.

⁶ Christos Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, trans. Norman Russell (Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 143.

⁷ For a description of *Storge* see, C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1960), 39-68.

⁸ For a description of *Philia* see, C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1960), 69-110.

has a sexual component. It is fueled by sexual attraction and is experienced by lovers.⁹ Lastly, *agape* or *charity*: a Christian form of love found in the Bible, particularly the writings of Paul and 1 John. Agape is a self-sacrificial love, a love which gives all to the other – a love perfectly exemplified by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.¹⁰

While humans like to categorize everything, to make neat and tidy groups of information which is digestible, experiences are not so easily defined. Eros may contain within it the affection of storge. Eros may also become self-giving and sacrificial, like agape. These categories, while appearing good on paper, do not translate to everyday life. This becomes most clear in Lewis’ *Four Loves*. While he does present us with definitions of each love mentioned, and referenced, above, he actually begins his work by looking at Need-love and Gift-love.¹¹ These two forms work together and encompass all forms of love we can experience (for example, *storge*, *philia*, *eros* and *agape*). Within each of us is a need to be loved, as we are relational beings. We also all want to give our love to the other. It is this give and take relationship which is so central to the thought of Lewis and Tolkien. In human relationships there must always be a give and take – a parent may love their child, but they also would like to be loved in return. To give a gift means someone needs to receive.

Why is this so important? Why does Lewis place an emphasis on Gift and Need-love? This is done because at the heart of Christian theology there is a debate about human agency. While we will explore this idea to a greater extent in chapter two of this thesis, Lewis and Tolkien both wish to affirm the Free Will of God’s children. Lewis is also reacting to the seminal work by the Lutheran theologian Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (1930 and 1936). In this text, published in English in 1953, Nygren rejects human agency in relation to love. While some theologians, like Nygren, claim freedom of choice was lost with the Fall, this is not the case for Lewis and Tolkien who believe it is not only God who can love. Humans too can love one another, and even return God’s love. Not only can we return our love to God, but we “Need” God’s Gift-love. It is vital to our beings – we are, after all, created in the Image of God and God is Love.

This thesis will argue that Free Will is a precondition to human love. More importantly, for C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, our freedom is what makes us relational beings. We can choose

⁹ For a description of Eros see, C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1960), 111-140.

¹⁰ For a description of Agape see, C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1960), 141-170.

¹¹ For an in-depth exploration of these two forms of love, and Lewis’ understanding of appreciative love, see Chapter 2 of this thesis.

to love, and can change our selfish ways, we can turn to God to receive and return his love. With this in mind, special attention will be paid to the way in which Lewis and Tolkien present children and adults with Christian notions of love. Their narratives present amusing escapes from reality, but still remain useful, as they teach us to avoid perverted and self-destructive forms of love, which are fleeting, based on external beauty, and which bring nothing but sorrow and despair. More importantly, they show us that we are free to choose. We can change our ways. Even the most self-interested person can become a self-giving individual. We are not destined to be sinners, there is hope for the human condition.

Methodology

This thesis will use two types of methods, both of which are interconnected; historical, which will be used to analyze the theological and historical evolution of the conception of love, and textual, which will examine literary sources. The historical method used will be the Great Thinkers Method, which allows one to focus on the theological and philosophical position taken by central thinkers in Western Europe.¹²

Because this thesis will rely exclusively on texts, some textual methods will also be borrowed from the rich work of biblical scholars. The first textual method will be Historical Criticism. This will focus on the historical period in which the text was written and help identify the historicity of the contents of the text.¹³ Tolkien and Lewis, for example, are living through a post-war period when the faith of some Christians was shaken. The Historical Critical method will allow us to consider this context when examining their motivations for writing their fiction and non-fiction.

The second method will be Form Criticism. This is a key method which will help identify the type of texts being used and their purpose. Since this thesis will explore various kinds of written works, like letters, poems, and stories, the forms in which the texts are presented will influence the way in which they are interpreted.¹⁴ A poem is not the same as a letter, nor is it the same as a novel

¹² James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 30-31.

¹³ S.E. Gillingham, "Historical Approaches to Biblical Studies," in *One Bibles, Many Voices: Different Approaches to Biblical Study* (London: S.P.C.K., 1998), 145.

¹⁴ M.J. Buss, "Form Criticism," in *To Each its Own Meaning. An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Their Application* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 70.

– each form has its own characteristics. Finally, the Narrative method will be applied. Such a method will enable us to examine texts as a whole and explore the way in which the morals of the stories are being presented by the authors.¹⁵ The Narrative method will also enable us to look at Lewis and Tolkien’s work as a larger body. For example, Lewis’ *Chronicles* are individual books but each connects, builds, or adds to the ones which came before. Tolkien did the same with his tales of Middle-Earth, each brings something new to the legendarium. Therefore, the Narrative method will aid in tying together larger strands of the stories.

While it is not the focus of this thesis, the concept of allegory should be briefly raised.¹⁶ It would be difficult to explore the history of allegory in this short section, but it is important to draw attention to this literary motif. C.S. Lewis practises a form of allegory in most of his works of fiction, particularly the *Chronicles of Narnia*. But what does allegory mean? In the strictest sense, allegory uses fictional characters or locations to stand in for people or places in our world. Alan Jacobs notes, in his essay exploring the *Chronicles of Narnia*, that in allegory: “the story itself – the procedure of the narrative and the action of characters within it – is purely and evidently fictional, but those wholly imaginary persons and events correspond, more or less strictly, to persons and events in our world.”¹⁷ Lewis, however, does not apply allegory in this exact way. Jacobs tells us: “Most stories of Faery, and the Faery-like stories of Narnia, don’t function in that way. Lewis imagines that there really could be, in another world that God has made, an Enemy very like the White Witch...”¹⁸ Jacobs makes a very important distinction for us here: Lewis does not truly use allegory in the traditional manner. It is worth quoting him a little more to illustrate his main point:

Since God simply *is*, in traditional Christian teaching, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that set of relations would have to obtain in other worlds as well: thus, Aslan is the son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. He does not have to be of the same species as we are, because it is not intrinsic to the Christian narrative that fellowship with God be confined to a single species; but he does have to be able to communicate with us. He need not die on a cross, but he

¹⁵ For a good examination of the Narrative method and its application to biblical texts, see: Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, ed. *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

¹⁶ For a detailed study of allegory and the history of this literary method, see Jean Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes*. Nouvelle édition, revue et augmentée (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1976). For an extensive bibliography on the notion of allegory, see: Patricia Eichel-Lojkne and Brigitte Pérez-Jean, eds. *L’Allégorie de l’Antiquité à la Renaissance – Bibliographie II* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2004).

¹⁷ Alan Jacobs, “The Chronicles of Narnia” in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, eds. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 272.

¹⁸ Jacobs, “The Chronicles of Narnia,” 272.

must needs die; a Stone Table does as well. And though the period that his body lies lifeless can vary, he must rise again and by his rising demonstrate that he has defeated the Enemy. Such correspondences necessarily link Narnia and our world, and the regularity and predictability of those correspondences sometimes gives the books the *feel* of allegory.¹⁹

A further analysis of the events of the *Chronicles of Narnia* will be undertaken in chapter two of this thesis, but the points made by Jacobs are relevant for our methodology. Events in Lewis' fiction will often seem to match up with those of our world, they run parallel to stories we know. Our world corresponds to Narnia in some central ways.²⁰

Though Lewis applies a writing style which feels allegorical, J.R.R. Tolkien rejects the method in its entirety. Tolkien tells us in his second foreword to the *Lord of the Rings*: "But I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers."²¹ This dislike of allegory, and support of feigned history, fits with Tolkien's style since his original intention, as we shall see, was to create a mythology for England – a mythology which takes place in the distant past of our world.²²

Division of this Thesis

This dissertation will be divided into four chapters. In the first, we will explore the biographies of Lewis and Tolkien. In this section we will also examine Lewis' return to Christianity and the importance of myth for Tolkien. The link between faith and stories will also be highlighted in order to illustrate the function it plays in Lewis' and Tolkien's fiction.

In chapter 2 we will survey the works of C.S. Lewis. While we cannot examine every story he wrote, our main focus will be on Need and Gift-love exemplified. Special attention will also be paid to the way in which Lewis is engaging with other Christian thinkers, like Anders Nygren. Lewis' emphasis on free will shall also be highlighted. A similar approach will be taken in chapter

¹⁹ Jacobs, "The Chronicles of Narnia," 272.

²⁰ For a more detailed study on allegory in Lewis' works see, Ad Putter, 'C.S. Lewis on Allegory,' in *C.S. Lewis at Poet's Corner*, eds. M. Ward and P.S. Williams (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 125-138.

²¹ J.R.R. Tolkien, *Fellowship of the Ring*, (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), xviii.

²² See, for example, the *Book of Lost Tales I* and II. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales 1*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (New York: Del Ray Book, 1983); J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales 2*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (New York: Del Ray Book, 1984).

3. There the works of J.R.R. Tolkien will be surveyed, with particular attention to the relationships he develops in his works of fiction. Here too, emphasis will be placed on human, or elven, agency.

Finally, in chapter 4, we will turn to the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. This tale is an exemplum of love and loss. Over time, the story of Orpheus and his lost wife has been the subject of many retellings. Each new author highlights elements they deem important. Many authors also change the outcome of the story. Lewis and Tolkien, both utilize the story of Orpheus in a similar way. They emphasize that we are each free to make choices, each of us can sacrifice ourselves for the other.

Part II: Brief Background of Love in Western Theology

Foundations: The Bible, Plato and Augustine

Before turning to our first chapter, it is important to lay down a foundational understanding of love in Western Europe. In order to establish some fundamental notions, we will very briefly explore the Bible, Plato and Augustine. Each of these thinkers, or texts, forms the building blocks of the Christian understanding of love. Though not exhaustive, this survey will serve as a basis for the upcoming chapters. It is also important at this point to note that many other texts and thinkers have influenced the way in which love is perceived in the West. Many of these readings are outside the bounds of this dissertation but are known to this author.²³ When relevant, other thinkers will be

²³ The following is a list of primary and secondary sources relevant to the history and reception of love in Western Europe. It is in no way exhaustive but represents a brief survey of the topic. For primary sources on love, see (in alphabetical order): Dante Alighieri, *La Vita Nuova*, ed. Stanley Appelbaum (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2006); Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (London: Everyman's Library, 1995); Bernard of Clairvaux, *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*, trans. G.R. Evans, ed. Emilia Griffin. (New York: HarperOne, 2005); Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. Amedeo Quondam, Maurizio Fiorilla and Giancarlo Alfano (Milan: BURizzoli Classici, 2013); Giovanni Boccaccio, *L'Ameto*, trans. Judith Serafini-Sauli. Volume 33, Section B. Garland Library of Medieval Literature (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985); Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. John Jay Parry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); Hadewijch of Antwerp, *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, trans. Mother Columba Hart, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1981); Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (New York: Penguin Books, 1998); Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (New York: HarperCollins, 2009); Ovid, *The Love Poems*, trans. A.D. Melville, Introduction and Notes by E.J. Kenney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Plato, *Phaedrus*, in *Six Great Dialogues: Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Symposium and the Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2007); Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, trans. Stephen Mackenna and B.S. Page (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1917). For secondary sources on Love, see (in alphabetical order): A.H. Armstrong, "Platonic Eros and Christian Agape" *Downside Review* 79 (1961), 105-21; Charles Baladier, *Erôs au Moyen Âge, amour, désir et «delectatio amorosa»* (Paris: Cerf, 1999); Benedict XVI, "Deus Caritas Est," In *The Essential Pope Benedict XVI: his Writings and Speeches*, ed. John F. Thornton and Susan

analyzed, but for the purpose of this Introduction focus is being placed on three pillars of love in Western thought – the Bible, Plato, and Augustine.

The Hebrew Bible is a collection of various texts and narratives, stitched together by the priestly class, to form what is known as the Tanakh, the canonical Scripture of Judaism. These narratives are affirmations of the covenant between God and his chosen people. Underpinning this relationship is the notion of covenantal love, best exemplified in the *Shema* found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.²⁴

God's love for his chosen people is exemplified by his faithfulness, even when facing rejection, but the *Shema* attempts to illustrate the reciprocal nature of this love. It is not only Yahweh who loves his people, though at times, as in Hosea, the scribes attempt to show the one-sidedness of this love, but the people of the covenant should also love their God. They play an active role in this relationship; they must uphold their part of the covenant by maintaining the laws established

B. Varenne (New York: HarperOne, 2007); M.C. D'Arcy, *The Mind and Heart of Love: Lion and Unicorn, A Study in Eros and Agape* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947); Denis De Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, trans. Montgomery Belgion (New York: Pantheon, 1956); Timothy P. Jackson, *Love Disconsolated: Meditations on Christian Charity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Werner Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love* (London: T&T Clark, 2010); Jean Leclercq, *L'amour vu par les moines du XII^e siècle*. (Paris: Cerf, 1983); Thomas Jay Oord, *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific and Theological Engagement* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010).; Thomas Jay Oord, *The Nature of Love: a Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice press, 2010); Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953); Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 1978); Karl Rahner, "Reflection on the Unity of Love of Neighbour and of God," *Theological Investigations* 6 (1981): 231-49, in *A Rahner Reader*, ed. Gerald A. McCool (New York: Crossroads, 1984); Pierre Rousset, *Pour une histoire du problème de l'amour au Moyen Âge* (Münster, 1908); Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Love Alone: The Way of Revelation* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968); Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H.T. Willets (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice in Love* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011); Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Suffering Love," In *Philosophy and Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas Harris (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

²⁴ Robert Alter, in his *The Five Books of Moses*, states that this part of Deuteronomy is like a catechism. This is why it was later adopted into the Jewish worship. He also notes that love is being invoked as an emotion here. Referencing Ibn Ezra, Alter notes that the statement to love is connected to monotheism. If there is only one God, you must love him as there are no other gods in existence. Love also appears, according to Alter, in Near Eastern treatise. It is usually in the form of loving the overlord, as the heart is considered the "seat of understanding." See Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation and Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2004), fn. Deut 6:4-9; 6:5.

by God through Moses.²⁵ With this in mind, and clearly expressed in Exodus 34:6-8, God emphasises his patience and almost limitless love for his people:

The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped.

Readers of the Hebrew Bible, according to exegetes, come face to face with this covenantal love in the Song of Solomon,²⁶ also known as the *Song of Songs*, where the longing of the Bride, who yearns to be kissed “...with the kisses of his [the Bridegroom’s] mouth”²⁷ is most clearly expressed. The sexual language of the Canticles, as seen in Song 4:5 “Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies,” solidifies our perspective that this is erotic love, yet the term *eros* is almost never used in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint.²⁸

The Song of Songs’ exact origins are unknown, the text most likely derives from a more ancient source, one which celebrates love and utilizes the pastoral motif.²⁹ Such appropriation led to many debates concerning the relevance of the text within the Scriptural canon, and the eventual

²⁵ The alliance utilizes legal and diplomatic language from the Ancient Near East. It contains, much like the covenant with Abraham, conditions which Israel must follow to maintain the alliance. Therefore, it is an agreement that God will uphold his end, if Israel fulfills certain requirements. The fundamental aspect of this covenant, however, is that Yahweh is the only true God of Israel. The importance of the Mosaic covenant is also highlighted by the fact that it occurs twice. Once with the Exodus generation at Horeb-Sinai and once by the next generation at Moab, before entering the promised land. See Pierre Buis, *Le Deutéronome, Verbum Salutis Ancien Testament 4* (Paris, Beauchesne, 1969), 194-202.

²⁶ The *Song of Songs*, is a complicated text found in the Hebrew Bible. Many theologians have debated the inclusion of this text in Biblical canon. It does not fit well with the other texts and represents a pastoral narrative with many sexual references. While some, like Gregory the Great, accepted the *Song of Songs* as an allegory, others like Martin Luther questioned its place within the Hebrew Bible. For studies on the reception of the Song of Songs, see Richard A. Norris, *The Song of Songs: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003); Ann W. Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

²⁷ Song 1:2.

²⁸ There was likely a fear of linking God to *Eros*, the Greek god. Therefore, to avoid this connection, biblical scribes chose to refrain from translating Hebrew terms for love with *eros*. This will lead some thinkers and theologians to view *eros* as something foreign to Christianity, while *agape*, the term used most often for love in the Septuagint, is given a special place, one which appears to be preferred to alternative forms of love. See, for example, chapter two of Werner Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love* (London: T&T Clark, 2010).

²⁹ See, for example, the introduction to the Song of Songs in Robert Alter, trans., *Strong as Death is Love: The Song of Songs, Ruth, Esther, Jonah, Daniel* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015), 3. See also, Othmar Keel, *The Song of Songs: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

rise of allegorical interpretations of the Canticles in order to justify its presence.³⁰ While three important allegorical interpretations of the Song will be briefly explored here; particular emphasis is given to medieval theologians who influence Lewis and Tolkien. This is in no way an exhaustive examination, the notion of erotic love and its importance in the relationship between God and humanity will be emphasized.

Christian theologians in the medieval period wrote various sermons attempting to interpret this cryptic text and its place within the wider biblical canon. In his *On the Song of Songs* Gregory the Great (540-604) argues that post-fall humans do not have the ability to find their own way easily. Our hearts are blind. We hear “Follow God!” and “Love God!” being preached to us, but we cannot fully understand what we are hearing. Therefore, according to Gregory, allegory is used by God to act as a crane which will lift us up. Through allegory we will be brought to understand the divine message. Allegorical language clothes divine thoughts in things we know and understand.³¹ The use of words like breasts, kisses and thighs are placed in the text to warm our hearts, spark our interests, and move us from our loves here on earth towards the Divine. Our intensity of love here should be transferred to the love of God.³² We will see later that this is in line with Augustine’s understanding of earthly loves, but for now it is important to note what Gregory is arguing. The Song of Solomon uses sexual language to entice us, to enable us to understand God a little more. We are to use the textual allegory as a ladder to climb past human breasts and kisses, towards God.

Gregory explains that within Scripture, God uses different titles for himself. Each title depends on the feeling he wants to instill in his creatures. Through the title of Lord, God wishes to be feared. “Father,” implies he wants to be honored. “Bridegroom,” which we find in the Song of Songs, implies God wishes to be loved.³³ Since God is the Bridegroom, the Church, the body of faithful, is represented by the Bride. We must bind ourselves to God as the bride is bound to her bridegroom.³⁴ Within Gregory’s interpretation we can find a particular theology of love; one which uses sensual language to entice and draw us away from the earthly towards the heavenly.

³⁰ These interpretations vary from love between God and his people, to political allegories presented by thinkers like Martin Luther. See, for example, Jarrett A. Carty, “Martin Luther’s Political Interpretation of the Song of Songs,” *The Review of Politics* 73, n. 3 (2011): 449-467.

³¹ Gregory the Great, *On the Song of Songs*, trans. Mark DelCogliano (Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2012), 109.

³² Gregory, *On the Song of Songs*, 110.

³³ *Ibid.*, 114.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

For the English Benedictine monk, the Venerable Bede (675-735), the Song of Solomon concerns the relationship between Christ and the Church, the Eternal King and His city. The Church referenced in the text represents the body of the faithful, post-incarnation. The Synagogue, on the other hand, represents the “*congregatio*,” the faithful Jews prior to Christ’s birth.³⁵ Bede also opts for an allegorical interpretation of this poem. The longing to be kissed on the mouth in the opening lines of the Song of Solomon is to be understood as a longing of the Synagogue for a kiss from God. After the incarnation and resurrection, we no longer call for that type of kiss. Now we seek to follow Christ, we must run after Him and move towards the heavens. This is highlighted when we read: “we will run after you” (Song 1:4).³⁶

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) is also an important interpreter of the *Song of Songs* as he viewed love as an element of Christian theology. Around 1124, Bernard wrote a letter on love, after which love never ceased to have a central role in his theology.³⁷ Bernard’s proximity to Troyes, an important hub of chivalry and courtly love, also influenced his ideas,³⁸ particularly his uses of romantic love to illustrate the relationship between Christ and the Church.³⁹ For Bernard, priority must be given to Divine Love, it is “the “law” of God’s being.”⁴⁰ According to Bernard McGinn, Bernard’s understanding of love is composed of two aspects. The first is a rational, prudent, and wise form of love, while the other is *amor vehemens*, a violent, forceful, and powerful form which asks the beloved to give in to love totality. While both aspects seem to contradict each other, Bernard views them as complementary. For Bernard, God can be both a wise and violent lover. The Bride, in the *Song of Songs*, must release herself in a violent manner for union to the Bridegroom to be achieved.⁴¹

Our journey to loving God is not an easy one and there is no direct path. Instead, Bernard, in *De Diligendo Deo*, argues we must actively turn towards our creator. God loved us first and so we must direct our hearts to him.⁴² We know he loves us because he gave his only Son as a sacrifice

³⁵ The Venerable Bede, *On the Song of Songs and Other Selected Writings*, trans. Arthur Holder, Classics in Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), 37.

³⁶ Bede, *On the Song of Songs*, 42.

³⁷ Jean Leclercq, *L’amour vu par les moines du XII^e siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 109.

³⁸ Leclercq, 110.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴⁰ Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism: Gregory the Great through the 12th century*, vol. II of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 194.

⁴¹ McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 203.

⁴² Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*, in *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*, trans. G.R. Evans, ed. Emilia Griffin (New York: HarperOne, 2005), 50.

for humanity.⁴³ It is through Christ that we must find our ladder towards the Divine. For Bernard there are four stages to reaching perfect love. The first is love of the self for its own sake. A shift to the second degree occurs when we recognise God can help us, at this degree we love God for our own sake. The third degree is where we love God for God's own sake, since he has redeemed us. The fourth degree is love of self for God's sake.⁴⁴ This final stage unites us completely with the Godhead, we now love the self and neighbour to the same degree God loves his creation. Bernard's understanding of love is one of progress, a movement away from the self towards the other, towards to the Divine. The *Song of Solomon* helps us to understand this love by applying it to a human framework.

Bede, Benedict and Gregory, present us with a way to climb past the earthly and attempt to reach the heavenly. While we longed to be kissed by God here on earth prior to the incarnation, once Christ has resurrected, we turn our focus from a kiss on earth, to an upward movement. We are able to transcend ourselves, the temporal sphere, the synagogue or congregation, and become the Church, overseen by the Eternal King.

As we turn to the New Testament, however, the links between God and love become even clearer. While still continuing the policy of avoiding *eros* and utilizing terms like *agape* and *philia*, the New Testament emphasises the need for loving God, who is Love, and neighbour. "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."⁴⁵ Through these verses the central message of Christianity is illustrated, the *Agape* of the Cross. God's "unmerited love for Israel"⁴⁶ is what saves humanity. It describes the encounter between a God who is willing to sacrifice all, to become a suffering God, for his "vulnerable creatures."⁴⁷ Paul utilizes this notion throughout his writings,⁴⁸ elevating *agape* to a divine form of love, one

⁴³ Bernard of Clairvaux, 51.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 73-81.

⁴⁵ 1 Jn. 4:8-10.

⁴⁶ Timothy P. Jackson, *Love Discovered: Meditations on Christian Charity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2.

⁴⁷ Jackson, *Love Discovered*, 211.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Rom. 5:6-10, which illustrates Paul's *Agape* of the Cross.

which offers the self in sacrifice for the other. Paul's *agape* descends from the Divine towards his people.

A central example of Pauline *agape* can be found in Romans 5:1-8:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Christ's crucifixion is the essence of *agape* for Paul. It was honest and extended to sinful humanity unconditionally.⁴⁹ Even when humanity was undeserving of Christ's sacrifice, when Israel turned away from their covenants with the divine, God was still willing to sacrifice his only Son for humanity. Pauline *agape* is the total self-giving of oneself, not only to those who are righteous or worthy, but to all – even those who are not deserving of said love. As Christ died for sinners, humans must also love their enemies, even if it may be difficult and cause us suffering, *agape* “can stand up under the burden”⁵⁰ because it is a divine form of love. Since we are in the image of a loving Creator, the ultimate form of *agape*, then we too should have a fraction of this selfless love within ourselves.

While much of Christian thought bases itself on the Bible, the influence of Greek philosophers can be heavily felt throughout theology. In truth, the western understanding of *eros* is based on the reading of Plato (d. 347 BCE). The *Symposium* most clearly illustrates Plato's views concerning *eros*. While there are many speakers in this dialogue, Diotima, who is not present during the dialogue of the *Symposium* but is represented by Socrates, defines love as the desire to possess the good always.⁵¹ Once obtained, *eros*, which by its very nature is reproductive, seeks to reproduce. “But why is the object of love procreation? Because procreation is a kind of

⁴⁹ Bill C. Caradine, “What Agape Means to Paul: Further Reflections on Nygren's Agape and Eros,” *Saint Luke's Journal of Theology*, vol. 9 n.2 (1966): 42.

⁵⁰ Caradine, “What Agape Means to Paul,” 44.

⁵¹ Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. M.C. Howatson, ed. Frisbec C.C. Sheffield (London: Cambridge university Press, 2008), 206a.

everlastingness and immortality for the mortal creature, as far as anything can be.”⁵² One should note Diotima is referring not only to biological, but also to poetic, spiritual forms of procreation as she implies various forms of artistic expression can be the result of this procreation. Moreover, *eros* is a way of moving towards the divine for Diotima. Recognising beautiful things, we are drawn to others, climbing upwards from “beautiful bodies to beautiful practices, and from beautiful practices to beautiful kinds of knowledge, and from beautiful kinds of knowledge finally to the particular knowledge which is knowledge solely of the beautiful itself...”⁵³ This concept is known as Diotima’s Ladder, a way in which *eros* promotes human transcendence out of the corporeal body towards the heavens.

Desire is the starting motivation to receive something from the “other.” There is also a recognition of the role beauty plays in this journey. Beauty as a crane or ladder, that we find in Diotima’s speech is reflected also in Gregory the Great’s commentary on the *Song of Songs*. We actively participate in our movement towards the Divine, with the help of the world and desires which are kindled by God’s created beauty. Augustine picks up on this Platonic notion of the ladder and uses it as a foundation for his theology of love.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) is one of the most significant thinkers in Western Christianity. A theologian with as many writings as Augustine can never be summarized completely, particularly due to the complex and evolving nature of his thoughts which often make his works difficult to reconcile; therefore, this examination will be a brief study of love as presented in his autobiography, the *Confessions*.⁵⁴ In this seminal, and often referenced text, Augustine traces his journey to God, while focusing on the central theme of love. The saint frames this interpretation himself in book one where he states that as a child he cried over Dido’s unreturned love for Aeneas, but did not feel any sorrow for not returning God’s love.⁵⁵ His work represents his journey towards this loving Deity.

⁵² Plato, *The Symposium*, 206e-207a.

⁵³ Plato, *The Symposium*, 211c-211d.

⁵⁴ For another text relating to Augustine’s view on love, see his *Ennarationes in Iohannem*. For an English translation of this work, see, Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John (1-40)*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New York City Press, 2009) and Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John (41-124)*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New York City Press, 2020).

⁵⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. James J. O’Donnell, vol. 1 Introduction and Text (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), I:XIII:20.

The first important story recounted by Augustine, in the *Confessions*, revolves around his theft of pears from a farmer's tree. He and his friends neither wanted, nor needed these pears, as they threw them to the hogs almost immediately. Augustine draws from this narrative the conclusion that his main desire at the time was to sin, his love of evil for the sake of evil.⁵⁶ However, there is a deeper indication that Augustine only partook in the act of theft because of his friends. He clearly states that had they not been there he would not have taken the fruits from the tree. This act can be both the drive to sin and also the desire for friendship, the love of camaraderie. Not taking part in the theft would have ostracised Augustine, leaving him without companions, friends who Augustine believed filled a void or longing within himself, a void which only God could have filled.

The second story unfolds in Carthage. While there, Augustine feels emptiness and seeks the comforts of women, turning to the embrace of prostitutes, only to feel the same longing once the encounter ends. The saint realizes that he was in fact searching for God.⁵⁷

And I marveled that I now loved you, and no phantasm in your stead, and yet I was not stable enough to enjoy my God steadily. Instead I was transported to you by your beauty, and then presently torn away from you by my own weight, sinking with grief into these lower things... But your memory dwelt with me, and I never doubted in the least that there was one for me to cleave to; but I was not yet ready to cleave to you firmly.⁵⁸

Augustine recognises his desire cannot be quenched by earthly things. The gap or sense of longing he felt was only to be filled by the Divine. Therefore, after converting to Christianity with the help of Ambrose of Milan, Augustine writes:

Not physical beauty, nor the splendor of time, nor the radiance of the light – so pleasant to our eyes – nor the sweet melodies of the various kinds of songs, nor the fragrant smell of flowers and ointments and spices...not the limbs embraced in physical love – it is not these I love when I love my God. Yet it is true that I love a certain kind of light and sound and fragrance and embrace in loving God, who is the light and sound and fragrance and food and embrace of my inner being – where that light shines into my soul which no place can contain, where time does not snatch away the lovely sound, where no breeze disperses the sweet fragrance, where no eating diminishes the food there

⁵⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, I:IV:9 and II:VIII:10.

⁵⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, VI:X:16.

⁵⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, VII:XVII:23. For this translation see Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Albert C. Outler and Mark Vessey (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2007), VII:XVII:23. “Et mirabar quod iam te amabam, non pro te phantasma, et non stabam frui deo meo, sed rapiebar ad te decore tuo moxque diripiebar ab te pondere meo, et ruebam in ista cum gemitu; et pondus hoc consuetudo carnalis. Sed mecum erat memoria tui, neque ullo modo dubitabam esse cui cohaererem, sed nondum me esse qui cohaererem...”

provided, and where there is an embrace that no satiety comes to sunder. This is what I love when I love my God.⁵⁹

Here we are exposed to Augustine's central concept of love, what we will call *caritas*.⁶⁰ Humans have within them a desire, a desire for love, a desire which attempts to fill a gap within themselves. For Augustine, who was once a Platonist, we are to ascend Diotima's Ladder, identify beauty in the world around us and continuously move beyond it to the source. We see the beauty of a tree, but recognise the tree is finite, it will die. We enjoy the fragrance of flowers, but remember the flowers will fade. We are to move beyond the finite towards the infinite. If we seek happiness and rest, humans must turn towards an undying God. Our drive to seek happiness and beauty has its endpoint in Him.⁶¹

How, then, is this different from Platonic *eros*? Augustine believes God's *agape* is also at work in the world. While we move upwards, through various stages, as Augustine moved from love of literature, friendship, sex and eventually God, the Divine is also moving towards us, we are pulled by God on a path towards Himself.⁶² Augustine's *caritas*, then, is a merger of Platonic *eros*, a desire or drive within us to seek out the good and beautiful, and Biblical *agape*, God's love which moves downwards towards his creation. *Caritas* is both a human and divine form of love, where both parties participate, where humans are continuously moving beyond themselves, beyond desires, beyond earthly things, towards the heavens. This Augustinian notion is very influential on Tolkien and Lewis. Let us turn then to an overview of their lives and thoughts.

⁵⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, X:VI:8. For this translation see Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Albert C. Outler and Mark Vessey (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2007), X:VI:8. "Non speciem corporis nec decus temporis, non candorem lucis, ecce istis amicum oculis, non dulces melodias cantilenarum omnimodarum, non florum et unguentorum et aromatum suavolentiam, non manna et mella, non membra acceptabilia carnis amplexibus: non haec amo, cum amo deum meum, et tamen amo quandam lucem et quandam vocem et quandam odorem et quandam cibum et quandam amplexum, cum amo deum meum, lucem, vocem, odorem, cibum, amplexum interioris hominis mei, ubi fulget animae meae quod non capit locus, et ubi sonat quod non rapit tempus, et ubi olet quod non spargit flatus, et ubi sapit quod non minuit edacitas, et ubi haeret quod non divellit satietas. Hoc est quod amo, cum deum meum amo."

⁶⁰ Throughout this thesis *caritas* will not be used as a Latin translation for *agape*, as we find in Jerome's *Vulgate*. Instead, it will denote the merger of *eros* and *agape* found in Augustinian thought.

⁶¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Suffering Love," in *Philosophy and Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas Harris (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988.), 199.

⁶² See, for example, Augustine, *Confessions*, V:XIII:23, where he claims to have been led to Ambrose without being aware of it.

Chapter 1: J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis and the Role of Stories

“Fantasy remains a human right: we make in our measure and in our derivative mode, because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a Maker.”⁶³ Readers of J.R.R. Tolkien’s “On Fairy Stories” are brought face-to-face with a particular worldview present throughout the works of both Tolkien and Lewis; a worldview which perceives the role of myth and tales, not as childish delights or guilty pleasures, but as natural human ingenuity which should be appreciated. This perspective is not surprising given the important role Christianity played in their lives. Judeo-Christianity is a religious family centered around words. It is seen in the centrality of the Tanakh in Judaism, the written word, which tells the story of Adonai and his people. It is seen in the creation story where God speaks things into existence, or the Jewish mystic creation book *Sefer Yetzirah*’s notion of God creating through the use of Hebrew letters. It is seen in the Christian Gospel of John, where the Greek Logos is converted into a Christian idea – where God, the Word, becomes flesh and lives amongst us. It would make sense, then, that the story, human’s attempt at creating something in written word, would hold an important role in the Creator-creation relationship. This chapter will seek to explore this importance for C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien and highlight their reliance on myth to teach the reader lessons of oftentimes abstract philosophical and theological theories.

Like many authors who came before them,⁶⁴ Lewis and Tolkien understood the value of stories.⁶⁵ Contained within the lines of a text are important lessons and morals which help shape young minds and stimulate older readers, for stories should be both useful and delightful. Complex theological and philosophical ideas can be best understood through a fictional narrative. A child may not grasp the great sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, but can certainly understand the sorrows of Aslan being bound to a stone, shaved and killed. The joy of the resurrection can be lost on the audience through the Gospels, but the feeling experienced in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* when the mice eat through the ropes and we finally hear Aslan’s voice again, or when we meet Gandalf in Fangorn after thinking him dead in *The Lord of the Rings*, reflect and mimic the feeling we should have for the risen Christ. While Aslan is not exactly the Jesus of our world and Gandalf

⁶³ J.R.R. Tolkien, “On Fairy Stories,” in *Tales of the Perilous Realm* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 371.

⁶⁴ Other authors who hold this thought include Dante, Boccaccio, and Milton, just to name a few.

⁶⁵ For Lewis in particular, he does not just “adopt fantasy as a didactic which after his conversion; rather it was his love of fantasy, myth and romance that led him to Christianity in the first place.” David C. Downing, *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis’ Ransom Trilogy* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 35.

is even further from Christ, both characters share in the Great Myth (the Christian story); both are Jesus-like. Readers get a taste for how the Christian message or kerygma are ingrained in all Lewis' and Tolkien's stories, like Justin Martyr's *Logos Spermatikos*, where aspects of the Word are present throughout all human societies, regardless of religious affiliations. This understanding of literature and the important role it plays in the lives of humans helps illuminate the works of Tolkien and Lewis, both of whom are heavily influenced by the things they read. This chapter, therefore, will explore their lives and relationship to religion in order to gain a better understanding of the motivations they had in composing their respective works.

J.R.R. Tolkien's Life before Oxford

Born January 3rd, 1892 to Mabel Suffield and Arthur Tolkien, in Bloemfontein, South Africa, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was named after his grandfather (John) and given his father's second name (Reuel).⁶⁶ Ronald, as he was known to his parents, or John Ronald, to his school friends, was baptized on January 31st of the same year.⁶⁷ When Tolkien was four, his father died from complications of pneumonic fever. His mother, Mabel, decided to move Tolkien and his younger brother, Hilary Arthur Reuel Tolkien, born February 17th, 1894, to Birmingham to live with her parents.

The move allowed the boys to attend King Edward's School, as their father once did. While Tolkien was starting his schooling, his mother and aunt were just beginning their journeys as new Catholics. Mabel's interest in Catholicism began with the death of her husband, but her father, John Suffield, a Methodist by education and a Unitarian in belief, was incredibly angry at his daughter for her decision. Mabel was also faced with strong anger from the rest of her family who held a distrust of Rome.⁶⁸

Tolkien's education progressed well, and he soon began to fall in love with languages; Greek being one of the first he encountered. His dislike for Shakespeare began around this time as well. His disappointment with the trees not truly moving in *Macbeth* Act 4, scene 1, stayed with him his entire life.⁶⁹ While Shakespeareans may find this appalling, Tolkien readers can take

⁶⁶ Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 20.

⁶⁷ Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*, 21.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

comfort in knowing the Ents, living and moving tree-like creatures, are a response to this early disappointment.

In November 1904, Tolkien and his brother experienced another great loss. His mother collapsed and fell into a diabetic coma, only to die a few days later. The death left Tolkien seeking methods to remember and honor his mother, Catholicism being the most effective.⁷⁰ Tolkien and his brother then moved in with one of their aunts and continued their studies. Tolkien discovered Old English and Middle English through the works of *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Pearl*,⁷¹ all of which Tolkien later modernised and provided commentary to.⁷² This love of philology also stoked a desire within Tolkien to create his own languages. He created two as a child, and would later go on to create the elvish tongue as an adult.

In 1911, after trying to secure a scholarship to Oxford, Tolkien finally was accepted to study Anglo-Saxon, Middle English and Philology.⁷³ His entry into Oxford and the few years which preceded it, also marked his difficult courtship of the twenty-one-year-old Edith Bratt. Though Edith and Tolkien tried to see each other often, Tolkien's guardian and financial supporter, Father Francis Xavier Morgan, who was also a close friend to Tolkien's mother and given the title of guardianship over her boys, was adamantly opposed to Tolkien shifting his focus away from his studies. Father Morgan prevented Tolkien and Edith from seeing each other, threatening to cut off support to Tolkien at an important point in his studies.⁷⁴ The prohibition intensified their love, and Tolkien eventually married Edith on March 22nd, 1916.⁷⁵

With the breakout of World War I, Tolkien found himself in France, where he began his writing of fantasy and the exploration of Middle-Earth in *The Book of Lost Tales* which later inspired part of *The Silmarillion*. His objectives were to create a mythology for England⁷⁶ which

⁷⁰ Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*, 38-39.

⁷¹ For example, see J.R.R. Tolkien, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Sir Orfeo and Pearl* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975) and J.R.R. Tolkien, *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary together with Sellic Spell*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2017).

⁷² Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*, 42-43.

⁷³ Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and Their Friends*, (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 24.

⁷⁴ Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*, 50-51.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

did not owe a debt to continental Europe. His role in the war ended in 1916, when he contracted Trench Fever and returned to England.⁷⁷

Not all was bad for Tolkien in 1917, since in November of that year his son John Francis Reuel was born.⁷⁸ His recovery and rehabilitation also afforded him time with Edith, much of which was spent walking and picnicking in the countryside near Roos. On one of these occasions, Edith sang and danced for Tolkien. This induced the central tale in his mythology, that of Beren and Lúthien. This important story was one of Tolkien's favourites, it even inspired him to place the name of Beren on his tombstone and Lúthien on Edith's.⁷⁹ Their family continued to grow with two more sons, Michael Hilary Reuel Tolkien, born in October 1920, and Christopher John Reuel Tolkien, born November 1924. Christopher became central in overseeing his father's literary estate, helping to publish many of his works posthumously. Their daughter, Priscilla Mary Anne Reuel Tolkien, was born in June 1929.

Tolkien got a job working for the Oxford English Dictionary in 1918, and became a Reader in English Language at Leeds University. By the early 1920s, he returned to Oxford and began his plan to remodel philological requirements of the Oxford English Syllabus. While this was rejected by his peers at first, among them C.S. Lewis, Tolkien eventually succeeded at his objective.⁸⁰

The Early Life of C.S. Lewis

As with Tolkien, C.S. Lewis experienced the loss of a mother at a young age. This loss, in combination with an indecisive father, caused Lewis to turn to his brother Warren, and works of literature. Clive Staples Lewis was born on November 29th, 1898 to Albert James Lewis, a solicitor, and Florence Augusta Hamilton, a clergyman's daughter. Lewis was born in Belfast, which is often lost on many of his readers, who consider him an English author.⁸¹

Lewis was educated early on by his mother and governess, but his later education was challenging. With the death of his mother in 1908, Lewis was sent by his father to Wynyard School

⁷⁷ Philip and Carol Zaleski, *The Fellowship. The Literary Lives of the Inklings: J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Owen Barfield, Charles Williams*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 71.

⁷⁸ Zaleski, *The Fellowship*, 124.

⁷⁹ Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*, 105.

⁸⁰ Carpenter, *Inklings*, 24.

⁸¹ Alister McGrath, *Eccentric Genius. Reluctant Prophet. C.S. Lewis: A Life* (Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers Inc., 2013), 3-7.

in Watford, North London.⁸² While Wynyard was likely once a good school, the headmaster there “became insane”⁸³ by the time Lewis and his brother attended. This led to many traumatic and abusive experiences for Lewis at an early age. It did not, however, deter him from reading and learning. Uncovering the works of Spenser and William Morris, Lewis began to feel certain comforts in these central texts. Even more importantly, his earlier exposure to the stories of Beatrix Potter prepared him for the wonders to come in larger fictional narratives.⁸⁴

At fourteen, Lewis was given a scholarship at Malvern College, where he continued to experience abuse at the hand of wealthier students. Thankfully, becoming more aware of his son’s plight, Lewis’ father decided to bring his son home to be taken under the tutelage of his old headmaster, W.T. Kirkpatrick.⁸⁵ Kirkpatrick was a stern teacher, often chiding Lewis for making illogical statements, but his methods enabled Lewis’ knowledge and love for scholarship to flourish. Under the guidance of Kirkpatrick, Lewis completed his move towards an atheistic world view, though Kirkpatrick was not an atheist himself and did not intend to lead Lewis in that direction.⁸⁶ The movement away from Christianity began much earlier, for Lewis tells us he first took issue with the Christian notion of God at Wynyard.⁸⁷ In his autobiography, Lewis explains that he latched on to a quote by Lucretius, “had God designed the world, it would not be / a world so frail and faulty as we see.”⁸⁸ Lewis will remember this idea, and it will become a central point he tried to combat in his later apologetical works. Though he turned away from the faith, Lewis never turned away from Christian literature. His love for Mallory, Spenser, and George MacDonald continued to be a central part of his life.⁸⁹

With his strong academic standing, Lewis, in 1916, was awarded a scholarship to Oxford University. The following year, he was drafted into the army and quartered with E.F.C. Moore, meeting for the first time Moore’s mother Janie Moore, a forty-five-year-old Irish woman. The relationship between Mrs. Moore and Lewis would develop over time, baffling and remaining a mystery to many. Most scholars, however, believe this was not a sexual relationship. Instead, it

⁸² McGrath, *C.S. Lewis: A Life*, 17.

⁸³ Carpenter, *Inklings*, 5.

⁸⁴ McGrath, *Eccentric Genius*, 18.; For a study of Lewis, his childhood and the impact fiction had on his thoughts, see Walter Hooper, *Past Watchful Dragons: The Origin, Interpretation, and Appreciation of the Chronicles of Narnia*, C.S. Lewis Secondary Studies Series, ed. William Griffin (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1971).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 35, 37.

⁸⁶ McGrath, *C.S. Lewis: A Life*, 7.; McGrath, *Eccentric Genius*, 42.

⁸⁷ C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of my Early Life*, (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1955), 58.

⁸⁸ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 65.

⁸⁹ A.N. Wilson, *C.S. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1990), 47.

was more akin to that of a mother and son. There is no direct evidence that Lewis viewed Moore in a sexual way.⁹⁰ There was no gossiping amongst the servants of the house, no indication that anything was going on amongst Lewis' friends and family, and more importantly, Moore's younger daughter lived with them most of the time and never reported any relationship between her mother and Lewis.⁹¹ Lewis' brother, Warnie, however, does note that Lewis's relationship with Moore "bound him to her service for the next thirty years."⁹² With the absence of evidence, particularly since Moore destroyed letters Lewis wrote her,⁹³ there has been a change in the way Lewis' and Moore's relationship is viewed. As Alister McGrath notes, Lewis and Moore "found each other attractive and engaging."⁹⁴ Lewis was also trying to fill the void left by his lost mother. He was seeking both a maternal figure and a love. Though their relationship is not perfectly clear "it appears to have been strongly shaped by both maternal and romantic factors."⁹⁵ Lewis also turned to Moore to fill the gap of affection he lacked from his father.⁹⁶

After a few months on the frontline of the World War I, Lewis was wounded and returned to England.⁹⁷ Once back in London, Lewis was accompanied during his recovery by Moore, whose son died in the war. They then moved to Oxford as Lewis began to study "the Greats" in 1922. By the time he graduated, however, there was no teaching post for philosophy. Therefore, he registered for reading in English Language and Literature, and studied Anglo-Saxon philology and Medieval Literature.⁹⁸ Not impressed with the intellectual rigor of the department, he soon completed his degree and in 1923 was awarded First Class in English Language and Literature.

He spent his first year after receiving his degree working on poetry, but then found a post teaching philosophy at University College. By 1925, Lewis was offered a fellowship at Magdalen

⁹⁰ Carpenter, *Inklings*, 9.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹² Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, *C.S. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994 [1974]), 66.

⁹³ McGrath, *C.S. Lewis*, 73.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.; Walter Hooper also noted in an interview with Christopher Mitchell in October 2009 that he did not fully understand Lewis' relationship to Mrs. Moore nor did he think it was something that needed to be questioned. See Christopher Mitchell, "Walter Hooper Interview" (Illinois: Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College, 2009). Found at: https://wadecenterblog.wordpress.com/2021/12/08/walter-hooper-interview/?fbclid=IwAR0EnDNmOIWCU0LPrrA3_FDCEp5sjOpOiOh8bOwNuDpUhr46h8GLvpS3M0

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁹⁶ Lancelyn Green, *C.S. Lewis: A Biography*, 57.

⁹⁷ Humphrey Carpenter notes that while Lewis most likely saw many horrors in the war, and lost friends, including E.F.C. Moore, he dedicates very little space to the war in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*. In this light his nearly three chapters describing the horrors of his early life in boarding schools shows just how influential and lasting the effects of his stay there were on Lewis. See Carpenter, *Inklings*, 10.

⁹⁸ Wilson, *C.S. Lewis: A Biography*, 62.

College in English Language and Literature.⁹⁹ Lewis was not impressed by all his colleagues, and thought they were too factional. On Tuesday May 11th, 1926, he met with the new professor of Anglo-Saxon, J.R.R. Tolkien. Lewis' diary entry for that day records the meeting which began a fruitful friendship, though one would not know it from Lewis' description.¹⁰⁰

He [Tolkien] is a smooth, pale, fluent little chap – can't read Spenser because of the forms – thinks the language is the real thing in the school – thinks all literature is written for the amusement of *men* between thirty and forty – we ought to vote ourselves out of existence if we were honest dons. No harm in him: only needs a smack or so. His pet abomination is the idea of “liberal” studies. Technical hobbies are more in his line.¹⁰¹

Though not flattering to Tolkien in the least, Lewis' opinion changed over the course of their friendship – particularly in relationship to the role of literature and Christianity.

The Inklings and Scholarship

Lewis' assessment of Tolkien was in a way correct. Tolkien believed in the value of stories, but also saw holes in the syllabus at Oxford and the lack of a philological emphasis. Students of literature did not gain enough experience with philology, while those in the language component spent too little time, if any, on medieval texts.¹⁰² This led Tolkien to seek reforms to the syllabus as a whole. For the literature portion, he called for the removal of modern sections, including the overemphasis on 19th century works, to be replaced by Anglo-Saxon and Middle-English narratives. Those in the language component would no longer explore Shakespeare, since Tolkien believed the courses should not cover anything after the 1400s. To this component, Tolkien also wanted to add the study of Old Norse. Though Lewis was at first against the reforms, as his research often explored late and post-medieval texts, he eventually agreed with Tolkien and joined his cause. It would seem Tolkien did not need a “smack or so,” for Lewis helped him pass the changes successfully in 1931.¹⁰³

The friendship between the two men would lead them both on important paths – for Lewis, it would bring him back to Christianity, while Tolkien would gain much needed support and insight

⁹⁹ McGrath, *Eccentric Genius*, 92.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁰¹ C.S. Lewis, *All My Roads Before Me: The Diary of C.S. Lewis 1922-1927*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1991), 392-393.

¹⁰² Zaleski, *Fellowship*, 174.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 174-175.

to complete many of his works of fiction. While these events, the fleshing out of Middle Earth and Lewis' conversion are not solely indebted to the friendship, it is clear that their connection acted as an incubator which sped up and fed already existing tendencies.

By 1928, Lewis' progression back to Christianity was already apparent, particularly in his conversations with Owen Barfield. This was also a moment when Lewis began focusing on the concept of love in literature. His attention shifted to *The Romance of the Rose* and the school of thought surrounding the writing of this text. The work which comes out of this study was titled *The Allegory of Love* and it sought to “[encompass] the structure of medieval narrative poetry, the dream-vision genre, the origins of romantic love, the ethos of chivalry, the moral psychology embodied in medieval lists of virtues and vices – virtually, the whole late-antique and medieval cosmos.”¹⁰⁴ Of central importance to his exploration was Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, a work dear to Lewis and one he deemed a foundational text on romance and the “romantic concept of marriage” which founded the school of literature from “Shakespeare to Meredith.”¹⁰⁵

Parallel to this increased interest in the notion of love, as previously mentioned, was Lewis' return to Christianity. By 1929, Lewis had read Chesterton's *Everlasting Man*. The book forced Lewis to recognise that he was surrounded by friends who believed in a personal god. More importantly, the stories and tales which were a comfort to him presupposed a belief in God.¹⁰⁶ His full return to Christianity would occur later on in his life, but the stage was set for Lewis and the conversion was in part thanks to the strong friendships he made with Christian thinkers.

For Tolkien, the idea of a group of intellectuals meeting and discussing scholarship, as well as their own personal writings, was central to academic development. Through his initiatives, Tolkien successfully created a number of these groups. One of the first ones he convened focused on the reading of Icelandic texts. The *Kolbitar* (Coalbiters) was made up of individuals who had no formal training in reading Icelandic. Instead, the group would trudge through the readings, with Tolkien acting as the lead and aiding in the pronunciation and translation. In 1927, C.S. Lewis was invited to attend the meetings and he did so on a regular basis.¹⁰⁷

Lewis and Tolkien soon recognized their shared interests and in 1929 Tolkien showed Lewis a draft of his most important story, that of Beren and Lúthien. Lewis truly enjoyed the

¹⁰⁴ Zaleski, *Fellowship*, 180.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 185; Carpenter, *Inklings*, 40-41.

¹⁰⁷ McGrath, *Eccentric Genius*, 175.

narrative, even producing a commentary on it pseudonymously.¹⁰⁸ Lewis pretended that there were various manuscript traditions for the tale, and even suggested “variants” to the lines.¹⁰⁹ Though Tolkien did not like most of the additions or suggested changes, the back-and-forth commentary became a common thing for these two friends. While the Coalbiters disbanded, Lewis and Tolkien eventually joined a new group known as the Inklings.¹¹⁰

The name, Inklings, was originally coined by Edward Tangey Lean, but Lewis took it up when Tangey Lean left Oxford and applied it to a group of selected members who met in his rooms at Magdalen College.¹¹¹ While Lewis and Tolkien met every Monday morning to talk, they both reserved their Thursday evenings for the meeting of the Inklings. Depending on the size of the group, they would convene in Lewis’ rooms or the Eagle and Child pub in St. Giles.¹¹² At these meetings debates, readings and discussions would take place. Members would read their own works and get feedback and suggestions. No minutes were taken, but it is clear that both Lewis and Tolkien benefited from the feedback. While the members’ list was ever changing and fairly large, some notable attendees included Owen Barfield, Charles Williams, and later on Christopher Tolkien.¹¹³

Charles Williams (1886-1945)

Williams was an important member of the Inklings, especially for Lewis. He was born Charles Walter Stansby Williams in 1886.¹¹⁴ A bright child, educated in day schools and by his well-read father, received a scholarship in 1901 to University College, London. He found a job as clerk at the Methodist Bookroom and eventually earned a position in 1908 as a reader for the Oxford University Press.¹¹⁵ In the same year, Williams met and fell in love with Florence Conway. While Williams did not truly pursue this love at the start, they were to eventually marry. He resisted Florence because he thought, as he interpreted Dante, that his love for Florence, “might not just be

¹⁰⁸ Wilson, *C.S. Lewis*, 117-118.

¹⁰⁹ Lewis’ commentaries can be found today in the *History of Middle-Earth* series, volume 3 titled *The Lays of Beleriand*.

¹¹⁰ Wilson, *C.S. Lewis*, 159.

¹¹¹ McGrath, *Eccentric Genius*, 117.

¹¹² Lancelyn Green, *C.S. Lewis*, 157.; Carpenter, *Inklings*, 127.

¹¹³ For a complete list of members and their brief biographies, see Carpenter, *Inklings*, 255-259.

¹¹⁴ For collected essays on Williams, his works and his relationship with contemporaries, see Suzanne Bray and Richard Sturch eds., *Charles Williams and His Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

¹¹⁵ Zaleski, *Fellowship*, 225.

an end in itself but indeed the approach to spiritual ecstasy. Earthly love is a ‘ladder or staircase up to God.’”¹¹⁶ Using this notion, Williams published a book of sonnets under the title *The Silver Stair*. The emphasis on the importance of earthly loves also influenced Williams’ other works of literature and theology, including his *Outlines of Romantic Theology*. Williams was a follower of Rosicrucianism, a belief system which merged Christianity with magic and the occult. This did not affect his popularity, however, as he is known to have given many well-received and well-attended talks on Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth, to name but a few.¹¹⁷

Williams’ personal life was not always perfect. His marriage to Florence was probably rocky and this eventually led him to fall in love with a librarian named Phyllis Jones. Williams would often send her love poems to which Jones would reply. The relationship, however, was never consummated and he remained faithful to Florence.¹¹⁸ With all that was going on in his personal life, Williams managed to write numerous works of fiction such as *Many Dimensions* (1931), *The Place of the Lion* (1931), *The Greater Trumps* (1932), and *Shadows of Ecstasy* (1933). Though not all of his works were successful, Williams did have some admirers including T.S. Eliot and of course, C.S. Lewis.¹¹⁹

Lewis first read *The Place of the Lion* in 1936. He was amazed and praised Williams in a letter. At the same time, Williams was reading Lewis’ *Allegory of Love* and was equally impressed with the content and recognized the value of Lewis’ work. They began a correspondence¹²⁰ and eventually Williams invited Lewis to lunch in London. The meeting began a great friendship, but Tolkien, who felt as though Williams was thrust upon him by Lewis, did not seem to share the same love for Williams’ thoughts. Tolkien probably disliked the bond between his friend Lewis and this newcomer. Tolkien also found him a thinker to be wary of, for Williams’ held a fascination with witchcraft and the occult.¹²¹ There is, however, evidence that Williams greatly appreciated Tolkien’s works, particularly *The Lord of the Rings*. The appreciation was never reciprocated. In fact, upon Lewis’ death, Tolkien lamented the overemphasis people placed on Williams’ influence on Lewis. Tolkien told his son Michael,

¹¹⁶ Carpenter, *Inklings*, 80.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹¹⁸ Zaleski, *Fellowship*, 234, 258.

¹¹⁹ Lewis and T.S. Eliot do not have a friendly relationship. See, for example, Wilson, *C.S. Lewis*, 286ff.; Carpenter, *Inklings*, 95-97.

¹²⁰ Zaleski, *Fellowship*, 237-238.

¹²¹ Carpenter, *Inklings*, 120-121.

Lewis only met Williams in 1939, and W. died in 1945. The ‘space-travel’ trilogy ascribed to the influence of Williams was basically foreign to Williams’ kind of imagination. It was planned years before, when we decided to divide: he was to do a space-travel and I time-travel. My book was never finished, but some of it (the Númenorean-Atlantis theme) got into my trilogy eventually... Williams’ influence actually only appeared with his death: *That Hideous Strength*, the end of the trilogy, which (good though it is in itself) I think spoiled it.¹²²

In 1945, nine years after meeting Lewis, Williams passed away. Given that his influence on Lewis can be found, Tolkien’s dismissal of it is interesting, and likely stems from feelings of rejection. What must be taken away from the friendship, and the role of the Inklings in general, was that all the members shared a similar notion: stories have an important part to play in the lives of humanity. They teach us lessons, hone our morality, and aid in our growth as humans. For better or worse, Fairy Stories, and stories in general, are worth being read and discussed.

This sentiment is one which echoes those held by many figures, including Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375).¹²³ Boccaccio that argued poetry, which Boccaccio connects to stories at large, especially pagan poetry, can aid in our understanding of Christian theology.¹²⁴ He noted that poetry was derived from God and argued “poetry is a practical art, springing from God’s bosom and deriving its name from its effect, and that it has to do with many high and noble matters that constantly occupy even those who deny its existence.”¹²⁵ Any attempt to discredit works of literature does a disservice to God. Boccaccio even went so far as to identify John the Evangelist as a poet. Boccaccio perceived John’s Revelation as an important work of poetry. To deny the theological value of poetry, then, is to deny the works of John.¹²⁶ Philip Sidney (1554-1586) agreed with Boccaccio, and like the Italian Proto-Humanist, Sidney noted that works of literature can help illuminate difficult moral, philosophical, and theological notions. Sidney argued: “I say the philosopher teacheth, but he teacheth obscurely, so as the learned only can understand him, that is to say, he teacheth them that are already taught; but the poet is the food for the tenderest stomachs,

¹²² J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 342.

¹²³ For an examination of Boccaccio’s defence of poetry, see, John Block Friedman, “Oraia-phonos and Eur-dike in Hell,” in *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000). See also, in relation to the “lies of the poets,” Paul-Augustin Deproost, “Ficta et facta. La condamnation du mensonge des poètes dans la poésie latine chrétienne,” *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 44 (1998): 101-121.

¹²⁴ Giovanni Boccaccio, *Boccaccio on Poetry: Beings the Preface and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of Boccaccio’s Genealogia Deorum Gentilium in English Version with Introductory Essay and Commentary*, trans. Charles G. Osgood (New York: The Library of Liberal Arts Press, 1956), XV: ix.

¹²⁵ Boccaccio, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, XIV: vii.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, XIV: xiii.

the poet is indeed the right popular philosopher, whereof Aesop's tales give good proof: whose pretty allegories, stealing under the formal tales of beasts, make many, more beastly than beasts, begin to hear the sound of virtue from these dumb speakers."¹²⁷ As previously noted, a child may not understand the complexity of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, but can easily grasp Aslan's moral lessons from the child-friendly *Chronicles of Narnia*. Poetry and literature aid in explaining and, in many cases, demonstrate complex ideas in a fictitious world.

George MacDonald (1824-1905)

We find this emphasis on fairy stories and the lessons they teach most clearly in the works of George MacDonald. One of the biggest influences on C.S. Lewis in particular, MacDonald was a friend of Lewis Carroll. Basing many of his works of fantasy, science fiction and theology on the thoughts of MacDonald, Lewis often emphasises his indebtedness to the pastor, even publishing an anthology of extractions from MacDonald's works.¹²⁸

MacDonald began as a Federal Calvinist with the belief that "God's love and forgiveness had to be purchased by the payment of Christ's suffering on the cross. God was sovereign over all things and had chosen to love only the elect."¹²⁹ Salvation, for the young MacDonald, came from unmerited Grace, but it was visible in the good works done by the elect. Human agency did not have a role to play in this salvation theology. Yet, this understanding of soteriology did not sit well with MacDonald and as he aged and became a pastor, MacDonald turned towards Anglicanism. He then began to argue that humans are in a constant journey towards God. On this journey, humanity must work alongside the Divine in order to serve "others with love and [seek] after ideals, which he believed were personified in Christ."¹³⁰ For MacDonald, the loving God serves his creation and the people, in turn, must also serve creation by loving one another. "MacDonald rejected the Reformation idea of salvation as primary *pardon* for the sinner based on the righteousness of Christ [...] Instead, MacDonald returns to Dante's expression of the old Catholic theology of union: salvation, the human *telios* (sic!) is *union* with God, imaged Biblically by the

¹²⁷ Philip Sidney, "The Defence of Poesy," in *Sir Philip Sidney the Major Works, Including Astrophil and Stella*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, 212-250 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), ln. 464-470.

¹²⁸ See C.S. Lewis, *George Macdonald: An Anthology* (New York: HarperOne, 2001).

¹²⁹ Kerry Dearborn, "Love at the Heart of the Universe," *Christian History & Biography* 86 (2005): 32.

¹³⁰ Jeffrey W. Smith, "Pre-Raphaelite imagery in the writings of George MacDonald: Representations in 'The Imagination', The Seaboard Parish and The Vicar's Daughter," *Journal of the Scottish Society for Art History* 17, (2012): 14.

prophetic metaphor of Yahweh's marriage with Israel and John the Revelator's picture of the marriage of Christ and the Church."¹³¹ Salvation requires humans to be one with God, to be like Him. This cannot be achieved on our own, we require God's help, but we must freely turn toward him.¹³² Human free choice has a role to play in MacDonald's new soteriology.

Turning now to MacDonald's works of fantasy, two adult novels, *Phantastes* (1858) and *Lilith* (1895), were of interest and influence to Lewis.¹³³ *Phantastes*, read by Lewis at a young age, planted the seeds of Christian fantasy. Even while he began to view himself as an atheist, Lewis was struck by this work, and it influenced him greatly. MacDonald's *Lilith*, which falls in the category of Christian Romanticism, also had an impact on Lewis. The story presents us with important ideas concerning the Christian notion of salvation which aids in understanding Lewis' idea of love and free will. *Lilith* follows the formula from medieval Romance: a hero who embarks on a quest, a lady, supernatural opponents, and landscapes.¹³⁴ *Lilith* is in "the forms of the Romance to express MacDonald's own lifelong search for a remedy for death, and his finding of the Christian solution."¹³⁵

The story of *Lilith* is quite complex; however, a brief summary can be provided here.¹³⁶ Mr. Vane, a scholarly man and owner of a library, notices an apparition which looks like a raven. Finding a book which he cannot decipher in his collections, Vane eventually decides to follow the raven in hopes of decoding the mysterious events occurring in the library. The raven, who is eventually identified as Adam in a redeemed form, leads Vane through a mirror and into a new world. Vane encounters and falls in love with Lilith, Adam's first wife, then faces various obstacles and monsters while fulfilling a number of quests.¹³⁷ The tests Vane faces are all to teach Christian lessons "as they do in the Romance. The instruction has to do with learning to accept authority; to distinguish truth from falsehoods, evil from good; to question one's motivation, to experience

¹³¹ Bonnie Gaarden, "Faeries Romance and Divine Comedy: God Marries His People in George MacDonald's *Heather & Snow*," *Scottish Studies Review* 7, no. 2 (2006): 59-60.

¹³² Bonnie Gaarden, 60.

¹³³ See, for example, Lewis' letter to Sister Penelope from July 1939 in C.S. Lewis, *Letters of C.S. Lewis*, ed. W.H. Lewis, rev. Walter Hooper (New York: Harvest Original, 1993), 321-322.

¹³⁴ Janet McCann, "George MacDonald's romantic Christianity in *Lilith*," *Renascence* 54, no. 2 (2002): 110.

¹³⁵ Janet McCann, "George MacDonald's romantic Christianity in *Lilith*," 110.

¹³⁶ See George MacDonald, *Lilith: A Romance*, introduction by C.S. Lewis (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000).

¹³⁷ Janet McCann, "George MacDonald's romantic Christianity in *Lilith*," 111.

compassion; to recognize what death is, seen by redeemed eyes; and finally, to understand the entire revealed truth encompassed in the Christian message.”¹³⁸

Lilith confronts the reader with a message seeking to console and present them with the notion of a fortunate fall. For MacDonald, “sin is a learning experience.”¹³⁹ All can be saved, even Lilith. So long as sins are recognized and we learn from our mistakes as Vane did, humans move closer to God and salvation. “Through sin and loss [Vane] arrives at the realization that he is a part of the divine mystery, though he cannot fully comprehend it, and that his actions have brought him closer to the heart of it.”¹⁴⁰

Love also plays a central role in the lessons Vane learns. His love for Lilith only leads to grief. His infatuation and overemphasis on her beauty do not allow for Vane to see her for what she truly is, a witch. Contrast this with his purer love for Lona, Lilith’s daughter, a love which “brings him joy”¹⁴¹ and it becomes apparent that MacDonald is creating a distinction between forms of love. Janet McCann states in her article on *Lilith*, “obsessive romantic love blinds Vane to obvious truths; other kinds of love help him to understand them.”¹⁴² Much like Dante’s love for Beatrice, some loves can raise humanity beyond themselves towards the heavens, while others can blind humanity and lead them astray, like that of Paolo and Francesca.¹⁴³ However, for MacDonald, loves that blind do not necessarily always lead to damnation. We can learn from our errors, ameliorate ourselves, just as Vane turned away from his unnatural love of Lilith and corrected his ways.¹⁴⁴

The Role of Joy and Fairy Stories

MacDonald infuses his story with Christian elements and creates a narrative which reflects his theological understanding. This conscious decision on his part is one which Lewis would eventually mimic. However, while the Inklings in their later years all believed in the value of the

¹³⁸ Janet McCann, “George MacDonald’s romantic Christianity in *Lilith*,” 111.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁴³ Francesca da Rimini was married to Paolo Malatesta’s brother. Reading together the stories of Lancelot and Guinevere, Francesca and her brother-in-law Paolo kissed. They were seen and both were killed. Francesca and Paolo blame the influence of courtly love stories for their tragic deaths.

¹⁴⁴ Augustine does a similar thing in his *Confessions*, turning from “fallen” loves towards the love of God.

story, such a view was not always held by Lewis. Through his friendship with Barfield and Tolkien, the younger Lewis began to truly appreciate the role myths played in the “history of language and literature.”¹⁴⁵ Though Lewis originally thought of myths as lies, one night Tolkien led him to realize this was not the case. Tolkien argued, according to Carpenter:

man is not ultimately a liar. He may pervert his thoughts into lies, but he comes from God, and it is from God that he draws his ultimate ideals...[N]ot merely the abstract thoughts of man *but also his imaginative inventions* must originate with God, and must in consequence reflect something of eternal truth. In making a myth, in practicing ‘mythopoeia’ and peopling the world with elves and dragons and goblin, a storyteller, or ‘sub-creator’ as Tolkien liked to call such a person, is actually fulfilling God’s purpose; and reflecting a splintered fragment of the true light. Pagan myths are therefore never just ‘lies’: there is always something of the truth in them.¹⁴⁶

A conversation between Tolkien, Lewis and a friend named Hugo Dyson, took place in September 1931.

This walkway is well known among those interested in Lewis and the other Inklings—the group of Oxford-based Christian writers who met regularly to discuss their works and read them aloud to each other—for Addison’s Walk was the setting for an important conversation Lewis had with J. R. R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson. At that time an agnostic, Lewis was deeply interested in Tolkien’s argument that, while Christianity’s central story bears a resemblance to various myths of a dying and rising god, it is unique in being “the true myth,” the one instance where the story for which humanity has a deep longing to be true actually entered into historical reality. It is natural, Tolkien argued, that other myths reflect this story, for they spring out of the innate human longing for it.¹⁴⁷

After spending all night discussing the role of myth, Lewis recorded a change in his thoughts;¹⁴⁸ he went from being a simple theist to being a believer in Christ and Christianity.¹⁴⁹ By Christmas day in 1931, Lewis decided to take Holy Communion for the first time since his childhood.¹⁵⁰ The return to the faith, through his understanding of myth, and of course recognition of Christianity in

¹⁴⁵ Carpenter, *Inklings*, 43.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁴⁷ Nancy Enright, “C.S. Lewis’s Till We Have Faces and the Transformation of Love,” *Logos* 14, no. 4 (2011): 92-93.

¹⁴⁸ For a study of the importance of myth in Lewis’ thought, see Irène Fernandez, *C.S. Lewis - Mythe, raison ardent: Pour comprendre les Chroniques de Narnia* (Geneva: Ad Solem, 2005). For Fernandez’s examination of the importance of myth in Tolkien, see Irène Fernandez, “La vérité du mythe chez Tolkien: imagination et gnose,” in *La feuille de la Compagnie n.2: Tolkien, les racines du légendaire* (Geneva: Ad Solem, 2003).

¹⁴⁹ For a detailed account of Lewis’ shift to Christianity, see chapter 4 “Conversion” in Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, *C.S. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994 [1974]).

¹⁵⁰ Carpenter, *Inklings*, 45-46.

all he did, enabled Lewis to become a persuasive apologist, even going so far as to produce radio broadcasts for the BBC during World War II which tried to staunch the rise of atheism in a time of troubles. These talks were compiled into one of the most famous works of a Christian apologist today, *Mere Christianity*.¹⁵¹

The conversation between Lewis, Tolkien and Dyson was so important to Lewis that he wrote a letter to his friend Arthur Greeves, in 1931, to discuss his conversion and the former distaste he held for the notion of the Christian Paschal sacrifice. In the letter, he highlighted the ways in which Tolkien and Dyson helped him see that he had no problem with the pagan stories of gods sacrificing themselves, so why were Christ's actions an issue? Lewis writes:

Pagan stories are God expressing himself through the mind of poets, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call 'real things.' Therefore, it is *true*, not in the sense of being a 'description' of God (that no finite mind could take in) but in the sense of being the way in which God chooses to (or can) appear to our faculties. The 'doctrines' we get *out of* the true myth are of course *less* true: they are translations into our *concepts* and *ideas* of that [which] God has already expressed in a language more adequate, namely, the actual incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.¹⁵²

Pagan stories of gods sacrificing themselves reflect the "true" divine sacrifice experienced by Christ. The doctrines derived from that sacrifice are simply words being used by theologians to help illustrate God's actions and should in no way be seen as what actually occurred. Instead, all doctrines should be viewed as human images of divine actions. Much like Anselm's satisfaction theory is viewed as one image of atonement, all theological doctrines are similarly just ways for the human mind to understand complex theological realities. "In light of this understanding of myth making, no "pagan" myth needs to be considered a rival to the truth about God, if only it can be seen for what it really is—an imperfect reflection of what has been perfectly revealed in the Gospel, which (in this context) can include all of revelation, going back to the book of Genesis."¹⁵³

The clearest example of this argument can be found in Tolkien's famous letter to Milton Waldman, "letter 131," in which Tolkien attempted to argue for the publication of what would eventually be *The Silmarillion* and the connection it has to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien writes: "Myth and fairy-story must, as all art, reflect and contain in solution elements of

¹⁵¹ Lancelyn Green, *C.S. Lewis*, 106.

¹⁵² Lewis, *Letters of C.S. Lewis*, ed. W.H. Lewis and Walter Hooper, (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1988), 288-289.

¹⁵³ Nancy Enright, "C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces* and the Transformation of Love," *Logos* 14, no. 4 (2011): 94.

moral and religious truth (or error), but not explicit, not in the known form of the primary ‘real world’”¹⁵⁴ He continues to argue that the truth will always find its way into narratives. In the beginning Adam and Eve experienced the fall, before them the angels, so all stories will inevitably contain within them a fall of sorts. “After all, I [Tolkien] believe that legends and myths are largely made of ‘truth,’ and indeed present aspects of it that can only be received in this mode; and long-ago certain truths and modes of this kind were discovered and must always reappear. There cannot be any ‘story’ without a fall – all stories are ultimately about the fall – at least not for human minds as we know them and have them.”¹⁵⁵ Tolkien is, in his own way, echoing older thinkers like Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) who also argued stories always center around human experience and origins. In his “Defence of Poetry” Shelley stated: “...Poetry is connate with the origin of man. Man is an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are drive like the alternations of an ever-changing wind over an Aeolian lyre; which move it, by their motion, to ever-changing melody”¹⁵⁶ For Tolkien, the Fall was a central element to the human condition and would therefore be constantly repeated through all our produced works of art. Tolkien may have agreed with Shelley on this point who argues “A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth,”¹⁵⁷ so literary representations of the human experiences are inevitable.

This ingrained truth within myths and fairy stories is at the heart of Lewis’ understanding of joy and his inevitable conversion, or return, to Christianity as outlined in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*. Published in 1955, the story Lewis recounts of his life is both detailed and revealing. For the purpose of this chapter, however, focus will be placed solely on his notion of joy as it is relevant for our understanding of the role of myth in the thoughts of Lewis and Tolkien.

Lewis’ first encounter with the feeling of joy seems to have been linked to his brother and a toy garden he made as a child out of a biscuit tin lid, twigs, and flowers. Lewis tells us that this was his first experience of beauty and joy.¹⁵⁸ Throughout his life he connected other experiences to this feeling, for example the works of Beatrix Potter brought out of him the feeling of Autumn, particularly *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin*.¹⁵⁹ He found joy in the sense of Northerness contained in

¹⁵⁴ Tolkien, *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, 144.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁵⁶ Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry,” in *Percy Bysshe Shelley, the Major Works, Including Poetry, Prose, and Drama*, ed. Zachary Leader and Michael O’Neill, 674-701 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 675.

¹⁵⁷ Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry,” 679.

¹⁵⁸ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 7.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

Norse writings¹⁶⁰ and Longfellow's poem on Balder.¹⁶¹ He found it in his favorite works, like Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and even in people he knew like his cousin and a dance mistress.¹⁶² While joy is distinct from physical and aesthetic pleasures,¹⁶³ Lewis seems to constantly seek out the feelings he once had, to reproduce them through the world around him. So, what is joy for Lewis? "Joy...has indeed one characteristic...the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again...But then it is a kind of [unhappiness or grief] we want. I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would even, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world."¹⁶⁴ Joy is a sense of longing for, or the realization of, a memory lost to time. A desire to return to particular point, or moment in one's life. Joy is also a foretaste of heaven.¹⁶⁵

An important note here is that Lewis is clear that this is in no way a sexual feeling. While it could be easily confused for such, Lewis tells us "Joy is not a substitute for sex. Sex is very often a substitute for Joy. I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not a substitute for Joy."¹⁶⁶ Lewis' desire for joy was in recreating the feeling of sense of wonder and awe. In the end, however, once Lewis converted back to Christianity, in the later part of his life, he began to no longer care about joy. Christianity seems to have relieved him of the desire to reproduce the sense of joy he continuously longed for.¹⁶⁷ This is, in a way, an interesting admission by a man who wrote his entire autobiography on the notion of joy. So, what was it about his conversion which enabled Lewis to move on from seeking the feeling experienced throughout his youth? The answer most likely links to the Christian message and the hope that message brings. We can find, in J.R.R. Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-Stories," a more detailed examination of this hope and the role it plays in storytelling.

Originally a lecture given in 1939, Tolkien's "On Fairy-Stories" is an examination of central themes generally found within these types of tales. Tolkien argues that "most good 'fairy-

¹⁶⁰ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 169.

¹⁶¹ Lewis was extremely moved by this poem. Not knowing who Balder was, it seemed to stir within him a longing for the vast north and possibly a sense of sorrow. "I heard a voice that cried / Balder the beautiful / Is dead, dead." See Carpenter, *Inklings*, 4; McGrath, *C.S. Lewis*, 18-19.

¹⁶² Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 69.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁶⁵ Jeffrey L. Morrow, "J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis in Light of Hans Urs Von Balthasar," *Renascence* 56, no. 3 (2004): 187.

¹⁶⁶ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 170.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 238.

stories' are about the *adventures* of men in the Perilous Realm or upon its shadowy marches."¹⁶⁸ Humans write these types of stories, and create all forms of art, because "fantasy remains a human right: we make in our measure and our derivative mode, because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a Maker."¹⁶⁹ We create because a Creator God made us in His image.

Tolkien tells us that the highest function of these fairy-stories is the *eucatastrophe*, a term he coined.¹⁷⁰ A moment when all seems lost, but events take a sharp turn towards a positive end. The greatest example of this comes from the Christian story. When all seems lost for the followers of Christ, as he dies on the cross, a *eucatastrophe* occurs with the resurrection. Hope is restored, Christ rises from the dead and all the mysterious pronouncements of Jesus, in his ministry, begin to make sense. "The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe in man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy."¹⁷¹ Here once again we come face-to-face with the notion of joy. Through the Incarnation God chose to take on our form, become human and live amongst his creatures. As Israel seemed abandoned, as humans seemed unredeemable in the Judeo-Christian story, God chose to become Incarnate. He elected to become a lowly creature and offer his life for the salvation of those who turned away from him over and over. It was an unexpected twist of events in story where the protagonist seemed doomed – it was the hope sinful humanity needed to correct the wrongs of the First Parents.

How does the eucatastrophe connect to joy? For Tolkien, it is the connection of a hopeful message: "it denies (in the face of moral evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief."¹⁷² The joy in fairy-stories comes from the satisfaction of a fleeting glimpse of divine hope, not only a consolation for the sorrows of the world, but a true hope for what is to come. It is *evangelium* because it spreads the Good News, the dragon can be defeated, goblins do not win out, the wicked witch can be overcome, resurrection can be hoped for after death. Through the eucatastrophe, readers gain "a brief vision that the answer may be greater – it may be a far-off

¹⁶⁸ Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," 322.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 371.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 384.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 388.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 384.

gleam or echo of the *evangelium* in the real world.”¹⁷³ It is worth quoting directly from Tolkien at length here to explore this point a little further. He argues:

I would venture to say that approaching the Christian story from this direction, it has long been my feeling (a joyous feeling) that God redeemed the corrupt making-creatures, men, in a way fitting to this aspect, as to other, of their strange nature. The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories. They contain many marvels - peculiarly artistic, beautiful, and moving: ‘mythical’ in their perfect self-contained significance, and among the marvels is the greatest and most complete conceived eucatastrophe.¹⁷⁴

If, therefore, we return to Lewis and his early literary experiences of joy, or even his hunt for joy in more general terms, why would his return to Christianity mark a shift away from seeking it out?

Tolkien has a possible answer for this as well:

The joy would have exactly the same quality, if not the same degree, as the joy which the “turn” in a fairy-story gives: such joy has the very taste of primary truth...It looks forward...to the Great Eucatastrophe. The Christian joy, the *Gloria*, is of the same kind; but it is pre-eminently (infinitely, if our capacity were not finite) high and joyous. Because the story is supreme; and it is true. Art has been verified. God is the Lord, of angels, and of men – and of elves. Legend and History have met and fused.¹⁷⁵

Two possible solutions to Lewis no longer needing joy can be drawn from this quote. First, Lewis no longer seeks joy, or needs to reproduce those early experiences, because he accepted and embraced the Christian message. Joy is no longer linked to the past, worldly cookie tin covers and leaves, nor contained within the pages of Beatrix Potter. Instead, Lewis is a member of the Christian community, his joy is through active participation in the faith and hope in the Christian message – he does not need to long for joy in fleeting glimpses of it, because he can hope for the future to come. Second, Tolkien’s point has a more general and larger application. For him, the story of Christianity is the Great Myth, one which can be found in all works of art and literature; resulting in all stories reflecting, in their own way, the larger message of the Christian faith. So, all tales have important lessons which should be given consideration, but authors can use their stories to present important messages to their readers. They can be delightful but also useful, a concept which will be explored to a greater degree in the following chapters. Lewis comes to share in this understanding: “Although Lewis’ love for myth is most often remembered in terms of how

¹⁷³ Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” 387.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 387-388.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 388.

he saw pagan myths prefiguring the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (e.g., Balder, Adonis, or Bacchus, the myths which later became "fact" in the Second Person of the Trinity), it's equally true that Lewis saw in mythology a type of *our* resurrected life as well. Human participation in God, Lewis says, is something that the poets and the mythologies know all about."¹⁷⁶ Participation in mythmaking, and being a follower of Christ, offers Lewis the joy he so often sought.¹⁷⁷

The Later Lives

Both men lived accomplished lives. While Tolkien held the chair of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, in 1945 he became Professor of English Language and Literature. He later retired in 1959, about twelve years before his wife Edith passed away in 1971. Tolkien died two years later, on September 2nd, 1973 at eighty-one years old.

Lewis remained at Magdalen College until 1954, at which point he was elected Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University. In 1951, Mrs. Moore died and Lewis began a correspondence with a New Yorker of Jewish descent, named Joy Gresham (Davidman). Lewis invited her to Oxford in 1952 to visit.¹⁷⁸ Joy was already married to Bill Gresham; their marriage was complicated and they eventually divorced in 1953. She was with Lewis on his move to Cambridge and they eventually married in 1956 through a civil union, to make it possible for Joy, an American, to stay in England.¹⁷⁹ A year later, Joy became ill and Lewis decided to marry her officially through the church, and in 1957 they exchanged the sacrament of marriage while Joy was in a hospital bed.¹⁸⁰ Joy seemed to have gotten better, but her cancer came back with force in 1959 and finally took her life in July of 1960.¹⁸¹

Joy was a strong and intelligent woman. She authored numerous books and had an important influence on Lewis' later life. She can be credited as a possible source for Lewis' *Four Loves* put together from lectures in 1958,¹⁸² and while Lewis claims it is not the case, it is coincidental that the title of Lewis' autobiography is *Surprised by Joy*. The title references the

¹⁷⁶ Chris Jensen, "Shine as the Sun: C.S. Lewis and the Doctrine of Deification," *Road to Emmaus* 8, no. 2 (2007): 47.

¹⁷⁷ For an examination of Lewis' quest for God see, Anne-Frédérique Mochel-Caballero, *L'Évangile selon C.S. Lewis: le dépassement du masculin-féminin dans la quête de Dieu* (Lille: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2011).

¹⁷⁸ Wilson, *C.S. Lewis*, 237-238.

¹⁷⁹ Zaleski, *Fellowship*, 453.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 455.

¹⁸¹ Wilson, *C.S. Lewis*, 280-281.

¹⁸² Zaleski, *Fellowship*, 459-460.

philosophical notion of joy Lewis adheres to within his personal account of his life.¹⁸³ Finally, Joy's death led Lewis to write the emotional work, *A Grief Observed*, which explores the concept of death and God through a Christian lens – a lens that allows for doubt and sorrow – a means for coping with loss.¹⁸⁴

Lewis died three years after Joy, on November 22nd, 1963. It was the same day President Kennedy was assassinated. He was found in his room by his brother Warnie, who heard Lewis fall.¹⁸⁵ After Lewis' death, Tolkien seemed to have been hurt by the distance that had grown between Lewis and himself as he truly valued their friendship. It should be noted that Lewis was in fact a private man. His two marriages, civil and sacramental, to Joy were kept secret from everyone, including Tolkien, until after the fact. Lewis' secrecy about his life is not surprising. He was always against the emphasis on biographical details, particularly in reading texts. For Lewis, focus on an author's biography distracts from the text. "Sometimes even reducing all writing to Freudian confessional, with the author as patient and critic as analyst."¹⁸⁶ Added to this secret marriage, was Tolkien's sadness at the role held by Williams in Lewis' life. Tolkien, writing a letter to his son Michael, quoted previously, illustrates the distance he felt from his old friend, but also the affection he still held for him. The undated letter states:

I am sorry that I have not answered your letters sooner; but Jack Lewis's death on the 22nd has preoccupied me. It is also involving me in some correspondence, as many people still regard me as one of his intimates. Alas! That ceased to be so some ten years ago. We were separated first by the sudden apparition of Charles Williams, and then by his marriage. Of which he never even told me; I learned of it long after the event. But we owed each a great debt to the other, and that tie with the deep affection that it begot, remains. He was a great man of whom the cold-blooded official obituaries only scraped the surface, in places with injustice.¹⁸⁷

Though estranged in the latter part of their lives, Lewis and Tolkien had grown and matured through their friendship. Their passion for learning and ameliorating themselves enabled these two thinkers to truly shine together. It is their main thesis that stories can help explain complex philosophical, moral, and theological ideas which will be at the heart of this dissertation. They

¹⁸³ Carpenter, *Inklings*, 238.

¹⁸⁴ Zaleski, *Fellowship*, 469-471.

¹⁸⁵ Wilson, *C.S. Lewis*, 297-298.

¹⁸⁶ David C. Downing, *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis' Ransom Trilogy* (Boston: University Massachusetts Press, 1992), 8-9.

¹⁸⁷ Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, 341. See, Letter 252.

considered themselves active participants of using story to convey important ideas, a method used throughout history and even applied by Christ in his parables.

There is no more human experience more complex than love, an experience debated by thinkers around the world for generations. If all stories reflect aspects of the Truth and aid the readers in reaching certain moral conclusions, then reading stories about love can help us understand the characteristics of this sentiment. Therefore, we will look to both Lewis and Tolkien in order to examine their images of love: what are the characteristics? What is involved? What distinguishes positive from negative forms of this human experience? More specifically, how do their stories attempt to moralize this experience? What do the stories teach us (*fabula docet*)? Once we have considered numerous case studies from their works of fiction, we will then look to an example, used by both Lewis and Tolkien, the tale of Orpheus and his lost love Eurydice.

Chapter 2: C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)

Having established the importance of the role of myth and fairy tales in the thoughts of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, let us now turn our attention to Lewis and the special contribution love plays within his works. Throughout much of his academic career Lewis studied the medieval romance, publishing works like *The Allegory of Love*¹⁸⁸ and then *The Four Loves*. Seminal to his thought was the central emphasis Christianity placed on love. If God is love, all forms of love must reflect, to a degree, the divine.¹⁸⁹ A distinction does present itself, however, in *The Four Loves*. While Lewis explicated his definitions of the four forms of love: affection (*storge*), friendship (*philia*), *eros*, and charity (*agape/caritas*), he provided the reader with an introduction and first chapter, entitled “Likings and Loves for the Sub-Human.” In this section of his work, Lewis does not divide the experience of love into four categories, but instead presents us with forms of love, which are interconnected and dependent on each other; the two central forms being Need-Love and Gift-Love. Divisions in human experiences are fluid, as Caroline J. Simon points out in her essay “On Love” in the Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis. Quoting Wordsworth, “We murder to dissect,” Simon notes, “Need, gift and appreciation mingle. Friendship and Eros can exist toward the same person at the same time.”¹⁹⁰ Love should not be divided into four “categories” since they all share in each other. Instead, there are aspects of love working in unison.

What is Lewis’ argument? He begins by explaining the complexity of an experience like love. Nothing remains in a bubble or in isolation. We cannot love, without having someone

¹⁸⁸ For brief survey of Lewis’ works on literature – *Allegory of Love*, *The Discarded Image*, *Preface to Paradise Lost*, and *Spenser’s Images of Life* – and the important influence he has on Renaissance literature, see William E. Engel, “C.S. Lewis as Medieval and Renaissance Scholar: An Allegory of Love Spanning ‘Drab Age Verse’ to the ‘Golden Period’ of English Literature” *Sewanee Theological Review* 55, no. 2 (2012): 145–51.

¹⁸⁹ An important distinction is made here by Lewis: God is love, but love is not God. Lewis draws on the work of Denis de Rougemont, where de Rougemont notes that love can be a demon at times. Lewis states: “St John’s saying that God is love has long been balanced in my mind against the remark of a modern author (M. Denis de Rougemont) that ‘love ceases to be a demon only when he ceases to be a god’; which of course can be re-stated in the form ‘begins to be a demon the moment he begins to be a god’. This balance seems to be an indispensable safeguard. If we ignore it the truth that God is love may slyly come to mean for us the converse, that love is God.” C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 7. See also, Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 27. For the work of de Rougemont, see Denis de Rougemont, *L’amour et l’Occident* (Paris: Plon, 1939). For an English translation see Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*. Trans. Montgomery Belgian (New York: Pantheon, 1956). For an exploration of Lewis’ distinction between God is love and love is God, see Jason Lepojärvi, *God is Love but Love is Not God: Studies on C.S. Lewis’s Theology of Love*. Dissertation presented to the Faculty of Theology (University of Helsinki, 2015).

¹⁹⁰ Caroline J. Simon, “On Love,” in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, eds. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 148.

wanting love. Need¹⁹¹ is always part of love.¹⁹² But how can we understand these two acts of loving? An example of Gift-Love, according to Lewis, is a parent who puts money away for a child. The parent never expects to use those funds, and in many cases will not be around to see the funds accessed, but they are put aside for the benefit of the child and family. This Gift-Love is a love which is self-giving and sacrificing.¹⁹³ It expects nothing in return and does not even anticipate seeing the effects of the “gift.” Lewis tells us that this is not only a human form of love, but also the way in which the divine expresses itself. “Divine Love is Gift-Love. The Father gives all He is and has to the Son. The Son gives Himself back to the Father, and gives Himself to the world, and for the world to the Father, and thus gives the world (in Himself) back to the Father too.”¹⁹⁴

Need-Love on the other hand is a love which requires another to love you, like a child running to the arms of his mother or father when they are hurt. Humans, as relational beings, by their very nature need others. Therefore, it is only natural that part of our love requires someone else. Lewis states: “we need others physically, emotionally, intellectually; we need them if we are to know anything, even ourselves.”¹⁹⁵ This can also be connected to God. Just as Gift-love is an example of divine love, Need-love, is the way in which creation relates to their Creator. “But man’s love for God, from the very nature of the case, must always be very largely, and must often be entirely, a Need-love.”¹⁹⁶ Humans cannot exist without God, or separate from the Divine. For Lewis, humanity is constantly seeking to fill a gap within ourselves, a God-hole, which requires God’s love and attention.¹⁹⁷

Needing, therefore, is not something foreign to Christianity, but central to our relationship. “It would be a bold and silly creature that came before its Creator with the boast ‘I’m no beggar. I

¹⁹¹ Lewis does distinguish between Need-pleasures and Appreciative-pleasures. Need is necessary, like water for a thirsty person, while appreciative is not needed but enjoyed, like a glass of cognac. See Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 16. A link, in fact, exist between Need-pleasure and Need-love, for Need-love is central to humanity. As social beings there will always be a need for human connection. To an even greater degree, there will always be a need for God’s love – a love which is like water to the thirsty. See Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 18-19.

¹⁹² Simon, “On Love,” 149.

¹⁹³ Human Gift-Love is similar to God in likeness, but not nearness according to Lewis. Likeness to God comes from our creation, and like the angels, who maintain a likeness to God. Likeness has been given to use, Creatures in the Image of God. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 9.

¹⁹⁴ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 1.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁹⁷ See, for example, Lewis’ interpretation of God as gasoline for humans, the only thing we can truly live and thrive on, in *Mere Christianity*, 50.

love you disinterestedly.’ Those who come nearest to a Gift-love for God will next moment, even at the very same moment, be beating their breasts with the publican and laying their indigence before the only real Giver.”¹⁹⁸ If God’s love is self-giving and sacrificial, it requires humanity to be willing to receive. You cannot give if there is no one willing, or able, to take.¹⁹⁹ This does not mean that humans are set up to exist on their own, or that needing love is a corruption. While perversions can most certainly occur in postlapsarian humanity, this does not imply that Christians should reject human emotions altogether. Lewis tells us, “Our Need-loves may be greedy and exacting but they do not set up to be gods. They are not near enough (by likeness) to God to attempt that.”²⁰⁰ And yet, Lewis provides us with examples of Need-love being corrupted: an over-doting mother who does not give their child space to grow and is abandoned by the child who feels overburdened, or a lover who loses interest in an aging mistress. Need-love can be limited, fleeting and changing with the passing of time. Can such a love truly be linked to God? Lewis claims that “Our Need-love for God is a different position because our need of Him can never end either in this world or in any other. But our awareness of it can, and then the Need-love dies too. ‘The Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be.’ There seems no reason for describing as hypocritical the short-lived piety of those whose religion fades away once they have emerged from ‘danger, necessity, or tribulation’.”²⁰¹ Though we are always beggars before the Divine, we may through hubris believe we no longer require God’s love. This is a perversion, but does not negate the fact that as humans we have a Need-love for God – the fuel that keeps our engines working, as Lewis tells us in *Mere Christianity*.

A third type of love is identified by Lewis, Appreciative love. This form is distinct from the other two. It is best characterized by our recognition of beauty. Lewis gives us the following example:

¹⁹⁸ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 4.

¹⁹⁹ A similar notion is used to defend the Trinity by theologians. If God is love, there must have been something before creation which was the focus of his love. Lewis, picking up of this idea, tells us “...the words ‘God is love’ have no real meaning unless God contains at least two Persons. Love is something that one person has for another person. If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love...They [Christians] believe that the living, dynamic activity of love has been going on in God forever and has created everything.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 174-175. Lewis shares the opinion of Richard of St. Victor. See, for example, Richard of St Victor, *On the Trinity*, trans. Christopher P. Evans in *Trinity and Creation: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Richard and Adam of St Victor*, ed. Boyd Taylor Coolman and Dale M. Coutler, 195-352. Victorine Texts in Translation: Exegesis, Theology and Spirituality from the Abbey of St Victor (New York: New City Press, 2011).

²⁰⁰ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 10.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

Need-love cries to God from our poverty; Gift-love longs to serve, or even to suffer for, God; Appreciative love says: “We give thanks to thee for thy great glory.’ Need-love says of a woman ‘I cannot live without her’; Gift-love longs to give her happiness, comfort, protection – if possible, wealth; Appreciative love gazes and hold its breath and is silent, rejoices that such a wonder should exist even if not for him, will not be wholly dejected by losing her, would rather have it so than never to have seen her at all.²⁰²

We can see the distinctiveness of “Appreciative love” simply in the way Lewis decided not to hyphenate the word, as opposed to “Gift-love” and “Need-love.” This is a love which basks in the glory of the beloved. It is not so much an active form, as gift and need, but a by-product or feeling.

Looking to the root, Appreciative pleasures,²⁰³ Lewis tells us:

Appreciative pleasure, even at their lowest, and more and more as they grow up into the full appreciation of all beauty, we get something that we can hardly help calling *love* and hardly help calling *disinterested*, towards the object itself. It is the feeling which would make a man unwilling to deface a great picture even if he were the last man left alive and himself about to die; which makes us glad of unspoiled forests that we shall never see; which makes us anxious that the garden or bean-field should continue to exist. We do not merely like the things; we pronounce them, in a momentarily God-like sense, ‘very good’.²⁰⁴

Beauty acts as a catalyst for Lewis. We do not only want to see what is beautiful, but we want to be part of it, breath it in, preserve it.²⁰⁵ Beauty acts as a signpost towards God. “This follows inevitably from the doctrine of creation. What God has made reflects the nature of its Maker. It does so imperfectly after the Fall, but the reflection, while dimmed and distorted in certain ways, has not been erased.”²⁰⁶

An important point should be raised at this juncture: why would Lewis begin his treaty on “four” loves, by presenting the reader with complementary forms of love? Particularly one which is giving, one which is appreciative and one which needs to receive? Why is he defending these aspects of what he perceives as relational love? The answer, in short, is that Lewis is responding to the Swedish Lutheran bishop, Anders Nygren. Nygren rejected any human agency in love, particularly since humans have fallen and are tainted with sin. Lewis, shaken by and questioning,

²⁰² Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 21.

²⁰³ For a survey of Lewis’ views on pleasure, and happiness, see Stewart C. Goetz, “C.S. Lewis on Pleasure and Happiness,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 40, no. 3 (2011): 283–302.

²⁰⁴ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 20.

²⁰⁵ James Prothero and Donald T. Williams, *Gaining a Face: The Romanticism of C.S. Lewis* (New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 4.

²⁰⁶ James Prothero and Donald T. Williams, *Gaining a Face*, 10.

Nygren's work,²⁰⁷ attempted to uphold human freedom throughout all his writings. While we have fallen and are sinful, our freedom to choose, though limited, is still present. We must be willing to turn towards the divine as beggars and ask for God's love. Lewis' position here has him perfectly in line with Anglican spirituality, as seen in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Lewis' spirituality is incarnational, it does not separate the spiritual from the carnal. The world in which we live should not be rejected as we can move beyond it.²⁰⁸ For Nygren, our ability to move beyond is what is suspect, since that implies active participation in our salvation, a role Adam and Eve removed from the Creator-creation relationship. We should shift our focus then to Nygren and explore his position on *eros* and *agape* briefly.

Anders Nygren (1890-1978) and the Rejection of Augustine

Born November 1890 in Sweden, Anders Nygren showed great promise as an intellectual in his early years. Throughout his studies, and as a member of the Lutheran church, he attempted to resolve with great rigor and a strong faith, philosophical and methodological debates plaguing Swedish theology at the time. While philosophy was seen as central to theology,²⁰⁹ the overuse of metaphysics was problematic to Nygren as it oriented itself towards arbitrary speculation which did not aid or illuminate the faith of everyday Christians. Therefore, he turned away from metaphysics and began emphasising the works of Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard. Through these thinkers, Nygren advanced a protestant theological framework focusing simply on the Christian life. This approach allowed him to become one of the most influential Swedish theologians. His objectives were twofold: to maintain a strict obedience to Lutheranism, which can be visible in his

²⁰⁷ C.S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis: Narnia, Cambridge and Joy 1950-1963*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: HarperOne, 2007), 980.

²⁰⁸ For an examination of Lewis' understanding of the 16th century version of the *Book of Common Prayer*, see Graham Holderness, "'The Scripture Moveth Us in Sundry Places...': Strategies of Persuasion in Sixteenth-Century Anglican Liturgy," *Reformation & Renaissance Review: Journal of the Society for Reformation Studies*, 2 (1999): 20-37. For studies on Lewis' Anglicanism see, for example, Suzanne Bray, "C. S. Lewis as an Anglican," in *Persona and Paradox: Issues of Identity for C. S. Lewis, His Friends and Associates*, eds. Suzanne Bray and William Gray (Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 19-36.; Dănuț Mănăstireanu, "C. S. Lewis, Reluctant Convert and (Not so) Ordinary Anglican," *Linguaculture*, 2 (2014): 57-65.; Doris T. Myers, "Growing in Grace: The Anglican Spiritual Style in the Chronicles of Narnia," in *The Pilgrim's Guide: C.S. Lewis and the Art of Witness*, ed. David Mills (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 185-202.

²⁰⁹ Jacob W. Heikkinen, "Basic Principles of Anders Nygren's Theological Thought" *Lutheran Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (May 1949): 127.

theology of love, and to produce meticulous texts illustrating the Swedish spirituality of Lund.²¹⁰ After becoming Bishop of Lund, he was elected the first president of the Lutheran World Federation, a position he held from 1947-1952.²¹¹

Written and published in two parts in the 1930s, Nygren's *Agape and Eros* is his most cited work. This treatise attempts to examine the history of eros and agape. Nygren viewed eros as the foundation of a religious and ethical framework based on desires of humanity to seek out a superior ideal, and agape as an ethical and religious system based on love given and revealed through Jesus Christ.²¹² These loves are in constant battle with each other and are mutually exclusive, in Nygren's view. No reconciliation can occur between the two ethical and religious frameworks derived from eros and agape. Nygren is an influential thinker in the Anglo-Saxon world when it comes to a theology of love. Not only does he inspire groups of reformed theologians, he also draws heavy criticism from Protestants and Catholics alike.²¹³ For the purpose of this survey, we will briefly explore his understanding of *eros* and *agape*.

According to Nygren *eros* is a pagan form of love, one which seeks to compete with the Christian *agape*.²¹⁴ "Nygren endeavors to present agape as the commanding fundamental motif of Christianity by contrasting it with Platonic eros. He presumes that it was eros in the Platonic sense which exercised a decisive influence on the spiritual world outside the Bible, especially on the religious environment of the New Testament [...] for him Plato's eros remains the classical peak of the concept of love outside Christianity and so the main counter-motif to the Christian agape."²¹⁵ *Eros* attempts to reach the divine through human faculties. It is an acquisitive love with ego-centric tendencies.²¹⁶ The individual is the most important aspect of *eros* and once the object of desire is

²¹⁰ Lucrèce Luciani-Zidane, "Avant-Propos" in *Éros et Agapè: La notion chrétienne de l'amour et ses transformations* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), iii.

²¹¹ Luciani-Zidane, ii.

²¹² Ibid., iv.

²¹³ Lucrèce Luciani-Zidane, a psychoanalyst, argues Nygren's work is extremely relevant today as it gets to the heart of modern atheist/theist debates. Eros, in Nygren's thought centers on human self-sufficiency, whereas agape relies on a divine presence and guide. This mirrors questions faced by present societies on the need/place for a god.²¹³ Luciani-Zidane claims Nygren, an epistemologist of the first order, has opened the door to debate on this question, not truly intending to make his work the last statement on the matter, but a continuation in the narrative of love theology in Christian thought. In this regard, Luciani-Zidane truly understands a central effect of Nygren's work, as many theologians seek to address his understanding of love in their own books on this human experience. See, Lucrèce Luciani-Zidane, "Avant-Propos" in *Éros et Agapè: La notion chrétienne de l'amour et ses transformations* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), xxiii.

²¹⁴ Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 50.

²¹⁵ Victor Warnach, "Agape in the New Testament," in *The Philosophy and Theology of Anders Nygren*, ed. Charles W. Kegley (Cambondale: Souther Illinois University Press, 1970), 145

²¹⁶ Nygren, 175.

gained the love ceases to exist. In this way Nygren takes a different view of an important component of Platonic *eros*, the notion of reproduction. While *eros* begins as a drive to seek out the beautiful, it inevitably turns into a need to keep and reproduce it. Diotima is quoted in Plato's *Symposium* as saying "But why is the object of love procreation? Because procreation is a kind of everlastingness and immortality for the mortal creature, as far as anything can be. If the object of love (*eros*) is indeed everlasting possession of the good, as we have already agreed, it is immortality together with the good that must necessarily be desired."²¹⁷ Nygren's criticism of *eros* hinges on his rejection of the concept of desire. Desire for anything cannot be positive according to Nygren and he therefore disapproves of a role it could play in Christian love. Christian love is against all individualistic feelings and motives according to Nygren.²¹⁸ The theologian Thomas Oord advocates this is a faulty position to take. Desires can never be fully removed from human actions, nor are all desires equal. Mothers desire good children; painters desire to paint for the benefit and pleasure of others. These are examples where the desire for something is not a negative, but a positive.²¹⁹ Yet Nygren does not care about happiness or human desires. For Nygren, humans are always flawed individuals and 'morally culpable,' therefore, we will always have negative motives.²²⁰ Mothers want the love of their children, painters may want fame, so even positive desires, like those listed by Oord can be twisted. In both of these cases, the happiness of the individual is being calculated. The mother will be happy with the child's affection; therefore, she gives herself completely to the child. The painter will be happy with acclaim, so he produces works of art to benefit his fame. In both examples, desires, which appear pure, have behind them a calculation for happiness – an ulterior motive.

Agape, Nygren argues, is the perfect form of love, the only form suitable for Christians.

Agape, on the other hand, is God's love. When a man can be said to have *agape* he is allowing God to work through him. Whereas *eros* seeks its own, *agape* is the love that 'seeketh not its own' (1 Cor. 13:5), and has no care for the self...Unlike *eros*, *agape* does not look for what is valuable to make it its own; it is itself creative of value. Making one's own is the mark of *eros* and

²¹⁷ Plato, *The Symposium*, 211c-211d.

²¹⁸ Jason Lepojärvi, "Does Eros Seek Happiness? A Critical Analysis of C. S. Lewis's Reply to Anders Nygren," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, 53 (2011): 211.

²¹⁹ Thomas Jay Oord, *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific and Theological Engagement* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 46.

²²⁰ Jason Lepojärvi, "Does Eros seek Happiness?," 216.

damnable as such. Agape, on the other hand, is in man a reflection of God's agape.²²¹

This is not a love we can fully participate in, as Nygren believes humans lack the grace to experience it completely. Instead Nygren argues we can find examples of *agape* in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. The most prominent image of *agape* is the *agape* of the Cross. There we find the concept of sacrificial giving, an act of self-rejection. *Agape* loves all, the saint and the sinner, not just the beautiful as Nygren believes *eros* does.²²² *Agapeic* love cannot be fully given by humans. We can attempt to give ourselves to the other, but we cannot remain completely passive, it is only a fraction of true *agape*. This is a love which God gives to us, his unworthy children. It is an overflowing love which pours into us in the form of Grace.²²³ Such a theological stance is greatly influenced by Nygren's Lutheran background and the emphasis on the importance of "*divine determinism*."²²⁴ It is, however, also a misrepresentation of the New Testament, according to John M. Rist, author of "Some Interpretations of Agape and Eros." Rist notes: "What Nygren has done to the New Testament...is to select those passages which might suit the theory that agape and eros are inhabitants of different worlds and then dragoon other passages into harmony. The situation in fact is that just as ancient Platonism recognizes that both the agape and the eros motifs are present in love, so they are also both recognized in the New Testament."²²⁵

The question becomes then: where does Nygren believe the Christian understanding of love went wrong? Why did *eros* sneak its way into Christian theology through the ages? Nygren points the finger at Augustine. For Nygren, Augustinian *Caritas* is the merger of *eros* and *agape* – humans have the desire to move upwards out of themselves towards the Divine, while God's love pours down raising them above the self.

Nygren is aware that Augustine found no difficulty in presenting the divine agape as at once the source and the satisfaction of the human eros. Apart from

²²¹ John M. Rist, "Some Interpretations of Agape and Eros," in *The Philosophy and Theology of Anders Nygren*, ed. Charles W. Kegley (Cambondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), 159.

²²² Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 210.

²²³ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 212. While God's love for humanity can be identified as *agape*, there is a distinction between this love and Grace. Grace is God's spirit acting within creation, while *agape* is his love for his creatures. "Grace is...the divine presence and power working and thereby present in the world, upon which the creatures' own operations are totally dependent." See J. Patout Burns' entry on "Grace" in Allan D. Fitzgerald O.S.A., ed. *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 392.

²²⁴ Thomas Jay Oord, *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific and Theological Engagement* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 34.

²²⁵ John M. Rist, "Some Interpretations of Agape and Eros," 172.

the Gospel of grace, Augustine sees that the soul's attempt to ascend to God by virtue of its own nature and in its own strength is an act of presumption; and that this fatal *superbia* dooms the attempt to failure. Eros can only reach its goal by humbling itself to accept the grace of 'God's humility' in the Incarnation. But Nygren maintains that this, which he calls Augustinian 'synthesis,' in spite of its apparent 'solidity and coherence,' is vitiated by 'real inner contradictions': that the true relation between agape and eros is either-or, and that Augustine's both-and is impossible to carry through.²²⁶

Nygren rejects the concept of human transcendence exclusively through desire. *Eros*, for the Lutheran Pastor, is prideful and seeks to take heaven by storm. *Eros* would have us believe our human faculties can allow us to reach the Divine, when in fact they cannot. Only Christ's sacrifice can draw us heavenward. *Eros* seeks to usurp God's authority.

Here we come to Lewis' rejection of Nygren. For Lewis, *eros* can be agapeic and self-sacrificing. "Lewis intentionally does not define *agape* as 'disinterested' to distinguish it from *eros*. In fact, *agape* and *eros* belong together. *Agape* is God's gift to all lovers, non-believers as well as Christians."²²⁷ Eros, according to Lewis, does not calculate happiness, even if it does not deny happiness.²²⁸ "*Eros* does not instrumentalize the beloved."²²⁹ Those in love do not continue to love because they calculate the probability of happiness.²³⁰ More importantly, to reject the needs, desires, or pleasures of humanity, is to reject the human need for God and our role as beggars before the Divine. "Lewis believed that our experiences of pleasure are really a likeness to and a foretaste of our enjoyment of God. He maintained that our enjoyment of God is the end

²²⁶ John Burnaby, "Amor in St. Augustine," in *The Philosophy and Theology of Anders Nygren*, ed. Charles W. Kegley (Cambondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), 175.

²²⁷ John R. Scudder and Anne H Bishop, "C.S. Lewis Surprised and Humanized by Joy," *Dialog* 48, no. 1 (2009): 74.

²²⁸ Stewart C. Goetz draws our attention to Lewis' understanding of happiness. He states: "According to Lewis, denying oneself what is good is not an end in itself...he believed that none of us pursues what is evil for its own sake. What is important to note at present, however, is that Lewis does not deny that a virtuous (moral, ethical) person must in certain circumstances abstain from or exercise restraint in the pursuit of certain goods for himself. Instead, Lewis points out that the virtuous person exercises restraint not for the sake of his own happiness but for the sake of the happiness of others. In what did Lewis believe this happiness consists? ... [A] solid case can be made that Lewis believed that happiness neither is synonymous with an individual's living well nor consists in his living a virtuous life. Instead, Lewis thought that where there is happiness, there is pleasure. His view seems to have been that happiness is intrinsically and exhaustively composed of experiences of pleasure and its connection with ethics is no more than extrinsic in nature in the form of justice, where those who choose an ethical way of life deserve to (and ultimately will) experience the intrinsically pleasurable state of perfect happiness for which they were created." Stewart C. Goetz, "C.S. Lewis on Pleasure and Happiness," *Christian Scholar's Review* 40, no. 3 (2011): 284.

²²⁹ Jason Lepojärvi, "Does Eros seek Happiness?," 220.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 221.

for which we exist and that this end is complete or perfect happiness...”²³¹ This understanding also, in a way, is derived from his own experience of love with his wife Joy Davidman.

Jack’s relationship with Joy helped him to understand that divine love (*agape*) is present in all *eros* relationships. He affirms that all believers or nonbelievers who love each other in that human love called *eros* receive that universal, self-giving love called *agape* as a gift of God. Believers, however, are moved to praise God for this gift, and for the way it broadens, deepens, and humanizes their faith.²³²

Lewis’ position is not only informed by experience, but also supported by his understanding of Augustine. Rudolf Johannesson, in “Caritas in Augustine,” states:

Augustine stresses that the final object of love must be God. Thus all perfect love is love of God, amor Dei. But in this love of God man also promotes his own existence and perfection. Real self-love, amor sui, therefore is essentially identical with love of God, amor Dei. This fact is comprehensible from the ontological situation of man: his existence is not self-sufficient but depends upon his own origin as a stream upon its own source, cut off from which it dries up and ceases to exist.²³³

Returning to Oord’s mother desiring the love of her child, while she may give them all she can to receive their affection, since that makes her feel good, she also wants them to thrive and flourish on their own. Lewis’ position is supported by Plato and Augustine.²³⁴ Nygren’s understanding of these two thinkers is clearly biased by his hermeneutical presuppositions. We will return to Nygren’s theology of salvation later on in this chapter but let us now explore some of Lewis’ work to see how he presents love.

C.S. Lewis: A Study of His Works – God’s Love for His Creation

While the exploration of Lewis’ notion of love can seem complicated, let us turn our attention to his works of fiction and the depiction of God’s love for creation to gain a clearer picture of his argument. For Lewis and Tolkien, myths and fairy stories should be used to teach children, and adults, certain truths. All myths, even pagan ones, contain some truth within them.²³⁵ Lewis and

²³¹ Stewart C. Goetz, “C.S. Lewis on Pleasure and Happiness,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 40, no. 3 (2011): 290.

²³² John R. Scudder and Anne H Bishop, “C.S. Lewis Surprised and Humanized by Joy,” *Dialog* 48, no. 1 (2009): 77.

²³³ Rudolf Johannesson, “Caritas in Augustine,” in *The Philosophy and Theology of Anders Nygren*, ed. Charles W. Kegley (Cambondale: Souther Illinois University Press, 1970), 195.

²³⁴ See the introduction of this thesis for a brief examination of these two thinkers.

²³⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” 369.

Tolkien are not alone in this understanding of fiction. Others, like the great Catholic thinker Hans Urs von Balthasar, share similar thoughts.

Lewis understood well the human heart and its relationship to God. Like the other authors, he saw life as a drama of human and divine freedom. Tolkien suggested that fantasy helps us in at least three ways: recover, escape, and consolation. Von Balthasar pursued beauty as a joyful experience which draws us out of ourselves and connects us with the Other. All three of the writers here see beauty as a bridge to the Divine, and art as a means of cooperating with God in the act of creation.²³⁶

Children should read fairy tales to learn morals. Only once they reach a certain age will they recognize the morality taught in the fairy stories as being Christian. *The Chronicles of Narnia* must always be read in this light. Lewis is presenting a myth, or fairy story, for children to read and eventually associate to the doctrinal elements of their Christian faith – including the complex Christian notion of love. The motivation behind this is highlighted in the introduction to the *Companion to Narnia* by Paul F. Ford. There Ford draws our attention to the fact that Lewis lamented his inability to find love for Christ when he was in his conversion process. Lewis notes that being forced to love could freeze the feeling, but also readers of the Gospels never experience Christ in a normal setting to truly connect with him.²³⁷ Therefore, Lewis attempts, through his writings, to stoke a fire before his readers go to the true Biblical source of faith. “[T]he *Chronicles of Narnia* have been written to familiarize a body of people, especially children, with certain ideas, namely the Christian faith and the way of life that goes with that faith.”²³⁸ This objective also connects to what Ford identifies as the two Lewises – Augustine and Aesop – the convert and the (moralist) storyteller.²³⁹

Love, more specifically God’s love for creation, is something which concerned Lewis since he was a child.²⁴⁰ In the *Pilgrim’s Regress* Lewis, through allegory, presents his conversion experience.²⁴¹ He begins the book by giving an account of a young boy, presumably Lewis himself, who goes by the name of John. John is sent by his parents to meet the Steward, a caretaker of the

²³⁶ Jeffrey L. Morrow, “J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis in Light of Hans Urs Von Balthasar,” *Renascence* 56, no. 3 (2004): 181.

²³⁷ Paul F. Ford, *Companion to Narnia: A Complete Guide to the Magical World of C.S. Lewis’s The Chronicles of Narnia*, Revised and Expanded (New York: HarperOne, 2005), 7-8.

²³⁸ Ford, *Companion to Narnia*, 9.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁴⁰ Carpenter, *Inklings*, 249.

²⁴¹ For a study on conversion in the works of Lewis and the role played by love, see Anne-Frédérique Mochel-Caballero, “D’Éros à Agapè: l’expérience de conversion dans l’œuvre de C. S. Lewis.” *théologie évangélique* vol. 9, n.2 (2010): 141-160.

Landlord's property. We can interpret the Steward as the Church and the Landlord as God. When John meets the Steward, he is given rules which he must not break in order to keep the Landlord happy. John realises immediately that he does not understand half the rules, while the other half are broken by him daily. John becomes extremely nervous when the Steward informs him that he would be severely punished if he did happen to break any of the rules. In fact, he would be shut up forever in a dark hole filled with snakes and scorpions.²⁴²

The conversation between John and the Steward ends with the Steward praising God's kindness but emphasising his ability to punish and hurt John for committing an offence against him. "...[I]t all ended with pointing out that the Landlord was quite extraordinarily kind and good to his tenants, and would certainly torture most of them to death the moment he had the slightest pretext. 'And you can't blame him,' said the Steward. 'For after all, it *is* his land, and it is so very good of him to let us live here at all – people like us, you know.'"²⁴³ When John leaves this meeting he is extremely nervous and fearful.

Such a view of God, one where He punishes his people and makes them suffer, is the exact view Lewis attempts to combat in his *Chronicles of Narnia*. While the *Pilgrim's Regress* begins with a depiction of a vengeful God, Lewis clearly wants to introduce Children to a loving God; a God who sacrifices himself to redeem evil deeds he did not commit. Therefore, it is important to note that the first book of the *Narnia* series, in publishing order, does not deal with creation. Instead, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (published 1950), deals with salvation and redemption – it depicts a loving and caring god.

When we are first introduced to the world of Narnia, we are told repeatedly by those who live there that in Narnia it is "Always winter and never Christmas..."²⁴⁴ There are at least three levels of meaning included in this single phrase. The first is for the child reading, or having the book read to them. On this level, the child will be able to recognise that winter usually means the arrival of Christmas and toys. Therefore, winter without Christmas may only mean to young children a lack of gifts. The second level, for those who are older, is that Christmas is a celebration of the birth of the Messiah. These older readers should recognise that the Saviour has not yet come

²⁴² C.S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 5.

²⁴³ Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, 5.

²⁴⁴ C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe in The Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 118.

to Narnia. Finally, the third level is that of the Medievalist. Lewis, a professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature, fills his works with medieval concepts. The idea that Narnia is always experiencing winter is an important one. The deepest parts of Hell, for Dante, are not fiery chasms. Instead, they are cold and icy places.²⁴⁵ Winter, and the cold which comes with it, occurs because Narnia, and hell in Dante's case, is separated from God's love, gaze, or warmth. The further you move away from God, the colder you become. Therefore, Lewis presents a Narnia with no Christmas gifts, no Saviour, and which separated from God's love and presence. All of this occurs in one-line repeated multiple times throughout his text.

Winter is broken, however, with the arrival of Father Christmas. He gives the Pevensie children, the main characters, gifts which they could use to fight the White Witch, the figure of evil.²⁴⁶ The arrival of Father Christmas is accompanied by the thaw of winter and a recognition that Aslan, a Christ-like figure, is on the move against the White Witch. Therefore, Father Christmas is being linked with the arrival of the Saviour and the removal of winter. God's presence and warmth is now felt by the Narnians. While Aslan's love was never withdrawn, it was held back by the White Witch and her schemes. But the citizens of Narnia did not all give up hope, the Beavers kept Aslan's story alive, for example. They actively hoped for his return.

The most important element in this book is Aslan's sacrifice. One of the Pevensie children, Edmund, had originally sided with the White Witch when he entered Narnia. However, he betrayed her and she now demands his life. In response Aslan offers his own life as a sacrifice on Edmund's behalf.²⁴⁷ When Aslan presents himself for sacrifice, he is mocked, the White Witch and her followers call him "Puss, Puss! Poor Puss!"²⁴⁸ This can be seen as a mockery of his kingship. The lion is known as a king of beasts, and to link Aslan to a mere cat is an insult. Aslan is also shaved and his lion's mane is removed.²⁴⁹ Older readers, or those who had read the *Chronicles of Narnia* as children, should be thinking of the crown of thorns placed on Jesus' head by the soldiers, the purple robe and the mocking "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Jn. 19:2-3) These similarities are key elements in the making of myths for both Lewis, and his friend Tolkien. Though there is no real place called Narnia, and no real Aslan, Lewis takes this myth of Narnia and imbues them with

²⁴⁵ See Dante's *Inferno*, XXXI-XXXIII.

²⁴⁶ Lewis, *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 159.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 181.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 180.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

Christianity. Lewis wants the reader to be thinking of Christ's trial and passion when we read his work. This is his primary objective, to build a link between the children reading the stories and the Christian message. When you finally read the Gospels and come to the Passion, the sorrow and sadness felt for Aslan can be transferred to Christ. In this way, Lewis has found a solution to his early inability to find love for the Biblical Jesus.

Once the mockery of Aslan is complete, the White Witch proceeds to tie Aslan down to a stone table and she threatens to kill Edmund once Aslan is dead. "Fool, did you think that by all this you would save the human traitor? Now I will kill you instead of him as our pact was and so the Deep Magic will be appeased. But when you are dead what will prevent me from killing him as well?...You have given me Narnia forever...you have lost your own life and you have not saved his."²⁵⁰ The Witch attempts to give Aslan doubt right before he is killed. However, she is unaware of the Deeper Magic of Narnia. Aslan will be resurrected because of this Deeper Magic. The Witch did not know that if "...a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards..."²⁵¹ The reason the Witch does not know of the Deeper Magic is because she entered Narnia after creation had already begun. More importantly, however, is the image of salvation being given here by Lewis. This is quite similar to Gregory the Great's baited hook theory. The bait, in this case, is the Deep Magic and the hook is the Deeper Magic, which states that the sacrifice of a willing innocent victim would cause death to be reversed. It is interesting to note here that in *Mere Christianity* Lewis states that his favorite image of salvation is the satisfaction theory of Anselm of Canterbury.²⁵²

This image of Aslan is a warmer one than the image of God presented to John in the *Pilgrim's Regress*. Aslan is not waiting to torture and cause suffering to his people. Instead, Aslan is willing to experience the torture and suffering himself. Lewis presents children with the image of a loving God, a God whom they will eventually come to know as Jesus in their world. Aslan tells the Pevensie children this constantly. They will have to come to know him in their world – our world – by a different name. For Lewis, young children should be read *The Chronicles of*

²⁵⁰ Lewis, *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 181.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 185.

²⁵² C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2001), 58. It can be theorised that since Digory and Polly, the first humans to enter Narnia, were not intended to reside in this world, God had incarnated himself in an animal form. This would mean, as a lion, Aslan could offer satisfaction for the beasts of Narnia as an animal himself, and present perfect satisfaction as the Son of God. For a discussion of animals and Narnia, see Rowan Williams, "The Point of Narnia," in *The Lion's World: A Journey into the Heart of Narnia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 11-29.

Narnia. They would then be exposed to Aslan's love and permitted to express their love for him. As the child grows and starts attending Catechism or Sunday school, they will begin to make links between Aslan, and the love they have for him, with Jesus. Passages from the Gospels, like John 19²⁵³, will bring up childhood memories of reading about Aslan and they will transfer those feelings to Christianity. Lewis is attempting to remove the negative, fearful view of God presented by the Steward, and replace it with the caring Aslan.

Lewis, after introducing many to a loving Aslan, wrote another book in the *Chronicles of Narnia* series entitled *The Magician's Nephew*. This sixth book, published in 1955, deals with creation and the introduction of evil into the world of Narnia. Chronologically, in Narnian time, this is the first book; however, Lewis published this as the second to last book in the series. While evil and sin were key elements in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *The Magician's Nephew* shows us that evil was brought into Narnia from outside and was not originally part of Narnia, the World's, creation.

The Magician's Nephew's main characters are Digory and Polly. In this book we are first brought into Narnia by a set of rings which have the ability to transport people to other worlds. After accidentally entering a dying world, Digory and Polly awaken Jadis, the future White Witch. Jadis is then transported with the children into Narnia at its birth. The reason the Witch did not know the Deeper Magic of Narnia, as stated previously, was because she entered Narnia when creation had already begun. This series of events suggests that the source of all evil in Narnia was brought into the world accidentally and is not, like in Christianity, part of creation.

Lewis' depiction of creation is quite interesting. Though it appears to be out of chaos, we are not certain what occurred before we entered the world. Aslan, the Son of God or Word, is doing the creating. When Digory and Polly first see the Lion, he is walking around singing.²⁵⁴ His song is linked to the creation of mountains, trees, and animals. "It was more like what we should call a tune, but it was also far wilder. It made you want to run and jump and climb...Can you imagine a stretch of grassy land bubbling like water in a pot? For that is really the best description of what was happening. In all directions it was swelling into humps."²⁵⁵ This section of creation seems to

²⁵³ John 19 tells of the flogging of Jesus by the Roman Soldiers and the placing of the crown of thorns on his head.

²⁵⁴ J.R.R. Tolkien also uses music in his creation story for Middle-Earth. The creation story, *The Ainulindalë*, of the published *Silmarillion*, can be translated as "The Music of the Ainur."

²⁵⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 68.

be linked to the creation account in Genesis 1. There, God used words to create as seen in the following quote: “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’” (Gen. 1:3). However, there is a second part to creation in Lewis’ text. Once the music stopped, Aslan “opened his mouth, but no sound came from it; he was breathing out, a long, warm breath... “Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake, Love, Think, Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters.”²⁵⁶ God breathes the breath of life into all of creation in this narrative. In Genesis 2:7, only Man gains the breath of life, Aslan in *The Magician’s Nephew* breaths his breath into all of creation, which is why animals and objects are able to speak in the world of Narnia.

The creation of Narnia, like that of the created order in the creation narrative of the Old Testament, is good. Lewis makes it perfectly clear that evil was brought into Narnia from the outside. After Aslan approaches Digory to find out why he entered Narnia, Aslan asks Digory: ““Son of Adam...Are you ready to undo the wrong that you have done to my sweet country of Narnia on the very day of its birth?”²⁵⁷ Digory is asked to correct the evil he brought into the world. Aslan asks him to go and retrieve a fruit from a magic tree. This fruit will be planted and grow into a tree that will protect Narnia from the evil of Jadis for a while. Digory accepts this task and leaves to retrieve the fruit. It should be noted at this point that the fruit from this specific tree could heal anyone who is sick and dying. Digory’s mother, who is in our world, is very sick and may die. Therefore, Lewis sets the stage for a possible fall.

When Digory gets to the tree, it is surrounded by a fence. At the entrance gate there appears a sign which states: “*Come in by the gold gates or not at all. / Take of my fruit for others or forbear, / For those who steal or those who climb my wall / Shall find their heart’s desire and find despair.*”²⁵⁸ This sign can be taken as God’s prohibition against taking the fruit for one’s own use. Should Digory choose to take the fruit for himself, in this case for his mother’s health, he would only find despair; taking the fruit for the benefit of Narnia, however, is permissible and the right thing to do in Digory’s case. As in Genesis 3, and the tempting snake, Lewis presents Digory with a tempter. Jadis, the evil Witch and the root of Narnia’s evil, follows Digory and Polly to the tree and offers Digory some knowledge. “If you do not stop and listen to me now, you will miss some knowledge that would have made you happy all your life.”²⁵⁹ Like the snake in the garden, Jadis

²⁵⁶ Lewis, *The Magician’s Nephew*, 70.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

offers knowledge as a reward to Digory. However, there is a difference between Eve in Eden and Digory in Narnia. Digory is not alone during the temptation and has with him his friend Polly for support. Digory also has the example of Eve from the Bible and has benefited from Christ's sacrifice in our world. Digory refuses the Witch's offer to take the fruit for his mother and questions what she has to gain from his taking of the fruit. Polly affirms his decision²⁶⁰ by whispering in his ear "Good for you, Digs...Quick! Get away *now*."²⁶¹

A second fall is avoided because Digory is a good child and he had his friend Polly with him to encourage him to leave and ignore the false promises of Jadis. However, the Witch makes one more attempt at convincing the children to take the fruit for themselves. As they leave, she screams after them saying: "Think of me, Boy, when you lie old and weak and dying, and remember how you threw away the chance of endless youth!"²⁶² The reader notices how Jadis shifts her attempts of tempting Digory to take the fruit for his mother, to taking the fruit for himself and his own immortality. Jadis, like many of the tempters in Lewis' work tries to use positive concepts to instill negative actions.

Digory succeeds in avoiding a second fall, and in the end, he is rewarded by Aslan with a fruit for his mother. However, this story is not the only one where Lewis avoids a second fall. In his *Cosmic Trilogy*, Lewis presents a response to John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.²⁶³ There is nothing lost, nor is there a need to regain anything, because Lewis writes a story of "Paradise Retained" – Eve resists.²⁶⁴ The second book in this trilogy, entitled *Perelandra* (1943), deals with a new world created by God. The world is on Venus, and here we find a New Eve and New Adam. The Devil, who hears of this new Eve, travels to Venus in the body of a man named Weston, whom Lewis calls Un-Man, to cause her fall. God, in turn, selects a man by the name of Ransom, to go to Venus and prevent this lapse from occurring.

²⁶⁰ Lewis has done something interesting here by having a daughter of Eve reject the fruit, as Eve was the first to fall to temptation. There is also a curious connection between Polly and Digory being together at the temptation. Milton presents a debate between Adam and Eve in Book IX lines 251ff. of *Paradise Lost*, where Adam claims Eve would be better off with him by her side for she could fall on her own. Lewis also raises the question of what would have happened if Adam did not consume the fruit after Eve, would God have been more willing to negotiate with him? See Lewis, *Preface to Paradise Lost*, 127.

²⁶¹ Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, 94.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁶³ For an examination of Lewis' influence on Milton studies, and his debate with T.S. Eliot on the importance of Milton, see Charles A. Huttar, "C.S. Lewis, T.S. Eliot, and the Milton Legacy: The Nativity Ode Revisited," *Texas Studies in Literature & Language* 44, no. 3 (2002): 324-348.

²⁶⁴ David C. Downing, *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis' Ransom Trilogy* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 46.

God, in *Perelandra*, prohibits the Adam and Eve of Venus from sleeping on a stationary island, much like the prohibition against eating the fruit in Genesis 2:17. Venus has many islands which all move, but there is one continent which is motionless. This prohibition is a means by which Un-Man tries to break the obedience of Venus' Eve, from now on referred to as the Green Lady, to God. Un-Man begins by arguing that the Green Lady would gain knowledge if she broke God's commandment. The Green Lady replies to this by asking if Un-Man knows for certain she would become wiser. He claims "Yes, for certain, that is how the women of my world have become so great and so beautiful."²⁶⁵

The offer of knowledge is, again like Jadis' promise to Digory and the Snake's promise to Eve, present. Un-Man is also guaranteeing greatness and beauty to the Green Lady. Though beauty is a good thing, in God's creation a desire for beauty can be corrupting. This issue should be explored further, since Un-Man exposes the Green Lady, throughout her temptation, to new ideas which appear positive, but have a negative consequence. The concept of beauty is very much present throughout the entire *Perelandra* temptation narrative. Un-Man gives the Green Lady a feathered cloak with which to cover herself. One is made aware of the problems this causes for Ransom immediately. First, birds were killed or seriously injured to get those feathers. Therefore, death or physical pain has been introduced to this New World. Secondly, the Green Lady, who was beautiful in her own right, is taught that clothing could make her more beautiful. Un-Man highlights for the Green Lady that trees have leaves and birds have feathers; therefore, she too should have something to wear.²⁶⁶ Beauty is also the incentive behind Un-Man giving the Green Lady a mirror²⁶⁷ with which to look at herself. He tries to introduce vanity into the mind of the Green Lady indirectly.

²⁶⁵ C.S. Lewis, *Perelandra: Voyage to Venus* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1943), 137.

²⁶⁶ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 166.

²⁶⁷ Lewis' use of the mirror here recalls a long tradition. The implication of the mirror and its connection to incestuous or perverted love can find its roots in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, particularly Narcissus. There is also the incestuous story of Myrrha, where we are introduced to a daughter who tricks her father into sleeping with her and getting her pregnant. When he discovers the deceit, he chases her and she is turned into a myrrh tree. The connection to the idea of mirror comes later, through the influence of Spenser, who in book III of the *Faerie Queene* merges the name of Myrrha and mirror – Myrrhour. This is connected to Britomart who glimpses the image of her future lover Artegall within it. Finally, the link is completed by Milton, who has Eve tempted by her own reflection in *Paradise Lost* book IV. Her beauty is later contrasted to Adam's as she does not see him as beautiful compared to her own reflection. The connection to Narcissus is evident, but Milton's Eve is not aware the reflection is her own. Instead, it is the image of the first female/mother-figure, even human, she sees. Therefore, were it not for the voice which draws her away from herself to Adam, Eve could have been stuck on her own beauty. For the link between Milton and Spenser see John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by Alastair Fowler, *Longman Annotated English Poets*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2013), IV, fn.460-71. This concept of the mirror is also extended to other stories as well, particularly the

The Green Lady experiences many days of debate with Un-Man, while Ransom remains amongst them listening and arguing when he can. When asked why the breaking of the command would not anger God, Un-Man responds that all other commands given by God are easily understood. The acts of sleeping, multiply, and loving, are all commands which had perceivable benefits. Sleeping replenishes energy and multiplying causes the expansion of God's children on the land he created for them. Not sleeping on fixed land, however, has no visible benefit for the Green Lady. Therefore, it could be broken if the Green Lady chose to break it.²⁶⁸ As Michelle Robinson notes: "The decision to choose God (Maleldil) or self-interest is before the main characters in the [Cosmic] trilogy and it is their corresponding choices and inclinations that determine their destinies as champions or villains, as heavenly or hellish. Moreover, the decisions are of cosmic importance as they affect the entire divine order."²⁶⁹ It is no surprise then, that Ransom intervenes and explains that the command or prohibition concerning the fixed land was put there in order to create obedience between the Green Lady and God.²⁷⁰ Satan, the Un-Man, seeks to un-make and de-glorify creation. He tries to convince the Green Lady to be mistress and not subject. "This is the essential motivation behind the advance of technology: to rule nature by force and by godlike will; to make man gods."²⁷¹

While the temptation occurred for multiple days, and it seemed the Green Lady will fall, in the end Lewis does not allow the lapse to occur. Ransom, who realises that his name signifies what he is, a ransom, becomes aware that he must physically battle the devil. "If he were not the ransom, Another would be. Yet nothing was ever repeated. Not a second crucifixion: perhaps – who knows – not even a second Incarnation...some act of ever more appalling love, some glory of yet deeper humility."²⁷² Ransom parallels Christ on earth. He has a dual nature, human and ransom. He is often tempted not to complete his mission. He experiences the loneliness and anxiety as Christ did at Gethsemane. Many other similarities exist, but for Lewis Ransom is not Christ – instead, like any Christian, Ransom must emulate Christ.²⁷³ Ransom, like Digory, knows the

connection of beauty and love – for example *The Green Lady of Shalott* (1832) by Alfred Tennyson has a similar motif merging the mirror with the Orphic story.

²⁶⁸ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 142-143.

²⁶⁹ Michelle Robinson, "C.S. Lewis's Cosmic Trilogy," *Touchstone* 31, no. 3 (2013): 40.

²⁷⁰ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 144.

²⁷¹ James Prothero and Donald T. Williams, *Gaining a Face: The Romanticism of C.S. Lewis* (New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 53.

²⁷² Lewis, *Perelandra*, 183.

²⁷³ Downing, *Planets in Peril*, 51-52.

Genesis story and has been fortified in Christ. He can prevent another Fall. Lewis also recognises that God would not repeat the crucifixion if the Green Lady were to fall. However, there would be an even greater act of “appalling love” which God would perform to save His people on Venus. God’s actions, as has been made clear throughout this essay, are always acts of love according to Lewis. But he is here emphasising the greatness and size of this love. One must also recognize the significance behind God giving this love to the people of Venus. The “act of appalling love”²⁷⁴ would be given to Venus if the Green Lady would break God’s commandment. Instead of punishment, Lewis focuses on God’s willingness to sacrifice and suffer for people who broke a relationship with him. In the end, Ransom manages to destroy the devil, though he hurts his heel and crushes the Un-Man’s (Weston’s) head in the process,²⁷⁵ in *Perelandra* Venus is saved from a fall, but the knowledge that God would have intervened and loved the beings of Venus even if they did fall is central to Lewis’ depiction of God in his literary works.

Lewis’ portrayal of the natural world throughout *Perelandra* is idyllic and unfallen. It is reminiscent of the description of nature in Wordsworth’s poetry.²⁷⁶ “Here nature, symbolized in part by the perfect Adam and Eve of *Perelandra*, is in total harmony with this new breed of humanity.”²⁷⁷ The victory over the Fall, solidifies the role of the natural world in Lewis’ fictional work.

When the victory over Unman is complete, Ransom is brought before the King and Queen to witness what Earth never has: unfallen humanity in perfect harmony with creation, Adam and Eve justly and kindly ruling and naming the beasts. It is an image that Lewis was fond of, and represented in *The Magician’s Nephew* in the crowning of King Frank and Queen Helen on the first day of Narnia. It is also briefly repeated in the *Great Divorce*...It was, for Lewis, one of the most concrete images of Paradise.²⁷⁸

Lewis comes to faith through nature – “pantheism to theism” – a fact reflected in the joy he experienced from the Tin Box Garden of his childhood. “For Lewis, nature did in fact operate as a sacrament that led to faith.”²⁷⁹ Nature in our world will be redeemed and renewed eventually, becoming part of Heaven.²⁸⁰ The image of Adam and Eve enthroned is also a reflection of Lewis’

²⁷⁴ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 183.

²⁷⁵ This reflects back to the promise of Gen. 3:15. See David C. Downing, *Planets in Peril*, 51.

²⁷⁶ James Prothero and Donald T. Williams, *Gaining a Face*, 55.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

mysticism. He saw the First Parents as the “first mystics” – unfallen and in direct communication with God. They experienced a harmony of “mind, soul and spirit.” For Lewis, we must seek to return to this paradise.²⁸¹ The image of the King and Queen of Perelandra enthroned, has a greater significance with this in mind. They are not only the sovereigns of Perelandra, but also the in direct communion with God. We should not, however, believe nature to be the end point for Lewis. “Christian faith...provides a basis for distinguishing first and second things. If God exists and created the world, then there is an objective hierarchy of goodness that began with and proceeds from the basic distinction between the Creator and the creation.”²⁸² Nature may lead to faith, but it does not satisfy our desires or answer our questions. “If God is God and Nature is his creation, this is just what we should expect.”²⁸³ Nature acts as a “fellow creature” and is not to be “exploited or deified.” Instead, it should be respected.²⁸⁴

The way in which temptation occurs in Lewis’ novels is interesting and should be further explored. “To take an example from *Perelandra*, when the Un-Man Weston is tempting the Green Lady, the arguments he employs do not, at times, appear unreasonable. But by the mere fact that the words flow from the mouth of a character so unmistakably horrid (the Devil himself), the reader is forced to re-assess the so-called reasonableness of the idea!”²⁸⁵ Temptation, by Satan in this book, is always propagated through positive means. The Devil used positive lessons to instill negative ideas. Knowledge for Satan is only a weapon and not something he enjoyed. “It showed plenty of subtlety and intelligence when talking to the Green Lady; but Ransom soon perceived that it regarded intelligence simply and solely as a weapon.”²⁸⁶

This use of reasonable arguments to produce sinful thoughts is reflected in Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*. Here a demon by the name of Screwtape writes letters of advice for his nephew Wormwood, another demon tempting a human. Evil, or sin, is presented as always beginning with reasonable intentions. These intentions are then perverted into evil. “There are things for humans to do all day long without His (God) minding in the least – sleeping, washing, eating, drinking, making love, playing, praying, working. Everything has to be *twisted* before it’s any use to us. We

²⁸¹ David Downing, *Into the Region of Awe: Mysticism in C.S. Lewis* (Downer Groves: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 81.

²⁸² James Prothero and Donald T. Williams, *Gaining a Face*, 7.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

²⁸⁵ Michelle Robinson, “C.S. Lewis’s Cosmic Trilogy,” *Touchstone* 31, no. 3 (2013): 40.

²⁸⁶ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 158.

fight under cruel disadvantages. Nothing is naturally on our side.”²⁸⁷ Screwtape here makes a few points clear. Firstly, all creation and actions begin good. Secondly, only when these actions or thoughts are perverted can they be of use to the demon. Eating begins as a need of sustenance, but humans can overeat and become gluttons. Therefore, a positive is changed to a negative.

One could ask, however, how prayer, which is mentioned by Screwtape, can be turned into something bad? Screwtape suggests that his demonic nephew should have his humans pray for the wrong things, selfish things, or “at the very least, they can be persuaded that the bodily position makes no difference to their prayers; for they constantly forget, what you must always remember, that they are animals and that whatever their bodies do affects their soul. It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out.”²⁸⁸ By perverting the way humans pray, the demons will prevent the prayers from being positive. By keeping things out, and by not having humans understand the importance of positions while praying, Lewis shows that the demons can corrupt a positive action or intention.

Demons and Satan are presented as cunning individuals by Lewis, and it is very likely that John Milton influenced this part of his work. One of the early modern works which Lewis spent time studying was Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. He gave a series of lectures on the text in 1941, which was later published as *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1967). When Eve meets the talking serpent in the Garden in Book Nine of *Paradise Lost*, she immediately asks why he is able to talk to her. His response is quite crafty. He begins by addressing Eve as follows: “Empress of this fair World, resplendent Eve!”²⁸⁹ Such flattering words are interesting in the context of Milton’s text. Eve is called Empress and her beauty is being noted, she is “resplendent.” We should link such an address back to the promise Un-Man made to the Green Lady if she broke God’s commandment in *Perelandra*: “Yes, for certain, that is how the women of my world have become so great and so beautiful.”²⁹⁰ Again, greatness and beauty are things being presented by Satan and amplified in the minds of humans. Milton’s Eve, unlike Lewis’, however, is eventually convinced by the snake that he gained his ability to talk from the Tree of Knowledge. He promises her that if she were to eat from the Tree, she would become like God²⁹¹ and Eve eventually falls.

²⁸⁷ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 118-119.

²⁸⁸ Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 16.

²⁸⁹ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by Alastair Fowler, *Longman Annotated English Poets*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2013), IX: 568.

²⁹⁰ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 137.

²⁹¹ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IX: 567-600.

John Milton's (1608-1674) *Paradise Lost* presents us with a case for the interpretation of love, and we should take the time to explore it briefly at this point, particularly since it was so influential on Lewis' thought. While love and sexual desire lead Adam to break the divine prohibition of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, it is apparent right from the start that Eve's beauty is not something which must be rejected. Instead, she represents the beauty of the Divine Mind and creation.

Our first encounter with Eve's beauty is a passage which is strikingly similar to one in which Ovid describes Narcissus. Eve, newly formed, catches a glimpse of her reflection in a pool of water. A voice wakes the first mother, who was pausing for an inordinate amount of time, from her fixation and explains that the image is simply her reflection, she is but a part of the created order and she should look beyond herself towards Adam, and possibly even beyond her spouse, to her Maker.

A shape within the watery gleam appeared / Bending to look on me, I started back, / It started back, but pleased I soon returned, / Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks / Of sympathy and love; there I had fixed / Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire, / Had not a voice warned me, What thou seest, / What there thou seest fair creature is thyself / With thee it came and goes: but follow me, / And I will bring thee where no shadow stays²⁹²

Eve's focus on her reflection can be seen as her recognition of the beauty found within her image, or even perhaps her first glimpse of a female or maternal figure, a role she lacks within her life. Adam confirms our suspicions that Eve, in fact, is beautiful to behold. While speaking with Raphael, the First Man displays a great deal of love and affection for his bride. Adam says: "So much delights me, as those graceful acts, / Those thousand decencies that daily flow / From all her words and actions, mixed with love / And sweet compliance, which declare unfeigned / Union of mind, or in us both one soul."²⁹³ His connection to her is suspect and Raphael draws Adam's attention to misplaced loves. Though Adam denies wrongdoing, and questions how love can be evil. "To love thou blam'st me not, for love thou sayst / Leads up to heaven, is both the way and guide; / bear with me then, if lawful what I ask: / Love not the heavenly spirits..."²⁹⁴ Adam has identified love as the central path or guide to the heavens, and therefore, how can love lead to evil outcomes?

²⁹² Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV: 461-470.

²⁹³ Ibid., VIII: 600-604.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., VIII: 612-615.

In the end it is all for nought, for Eve lapses, tricked by Satan in the guise of a snake, and consumes the forbidden fruit in hopes that she will become more beautiful²⁹⁵ and possibly even transform herself into her husband's equal or maybe even a God.²⁹⁶ Though Adam at first laments her choice, he nevertheless also partakes of the fruit – not because he wishes to sin, but because he is reluctant to live in a world without Eve. Adam tells Eve: “Some cursed fraud / of enemy hath beguiled thee, yet unknown, / And me with thee hath ruined, for with thee / Certain my resolution is to die; / How can I live without thee, how forgo / Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined, / To live again in these wild woods forlorn?”²⁹⁷ It should be noted that Eve offers Adam the fruit for a more selfish reason – she fears her husband will live on without her and be given a new wife.

Milton's views on love are clear. Sex and love between the first parents was something good and sanctioned by God, “[b]e fruitful and multiply,”²⁹⁸ the failure to look beyond themselves towards their Maker – a God who speaks directly to them and sends his heavenly messengers to teach and eat with them – was their ultimate crime. Eve wishes to be more beautiful, to enhance the already perfect Divine creation, and Adam thought Eve so beautiful and lovely that he gave up his immortality and turned against his Maker.

Yet, Satan is also culpable and has a role to play in the Miltonic Eve's lapse. Through his use of cunning, he manages to kindle already existing doubts in Eve's mind thus precipitating the fall. The Devil in Lewis' writings also always appear justified, sound and well thought out. Just before Ransom defeats Un-Man, the human whom the devil possessed, Weston, wakes from his trance and begins to explain his fears to Ransom concerning death. Weston fears that God does not exist and that upon his dies he will only experience nothingness. More importantly, the God about whom Weston was taught was the God of the living. What benefits would he obtain from this God when he is dead? Ransom immediately responds to this by recognising that these views were contemporary atheist views, views which were put into Weston's mind by the Devil.²⁹⁹ Positive views, uncertain ideas, like the afterlife, are here being brought into question by Satan.

²⁹⁵ Satan's lie here is a grievous one. In Book IV, when Satan first catches a glimpse of Adam and Eve, his admiration of their form and beauty is highlighted. Satan recognized their perfection, and by inciting Eve to become more beautiful, he is in fact diminishing her. Satan experiences a similar change throughout *Paradise Lost*, beginning as a bright angel of the highest order to eventually becoming a reptilian snake.

²⁹⁶ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IX: 567-600

²⁹⁷ Ibid., IX: 905-910.

²⁹⁸ Gen 1:28.

²⁹⁹ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 210-211.

The role of Weston, and of the Satan-like Jadis in the *Chronicles*, draws on Milton heavily. Satan encourages the breaking of rules he does not understand, rules which make no sense to him.³⁰⁰ Weston and Jadis do the same. Why not eat from a tree, when all other fruit is perfectly edible? Why not take the fruit to your dying mother if it will save her? Why not sleep on an island that is not moving, when you can sleep anywhere else? These are impositions which cannot be understood by the prideful Lucifer, who questions why should he be banned from doing perfectly normal things? In fact, the ban in itself urges him forward and encourages him to do it. It allows him a way to begin his temptation. Satan tries to pervert humans, as they are vulnerable. His objective is to spite God by ruining his great creation. “Jadis’s methods are not dissimilar from Satan’s temptation...Satan and Jadis prefer to corrupt and contaminate the people they envy and the kingdoms they covet.”³⁰¹ Spite and pride are the catalysts for the Satan characters in each of these temptation narratives.

Why does Lewis avoid the fall in both *The Magician’s Nephew* and *Perelandra*? There are several reasons for this avoidance. First, Lewis is uncomfortable with the notion of God’s creation going bad a second time. Second, there is always a human, or Son of Adam and Daughter of Eve as Aslan would say, present at the possible second fall. These Sons and Daughters of Adam and Eve have the stories of the first Fall to remind them of the temptations of evil. They are also fortified by Christ’s salvation in our world. Milton’s *Paradise Regained* quite beautifully illustrates this point. “I, who erewhile the happy Garden sung / By one man’s disobedience lost, now sing/ Recovered Paradise to all mankind, / By one man’s firm obedience fully tried / Through all temptation, and the Tempter foiled.”³⁰² For Ransom and Digory, paradise has been regained. They have been saved by Christ and they can help avoid another lapse through their fortification in Christ and by the examples of Adam and Eve from their world.

Lewis depicts God as a loving God. This is in direct contrast to a god who punishes his people for their sins like the God presented to John by the Steward in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*. God, as Lewis depicts him, sacrifices himself for the sins of Edmund in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, he creates a good and pure world in *The Magician’s Nephew* and when evil is brought

³⁰⁰ Elizabeth Baird Hardy, *Milton, Spenser and The Chronicles of Narnia*, Literary Sources for the C.S. Lewis Novels (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007), 44.

³⁰¹ Baird Hardy, *Milton, Spenser and The Chronicles of Narnia*, 37.

³⁰² John Milton, *Paradise Regained*, in *Milton: The Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey, 424-512. *Longman Annotated English Poets*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2013), I: 1-5.

into the world by Digory, God seeks to correct the evil and even rewards Digory for his good choices. Finally, in *Perelandra* God, chose a human from Earth to travel to Venus and prevent another fall. This God is a God who cares for his creation, not a God who one should fear as cruel.

There is evil in the world, due to the free will God gave to his creation according to Lewis,³⁰³ but this evil exists separately from God. It should also be noted, however, that humans are not totally absolved by Lewis of any involvement in their salvation. Digory still has to make the choice not to take the fruit for his own benefit, and Ransom could have allowed the Green Lady to fall. As Lewis explains in another work entitled *The Great Divorce* “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, “Thy will be done,” and those to whom God says, in the end, “Thy will be done.” All that are in Hell, choose the latter. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell.”³⁰⁴ To answer God’s call, the call of a loving God, is always within our own freedom of choice. As Jerry L. Walls in his assessment states, it is our own free will that locks us in hell. God allows us free will, according to Lewis, and constantly tries to engage us, but after a period of time God gives in and allows us to remain separated from him.³⁰⁵ This is the ultimate fate of Satan after his fall, but it does not have to be the fate of all of God’s people, as we have seen in Lewis’ major works of fiction. We should now turn to the depiction of this free will and how it affects humanity’s relationship with God.

C.S. Lewis: A Study of His Works – Creation’s Freedom to Love

As we have already noted, a large distinction exists between Lewis’ understanding of the role that humanly love, Need-love, plays within the larger Christian framework and Nygren’s complete rejection of what he perceives as a fallen and corrupt experience. The distinction is not something which should be overlooked, for it has larger implications for Lewis’ theology and stories he authors. Unlike Nygren’s theology, which is based on a theological education, much of Lewis’ theological insights come from works of literature and medieval authors.³⁰⁶ This becomes clearly

³⁰³ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 48.

³⁰⁴ C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 75.

³⁰⁵ Jerry L. Walls, “The Great Divorce,” in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, eds. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge Collections Online: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 255.

³⁰⁶ While Lewis had little theological training, his understanding of theology and biblical studies was above average. Robert C. Eennell notes: “He seems to have known the details of the problem of the relationship among the Synoptic gospels, and largely agreed with the findings of those who studied it. (“Of course, we agree that passages almost verbally identical cannot be independent”). Lewis also applied the tools of literary criticism in a sophisticated way,

visible in Lewis' interpretation of free will. While Nygren and many Protestant thinkers see the human will as almost non-existent due to Original Sin, Lewis takes a moderate approach. Though the Fall has marred the human ability to do good, it did not completely erase our freedom. We are still able to turn towards the Divine, and in fact it is necessary that we continue to have agency in the Creator-creation relationship. For Lewis, God armed humanity with a number of weapons to help combat the perversions introduced by Satan. "And what did God do? First of all He left us conscience, the sense of right and wrong; and all through history there have been people trying (some of them very hard) to obey it. None of them ever quite succeeded. Secondly, He sent the humans race what I call good dreams: I mean those queer stories scattered all through the heathen religions about a god who dies and comes to life again and, by his death, has somehow given new life to men."³⁰⁷ Lewis is most likely being influenced by the Protestant John Milton.

While Milton was a Puritan, his views concerning free will were unlike those of the majority of his Puritan contemporaries.³⁰⁸ His influence on Lewis can be seen in the previous quote very clearly, for once again, Lewis' theology is heavily indebted to works of literature and not necessarily theological tractates. Both the idea of conscience and good dreams are presented by Milton in *Paradise Lost*. In book three of *Paradise Lost*, the Son pleads with the Father to help Adam and Eve. Though the Father knows they will fall to temptation of their own free choice, the Son argues the Father should warn them directly in order to avoid accusations that he did not do all he could to prevent their lapse. The Father agrees to send Raphael to warn the first parents, but he also imbues humanity with a conscience. "And I will place within them as a guide / My umpire conscience, whom if they will hear / Light after light well used they shall attain, / And to the end

which is no surprise, given his training and skill as a scholar of literature. He noted the similarities of form, style, content and genre between the Magnificat of Mary and the much older Psalms, for example." He goes on to state, "Lewis thought, however, Biblical criticism was often against Christianity – "even anti-Christian" – Scripture is to be evangelical, not an "excellent history or flawless philosophy". It is to spread the message of Christianity, but not answer all questions." See Robert C. Eennell, "'The Bible Will Bring Us to Christ': C.S. Lewis as an Interpreter of Scripture," *Touchstone* 31, no. 3 (2013): 15-16.

³⁰⁷ See Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50-51. Along with a conscience and good dreams, Lewis states that God elected a group of people to work directly with, the Jewish people, and finally, the Incarnation takes place in order for Jesus to forgive the sins of the fallen.

³⁰⁸ In fact, much of Milton's theology is unorthodox. He does not see the Son as coeternal with the Father, since the Son only has as much divinity as the Father permits. Milton was most likely an Arian or Socinian. He also believed in mortalism. Evidence of these beliefs can be found throughout his works, but they are made clearer in Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana*. See the prefatory note to the *De Doctrina* in John Milton, *Prose: Major Writings on Liberty, Politics, Religion, and Education*, ed. David Loewenstein (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2013), 470-471. For selections of the *De Doctrina*, see John Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana*, in *Prose: Major Writings on Liberty, Politics, Religion, and Education*, ed. David Loewenstein (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2013), 472-556,

persisting, safe arrive.”³⁰⁹ Through this gift of conscience humanity gains an internal guide to lead them on the correct path. What about the idea of good dreams, a term which Lewis seems to indicate that he coined and defines for his readers? This too may find its roots in Milton. After the Fall, the Father sends Michael to cast out Adam and Eve from the Garden. Before he does so, Michael reveals to Adam, in books eleven and twelve, the salvific history of the world. While Adam is shown a number of visions, Eve is not present with her husband. After Michael shows Adam the visions, he tells him to go find Eve: “Go, waken Eve; / Her also I with gentle dreams have calmed / Portending good, and all her spirits composed / To meek submission.”³¹⁰ Though Adam engaged with Michael directly to see what was to come and sacred history was revealed to him, Eve was not abandoned by God. Like her future descendants, she too was shown good dreams, dreams of the patriarchs, but also of the Son of God Incarnated, crucified and resurrected. Lewis has picked up on both of these Miltonic ideas and has retooled them for his own theology. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis tells his readers that after the Fall God gave us tools to return to him. First, he left us a conscience to know right from wrong, a universal idea for Lewis. Then God gave us good dreams, dreams of gods who died and came back. We see this reflected through all mythologies which retell the story of a god who dies and resurrects, like the Egyptian Osiris or Greco-Roman Dionysus. Next, God selected a group of people, the Jews, to explain the type of God he is, an Elect to introduce himself to. Finally, Jesus becomes incarnate amongst this monotheistic Elect. He claims to be the one God the Jews worship and fulfills the good dreams of larger parts of humanity.³¹¹ The tools Lewis claims God has armed humanity with are strikingly similar to elements of the dreams Eve has. She sees the Elect, the Incarnation, the death, and resurrection of God. The way back to God, which Lewis expands on in *Mere Christianity*, is almost identical to the Miltonic post-lapsarian visions experienced by the First Parents.

Milton’s influence does not only end with these two examples, for Lewis makes it clear that we have the ability to make good choices. We need only look at one of the examples previously discussed, Digory. Digory had the ability to reject Jadis, and he does indeed ignore her temptation to take the fruit for his mother. He was fortified in Christ, but also had his conscience and friend

³⁰⁹ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, III:194-197.

³¹⁰ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, XII: 593-596.

³¹¹ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50.

Polly to aid him in his free choice. Milton's optimism, then, is scattered throughout Lewis' works of fiction.

This optimism extends into Lewis' understanding of Free Will. Lewis does not include predestination in the Lutheran or Calvinist sense, unlike Nygren's concept of salvation. Though God knows all that is to come, this does not affect the human freedom to choose. Humans are free to make choices, but God knows those free choices and their outcome before we make them. Milton's influence can once again be felt here.³¹² When the Father explains to the Son that the first parents will fall, he makes it clear that his knowledge of their fall does not make it inevitable. He simply knows the decisions they will make freely. God cannot change their minds by force or remove the freedom he gave them. They must remain free, or risk God becoming a tyrant. The Father states: "Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault / Which had no less proved certain unforeknown.../ I formed them free, and free they must remain"³¹³ For Lewis, Milton's view on free will and God's foreknowledge, simply reaffirms that of another thinker who heavily influenced him – Boethius (ca. 476-524).

It is impossible to do justice to a thinker like Boethius, especially in such a short section,³¹⁴ therefore instead of examining his works, we will explore Lewis' interpretation and appropriation of Boethius' thought. In his *Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius attempts to prove that humans have free will and our choices matter. He also attempts to illustrate how God, knowing and seeing all – for God is omniscient – does not negate our freedom. Boethius argues "But if it is appropriate to compare the divine present with the human, then just as you men see certain things in this temporal present of yours, so God sees all things in his eternal present. Hence this divine foreknowledge does not change the nature and character of things; God sees them as present before

³¹² For a study of Boethius' influence on Milton and Lewis, see Jefferey H. Taylor and Leslie A Taylor, *The Influence of Boethius' De Consolatione Philosophiae on John Milton's Paradise Lost* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2016).

³¹³ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, III: 118-119; 124. For more examples of Milton's emphasis on free will see *Paradise Lost* V:235-237, 538-540; IX:351-356; See also the theme and opening quote of *Areopagitica* and Milton's *De Doctrina Cristiana* I:iv "of Predestination." See also, Mindele Anne Treip, "Reason Is Also Choice': The Emblematics of Free Will in *Paradise Lost*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 31, no. 1 (1991): 147-77.

³¹⁴ For a good study on Boethius see Henry Chadwick, *Boethius, the Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). See also, Alain Galonnier, *Boèce ou la chaîne des savoirs* (Paris, Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 2003). For a study on the influence of Boethius through the centuries, see Pierre Courcelle, *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire: Antécédents et postérité de Boèce*, (Paris, 1967). For a study of the philosophical and biblical wisdom in Boethius' *Consolation* and medieval commentaries, see Jean-Michel Roessli, "Sagesse biblique et sagesse philosophique dans la *Consolation de Philosophie* et dans quelques commentaires latins du Moyen Âge au chef d'œuvre de Boèce," *Semitica & Classica* 12 (2020): 157-207.

his eyes as they will emerge at some time in the future.”³¹⁵ Lewis uses this idea and scatters it throughout his works. He also takes the time to offer his readers many examples of how to interpret this concept. Lewis explains Boethius’ position in *The Discarded Image*.

God is eternal, not perpetual. Strictly speaking He never *foresees*; He simply sees. Your ‘future’ is only an area, and only for us a special area, of His infinite Now. He sees (not remembers) your yesterday’s acts because yesterday is still ‘there’ for Him; he sees (not foresees) your tomorrow’s acts because He is already tomorrow. As a human spectator, by watching my present act, does not at all infringe its freedom, so I am none the less free to act as I choose in the future because God, in that future (His present) watches me acting.³¹⁶

Other examples can also be found in *Mere Christianity*. While they may be quite lengthy, a section should be quoted to help establish Lewis’ position more clearly.

[I]f God foresaw our acts, it would be very hard to understand how we could be free not to do them. But suppose God is outside and above the Time-line. In that case, what we call “tomorrow” is visible to Him in just the same way as what we call “today.” All the days are “Now” for Him. He does not remember you doing things yesterday; He simply sees you doing them, because, though you have lost yesterday. He has not. He does not “foresee” you doing things tomorrow; He simply sees you doing them: because, though tomorrow is not yet there for you, it is for Him. You never supposed that your actions at this moment were any less free because God knows what you are doing. Well, He knows your tomorrow’s actions in just the same way-because He is already in tomorrow and can simply watch you. In a sense, He does not know your action till you have done it: but then the moment at which you have done it is already “Now” for Him.³¹⁷

Lewis is adamant that humans have free will. Without freedom to choose we would be only robots or puppets working to God’s every wish. Free will allows for evil to occur in the world, but it also enables a true relationship between God and humanity.

Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata – or creatures that worked like machines – would hardly be worth creating. The happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that they must be free.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), V:vi:20-22.

³¹⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, Ninth Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 89.

³¹⁷ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 170.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

We come then to the main point of this digression on free will. If God is Love, and he wishes to have a true relationship with his creatures,³¹⁹ Nygren's position cannot work. Humans must be free to turn towards their Creator, to change their paths and motivations in order to love God back. If Divine love is forced upon humans, or if humans could not freely accept or need (Need-love) God's love, then it would be an unrequited love. If God is Love, he would want humans to freely and truly love him in return.³²⁰ Change is a part of the human condition and our ability to change is key to our relationship with others and God. No greater examples can be found than in the creation narrative of Narnia and Aslan's first commandments to his creatures "Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters."³²¹ Aslan commands the creatures of Narnia to love, think and speak for themselves. To be free beings, separate from himself. The freedom of the creatures is reaffirmed when he states: "'Creatures, I give you yourselves,' said the strong, happy voice of Aslan. 'I give to you for ever 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 so.'"³²² Narnians can exercise their freedom or return to their base natures. "For Lewis, human freedom was a bedrock belief, fundamental to the idea of what it

³¹⁹ For an examination of the historical interpretation of God's relationship to creation, see, for example, Christopher Iacovetti, "God in his Procession: Aquinas, Palamas, and Dionysius on God's Relation to Creation" *Pro Ecclesia* 26, n.3 (2017): 297-310. According to Pseudo-Dionysius there is a distinction between God in his "totally transcendent unions" and God in "His outgoing distinctions." These distinctions are the process by which "God gives and relates himself to creation." Iacovetti, 299-300. Thomas Aquinas in his *Commentary of the Divine Names*, followed Pseudo-Dionysius "in accepting a notional distinction between the divine nature 'as it is in itself,' on the one hand, and the divine nature as it 'goes out from itself,' on the other." Iacovetti, 301. Aquinas, along with the Eastern theologian Gregory Palamas, select Pseudo-Dionysius' distinctions to identify the differences between the "divine procession *ab intra*," within the Godhead (for example, the relationship between the Son and Spirit) and the "divine procession *ad extra*," outside the Godhead (for example, God's relationship with humans). Iacovetti, 305. This division between God's essence, which is unknowable and unchangeable, and God's energies is central to Aquinas. For while Creatures cannot know God "as he is in Himself" we can know him, and relate to him, in his energies. Iacovetti, 307.

³²⁰ While outside the scope of this thesis, there has also been a shift by some contemporary theologians who propose that God cannot be love unless he suffers. Jürgen Moltmann argues a God who does not suffer cannot be love. John Macquarrie claims a God of love must be vulnerable, for to love is to suffer. William Placher proposes that in Mark, the God of love there is willing to risk. Christ, through crucifixion and death, is "the very suffering of God." See Michael J. Dodds, *The One Creator God in Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Theology* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 122, 124. While this may be the case, human metaphors for love do not truly reflect Divine Love. Why does God create, according to Aquinas? Because he loves, and while human loves are good metaphors for God's love, they do not perfectly explain it. For God's love is without limitation and imperfection. "God's love for creation is not a mere metaphor," he loves all – even things humans can never love. Dodds, 119.

³²¹ Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, 70.

³²² *Ibid.*, 71.

means to be created in the image of God and essential to the possibility of genuine love. This finds expression in *The Magician's Nephew* at the creation of Narnia, where Aslan says in a strong and happy voice, 'Creatures, I give you yourselves.' Lewis thought that all human beings had been given this same gift."³²³ They are free to love and think, or go back to their original ways. Aslan gives freedom to his creation.³²⁴ Let us turn then to examples of creatures exercising their freedom to love in Lewis' works of fiction.

Case Studies in the Chronicles of Narnia

The *Chronicles of Narnia* are filled with examples of love, but three characters will be explored here to show the way in which Lewis points his readers in the right direction when it comes to self-sacrifice. These characters, Edmund, Eustace and Reepicheep,³²⁵ each displays bad tendencies but over the course of the narrative they use their free will to change their ways and become positive examples of love.

Edmund Pevensie is one of the most important characters in the early Narnia books. The brother of Peter, Susan and Lucy, he is first introduced to the reader as a devious child. He antagonises his younger sister Lucy, and even lies for his own gain. His sole purpose is to increase his pleasure and position amongst his siblings. We are made aware of Edmund's problem fairly early on in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, but the most striking example of his nature can be found in his overindulgence in Turkish Delight. Having entered Narnia for the first time, Edmund is found by the White Witch, Jadis. She offers him Turkish Delight and promises him all kinds of rewards for bringing her his siblings. Edmund consumes the candy with gusto and he continues to crave it throughout his time with the Witch, constantly asking for more. The reader should be aware immediately that this is a perversion, for wanting something to the point of being fixated on it, is a misdirected form of love – gluttony. We see how poor Edmund's desires are driving him, for when the Witch is continuously cruel to him, he still maintains the hope of getting more Turkish Delight. "When the dwarf had gone to get the sledge ready he expected that the

³²³ Chris Jensen, "Shine as the Sun: C.S. Lewis and the Doctrine of Deification," *Road to Emmaus* 8, no. 2 (2007): 54.

³²⁴ Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio*, XXVII:142. "Per ch'io te sovra te corono e mitrio" "I crown and mitre you over yourself."

³²⁵ Though these three characters are explored in this section, Lucy, who can be seen as one of the central characters of Lewis' *Chronicles* is also of great importance. For a more detailed examination of her, and her innate goodness, see chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Witch would start being nice to him, as she had been at their last meeting. But she said nothing to him at all. And when Edmund plucked up his courage to say, ‘Please, your Majesty, could I have some Turkish Delight? You – you – said-’ she answered, ‘Silence, Fool!’³²⁶ Though the Witch changes her mind and does provide Edmund with food, it is only dry bread, which he is forced reluctantly to eat. Edmund is not hungry, since he is not starved enough to want the dry bread. Edmund has placed too much of his desire on the Turkish Delight and has lost sight of the larger picture. He is aiding a Witch who threatens his brother and sisters, but also the welfare of all of Narnia. His need to consume the candy is one of the drives he must overcome.

Lewis provides readers with a counter example to Edmund in *Perelandra*. When Ransom first lands on Venus he discovers a fruit which tastes so great he believes wars would be started on earth for a taste of it. Ransom claims tasting the fruit was “...like the discovery of a totally new genus of pleasure, something unheard of among men, out of all reckoning, beyond all covenant. For one draught of this on Earth wars would be fought and nations betrayed. It could not be classified.”³²⁷ Ransom later uses the term “orgiastic”³²⁸ to describe the sensation he had. By focusing on the description of the fruit provided by Ransom, it is not a stretch to apply the same sensation to the Turkish Delight consumed by Edmund. Once Edmund consumes the candy, he fulfils part of Ransom’s assessment: he helps start a war in Narnia and betrays his family, both consequences Ransom identified as possibilities should humans taste the Perelandrian fruit. Ransom shows the restraint that Edmund did not. Ransom clearly wants to eat more of the fruit, but decides against it. “His reason, or what we commonly take to be reason in our world, was all in favour of tasting this miracle again [...] Yet something seemed opposed to this ‘reason.’ [...] But for whatever the cause, it appeared to him better not to taste again. Perhaps the experience had been so complete that repetition would be a vulgarity – like asking to hear the same symphony twice in a day.”³²⁹ Ransom avoids the sin of gluttony, while Edmund does not. The issues concerning Appreciative pleasures, highlighted by Lewis earlier, can be seen here. This is not a glass of water for the thirsty nor a “Need.” Just as an alcoholic overindulges in their drink of choice, not because they savour the flavour, but because they seek the effects, Edmund seeks out more Turkish Delight for the effect it has on him.

³²⁶ Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 161.

³²⁷ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 46.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

Turkish Delight is not the only enticement Edmund falls for. He is also offered kingship by the Witch. She promises to make him a prince and “he would wear a gold crown and eat Turkish Delight all day long.”³³⁰ His siblings would be his courtiers, dukes, and duchesses. Edmund rejects this, as he does not want his siblings to get any special treatment, but the Witch’s intentions are important here. Edmund does not like his siblings all that much to begin with, but the Witch’s offer works in two ways. If Edmund did like his brother and sisters, she was offering them a gift. This would have been enticing for Edmund; however, if Edmund did not like his siblings, as is the case, he would be placed above them as king. Lewis is once again drawing on Milton. Just as Eve contemplates the fruit thinking it may make her Adam’s equal, or even superior, Edmund is presented with a similar temptation by the Witch.³³¹ In both cases, what Eve and Edmund are being tempted with is already the outcome which would be achieved should they hold true to themselves. For Eve, Milton’s theological framework allowed for her to eventually transcend herself and become an angel³³² and for Edmund, he will eventually become the king of Narnia with the blessing of Aslan. Both craved that to which they already had access. Edmund, like Eve, failed by aiding the Witch thus betraying and lying to his family,³³³ and helping her start a war in Narnia, all for his self-love.

A character like Edmund is important for young readers as he provides examples of behaviours to be avoided. Such a character also enables Lewis to show how change is possible, even for those with bad tendencies. Using his own free will, Edmund is able to change his course and correct his mistakes. Though it comes late in the narrative, Edmund begins to realize the Witch is not all she appears to be. She is cruel to him and others, and her cruelty is what changes his perspective. It begins with the recognition that the Witch would never make him king. This does not alter his course, but instead it allows him to grow in sympathy for others. When the Witch becomes angry at a group of creatures for informing her that Father Christmas has arrived, she uses her wand to turn them all to stone statues. Edmund is shocked and saddened by the event, and

³³⁰ Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 126.

³³¹ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IX: 821-825.

³³² See, Milton, *Paradise Lost*, V: 496-503. “And from these corporal nutriments perhaps / Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit, / Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend / Ethereal, as we, or may at choice / Here or in heavenly paradises dwell; / If ye be found obedient, and retain / Unalterably firm his love entire / Whose progeny you are.”

³³³ One of these lies was particularly hurtful, as it was against his younger sister Lucy. When she claimed Narnia existed, Edmund, who had already been there, had Peter and Susan believe Lucy was lying.

the narrator notes that "...Edmund, for the first time in this story, felt sorry for someone besides himself."³³⁴

The metamorphosis is drastic and not expected, but for Lewis all humans have the freedom to change. Edmund is no different, for he eventually ends up with Aslan and is forgiven.³³⁵ The clearest sign of this forgiveness comes from Aslan's statement to Peter, Lucy and Susan: "'Here is your brother,' he said, 'and – there is no need to talk to him about what is past'"³³⁶ The importance of this forgiveness should not be lost on the reader. It is because Edmund sided with the Witch and then betrayed her that Aslan is sacrificed. Aslan knows that Edmund's actions will lead to his personal suffering, as well as the suffering of others, but Aslan's love is self-giving. Edmund needs Aslan's love at this point in his life. He constantly sought love from the Witch, but only experienced her cruelty. He thought her original gift of Turkish Delight meant something more, some form of affection, but it was an empty and fleeting gesture - she is cruel to him on his return to Narnia. Aslan's love is complete and unconditional, it does not discriminate against Edmund or his actions, so long as he freely changes his ways and thinks of others. Peter and Susan also experience a growth here, for they willingly forgive their brother.

The elder siblings Peter and Susan begin by thinking only of themselves and their family; they just want to rescue their brother Edmund from the White Witch and get back home. Yet, they end up taking their wider obligations seriously, accepting the challenge of battling against injustice and liberating the inhabitants of Narnia from the Witch's tyranny. They develop courage and determination as they pursue the honorable purpose of freeing the Narnians so they can thrive and prosper rather than live in fear. They learn about the importance of generosity of spirit and gratitude, and forgive Edmund for his disloyalty and betrayal. They learn to appreciate qualities of friendship, self-sacrifice and courage, and the importance of doing the right thing even when it costs.³³⁷

Aslan's forgiveness and love, coupled with Edmund's will to change his path, eventually lead to success for all of Narnia. Ultimately it is Edmund who is central to the final defeat of the Witch. Though the battle against the Witch has many important moments, including the sacrifice and resurrection of Aslan, Peter tells the Lion that it was in fact Edmund who was key to the victory

³³⁴ Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 163.

³³⁵ For a study on the role of conversion in Lewis' work, see Suzanne Bray, "La conversion dans les *Chroniques de Narnia* de C.S. Lewis," *Mélanges de Science Religieuse*, 68 (2011): 19-30.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 174.

³³⁷ Mark Pike, Thomas Lickona, and Victoria Nesfield, "Narnian Virtues: C.S. Lewis as Character Educator," *Journal of Character Education* 11, no. 2 (2015): 78.

over the Witch. Edmund, after working with the Witch knew that her wand was what changed creatures into stone statues. So, in the midst of battle while others were attacking the Witch herself, Edmund rushes towards her, according to Peter, “And when he reached her he had the sense to bring his sword smashing down on her warts instead of trying to go for her directly and simply getting made a statue himself for his pains. That was the mistake all the rest were making.”³³⁸ Edmund saved all of Narnia, and his betrayal of the Witch not only enabled him to help the right side but also eventually led to Aslan’s death and resurrection – acts of evil led to good outcomes. This concept will be important moving forward, particularly in connection to J.R.R. Tolkien’s fiction. We find it throughout Christian thought, but Milton directly illustrates this in *Paradise Lost*. In book VII, the angelic choir sings in praise of the Father, after casting the rebel angels out of heaven, stating: “Who seeks / To lessen thee, against his purpose serves / To manifest the more thy might: his evil / Thou usest, and from thence creat’st more good”³³⁹ The Witch, Jadis, tried to use Edmund for her own evil plan, but instead Edmund helped bring about the salvation of Narnia.

Augustine’s influence is felt in this theological view, and Lewis draws our attention to this fact in his *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. In chapter ten, “Milton and St. Augustine,” Lewis examines the Augustinian theology of evil. All roads lead back to the Fall, but Lewis highlights some important points he and Milton borrow from Augustine. Firstly, God created all things good. Evil, therefore, is not part of the fabric of the created order. Second, this means that which is bad must be “good things perverted.”³⁴⁰ Lewis links this to pride, the idea that humans can run on their own, with no need of God. Thirdly, good can exist without bad, but bad cannot exist without good. If bad is the privation of good, it can only exist in relation to the good. With these three points in mind, Lewis draws out of Augustine another central point: bad will also be used, in the end, to benefit God’s divine plan. Lewis tells the reader: “[God] foreknows that some will voluntarily make themselves bad (*De Civ. Dei.*, XIV, ii) and also foreknows the good use which He will then make of their badness (*ibid.*). For as He shows His benevolence in *creating* good Natures, He shows his justice in *exploiting* evil wills.”³⁴¹

³³⁸ Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 192.

³³⁹ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, VII:613-616.

³⁴⁰ Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, 66.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

Edmund is a good example of both Need and Gift-love. He chooses to freely love others, changes his focus from a self-centered love, and even risks himself in the end to stop the Witch from harming Narnians. He is willing to sacrifice himself (Gift-love) without knowing the consequences in his final attack against the Witch. He is also a recipient of Aslan's Gift-love, through Aslan's forgiveness and self-sacrifice, for Edmund needs the love and recognition of others (Need-love). Edmund is not the only one to show such a huge change in character. A boy named Eustace Clarence Scrubb, Edmund's cousin, is also a good example of an individual who learns from his mistakes.

Eustace first appears in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Much like Edmund, Eustace is a self-centered child who holds himself in great esteem. His interpretation of events is often questionable. Eustace will write journal entries which are far from the facts, but he seems convinced that his perspective is the correct one.³⁴² This allows Lewis to amplify our distrust of Eustace and his point of view throughout the narrative. It is pride that taints Eustace at the start of his journey in Narnia, an overvaluing love for himself and a blatant disregard for those around him.

A central point of change occurs for Eustace when he finds a treasure. Seeing all the gold and jewels and realizing that he does not need to pay taxes on anything he finds, Eustace decides to profit from the hoard. He picks up a bracelet and places it on his arm, then begins to stuff his pockets with other treasures.³⁴³ The treasure turns Eustace into a dragon and marks the true beginning of his metamorphosis into a human being.³⁴⁴ Becoming a monster made the prideful and

³⁴² See, for example, Eustace's journal entry for August 7th in chapter 2 of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. While Edmund and Lucy "were delighted with the *Dawn Treader*, and when they returned aft to the cabin and supper, and saw the whole western sky lit up with an immense crimson sunset, and felt the quiver of the ship, and tasted the salt on their lips, and thought of unknown lands on the Eastern rim of the world, Lucy felt that she was almost too happy to speak." Eustace, on the other hand, records a very different and made-up version of the events in his diary. He states: "Have now been twenty-four hours on this ghastly boat if it isn't a dream. All the time a frightful storm has been raging (it's a good thing I'm not seasick). Huge waves keep coming in over the front and I have seen the boat nearly go under a number of times." The drastic difference between the truth presented by the narrator, and Eustace's lies is striking. C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 437.

³⁴³ Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 464.

³⁴⁴ The concept of treasure turning people into dragons is heavily indebted to Norse mythology. See, for example, the story of Fáfnir in *Fafnismal* in the *Poetic Edda* (*Elder Edda*) and the *Völsunga Saga*. For a good modern English translation, which tries to remain faithful to the original text, see Jackson Crawford, trans., *The Poetic Edda* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2015), as well as Jackson Crawford, trans., *The Saga of the Volsungs*, with *The Saga of Ragnar Lothbrok* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2017). For a more detailed examination of this story and its connection to Tolkien's "dragon sickness," see chapter 3 of this dissertation.

often difficult Eustace more willing to help those in need. He no longer cares only for himself, as he now also needs the aid of those around him. The narrator is quick to point out that “It was, however, clear to everyone that Eustace’s character had been rather improved by becoming a dragon. He was anxious to help [...] The pleasure (quite new to him) of being liked and, still more, of liking other people, was what kept Eustace from despair. For it was very dreary being a dragon. He shuddered whenever he caught sight of his own reflection as he flew over a mountain lake.”³⁴⁵ When his outer form is changed into a dragon, reflecting his personality, he shudders at the sight of himself. Eustace begins to reform his character, the person he is on the inside. He comes to realize that caring for others is important to maintain relationships. He gives up his self-centred pride, writing false stories in his diary while alone at night, and begins to appreciate the company of his companions – he experiences the feeling of being loved and realizes he needs that more than anything else.

His metamorphosis eventually leads to his salvation. Learning to love those around him, Eustace is transformed back into his original body by Aslan. The process, which takes some time, reflects the changes Eustace experienced within himself. The process is one of Need and Gift-love, Eustace acting freely and Aslan responding to Eustace’s free choice. Eustace begins the removal of his dragon body by scratching at his scales and removing layers of dragon skin. This is accompanied by the presence of water to wash away aspects of his dragon frame. Though Eustace manages to remove quite a bit of his skin on his own, Aslan finally tells him “You will have to let me undress you.”³⁴⁶ Aslan completes the removal of Eustace’s scales and turns him back into a boy. Eustace tells Edmund, after he is found by his friends again, that Aslan “caught hold of [him] [...] and threw me into the water.”³⁴⁷ Eustace splashes and swims around. Then Aslan proceeds to dress him “in new clothes.”³⁴⁸ The reader can find links to Galatians 12:27 “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothes yourselves with Christ.”³⁴⁹ Eustace is clothed and protected by Aslan.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁵ Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 471.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 474.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 475.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 475.

³⁴⁹ Lewis’ interpretation of being clothed in Christ was most likely heavily influenced by Calvin. For a good summation of John Calvin’s views on being clothed in Christ, see Dawn DeVries, “Calvin’s Preaching,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 106-124. See also, John Calvin, *Sermons on Galatians*, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1574).

³⁵⁰ This also mirrors God providing clothing for Adam and Eve after being cast out of the Garden in Genesis 3.

Eustace begins his transformation willingly, removing layers of scales from his dragon body as he no longer wants the outward appearance of a beast. Coupled with his internal willingness to love and help those around him, his personal conversion process is complete. He could not go all the way on his own though. He required help from Aslan, who removed the last remnants of his old nature, threw him into the waters, not unlike a baptismal font, to purify him and finally clothed him in new clothing. His change is complete, and the readers are made aware of that fact by Edmund's comments to Eustace looking back on his own sins in Narnia. Edmund tells him "Between ourselves, you haven't been as bad as I was on my first trip to Narnia. You were only an ass, but I was a traitor"³⁵¹.³⁵² "In Prince Caspian, the pitfalls of pride are well illustrated and Edmund, for his part, reflects on his own humbling during the children's first visit to Narnia."³⁵³ Both boys recognise the errors of their ways, but also their ability to change and become better. "Eustace begins by taunting his cousins and wanting to smash the picture in the bedroom. He is selfish, sullen, and surly aboard the ship, thinking of no one but himself and showing no gratitude whatsoever for what he receives. Even after Eustace becomes a dragon, initially he only thinks about how he will be able to lord it over his cousins. However, it is not long before he realizes that all he really wants is to be "friends" rather than being "better" than others."³⁵⁴ When Eustace returns to the real world, everyone notes his change and the narrator tells us that in fact many say "You'd never know him for the same boy."³⁵⁵

Before moving on from Edmund and Eustace, it should be noted that both boys experience a significant external event in their lives which seems to act as a catalyst for their change. This event, the petrification of Narnians for Edmund and being turned into a dragon for Eustace, could be viewed as external incidents which forced these two boys to experience a change of character. While this can be seen as a counterargument to their freedom of will, since turning into dragon could force someone to make a choice, they are reluctant to make, Lewis is clearly illustrating free will in both these cases. An example which shows that dramatic events do not always produce

³⁵¹ See Dante on treachery in the ninth circle of hell for why Edmund links himself to traitors. The first round, Caïna, is reserved for those who are traitors to their family. Named after Cain, in this area we find the degli Alberti brothers as well as Mordred, King Arthur's son. Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia: Inferno*, edited and commented by Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, *Classici* vol.613 (Milan: Oscar Mondadori, 2005), XXXII.

³⁵² Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 475.

³⁵³ Mark Pike, Thomas Lickona, and Victoria Nesfield, "Narnian Virtues: C.S. Lewis as Character Educator," *Journal of Character Education* 11, no. 2 (2015): 78.

³⁵⁴ Mark Pike, Thomas Lickona, and Victoria Nesfield, "Narnian Virtues," 79.

³⁵⁵ Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 541.

change is the case of Jadis in *The Magician's Nephew*. There is likely nothing more dramatic, though none can really say, than watching a god create a world. We may presume that seeing such a thing occur would be both memorable and life changing, perhaps even more of a catalyst than someone turning to stone. The birth of Narnia, however, had no change on the character of Jadis.³⁵⁶ Instead of changing her ways, she becomes a force of temptation in Narnia. Jadis is a perfect example to counteract the idea that all events force changes on Lewis' characters. Instead, they can freely become better, as Eustace and Edmund do, or they can remain bent as Jadis, the White Witch, does.

For the final example, let us turn to Reepicheep the mouse. Unlike Edmund and Eustace, Reepicheep's personality is not bad. Instead, he hovers around the margins of what Lewis would consider prideful behaviour. For Reepicheep, his honour is of the utmost importance. Our interactions with him continuously highlight this fact. Whether it be his arguments with Eustace in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* or in his interactions with characters in *Prince Caspian*, readers are confronted with both a proud and loyal mouse. In the events of *Prince Caspian*, Reepicheep and his mouse forces help fight the Telmarines. In this battle he ends up losing his tail. A conversation of note occurs between Reepicheep and Aslan at this point, one which highlights areas where Reepicheep's honour may be questionable to the Lion and the reader. The discussion is lengthy, but it is important to expand on a few points:

“But what would you do with a tail?” asked Aslan

“Sir,” said the Mouse, “I can eat and sleep and die for my King without one. But a tail is the honour and glory of a Mouse.”

“I have sometimes wondered, friend,” said Aslan, “whether you do not think too much about your honour.”

“Highest of all High Kings,” said Reepicheep, “permit me to remind you that a very small size has been bestowed on us Mice, and if we did not guard our dignity, some (who weigh worth by inches) would allow themselves very unsuitable pleasantries at our expense. That is why I have been at some pains to make it known that no one who does not wish to feel this sword as near his heart as I can reach shall talk in my presence about Traps or Toasted Cheese or Candles: no, sir – not the tallest fool in Narnia!”

[...] “Why have your followers all drawn *their* swords, may I ask?” said Aslan.

³⁵⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, 60-65.

“May it please your High Majesty,” said the second Mouse, whose name was Peepiceek, “we are all waiting to cut off our own tails if our Chief must go without his. We will not bear the shame of wearing an honour which is denied to the High Mouse.”

“Ah!” roared Aslan. “You have conquered me. You have great hearts. Not for the sake of your dignity, Reepicheep, but for the love that is between you and your people, and still more for the kindness your people showed me long ago when you ate away at the cords that bound me on the Stone Table (and it was then, though you have long forgotten it, that you began to be *Talking Mice*), you shall have your tail again.”³⁵⁷

How is Reepicheep different from Edmund and Eustace? His pride in his stature, though questionable, is something which brings him honour. His stature and position within the created world is one which is often oppressed, so the Mouse needs to adapt to the world around him. Of even greater importance is the response of the other mice who are under Reepicheep’s leadership. They are willing to sacrifice their own tails for the love they bear him. Edmund never incited that kind of loyalty, nor did Eustace. Both boys were proud and self-centered, but Reepicheep’s pride is one linked to his place within the wider world. He is loyal to his men and loving of those who show him the respect he deserves as an equal being in creation. The place held by mice in Narnia’s society has been established, even though they only gain the ability to speak much later than the other animals. The honour of the mice is derived from their desire to maintain that equality, not to lord it over the other creatures, but to be taken seriously. This is further emphasised by their forgetting of the fact that they began to speak after cutting Aslan loose from the Stone Table. No greater honour exists than helping their God after his great sacrifice. The mice do not use that in order to increase their standing in society or claim superiority over the other creatures. Instead, they turn to things they perceive as valuable within themselves, positive personal traits.

We get a good indicator of Reepicheep’s character by the end of his story. The internal compass, discussed by Milton and Lewis, of Reepicheep, that which allows him to know good from bad and draws him to Aslan is on full display at the end of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Earlier in the story we are told that the young Reepicheep was given a prophesy by a Dryad. She tells him: “Where sky and water meet, / Where the waves grow sweet, / Doubt not, Reepicheep, / To find all you seek, / There is the utter east.”³⁵⁸ Throughout his entire life, the Mouse seeks out

³⁵⁷ Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 412-413.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 433.

this land, known as Aslan's Country. It is his ultimate goal and the drive within him, a constant motivation to move forward. Having travelled to the end of the world with Caspian and his crew and being within sight of what he perceives as Aslan's Country, Reepicheep is more than willing to take the chance and travel beyond the known world.³⁵⁹ A testament to his nature, belief, and love for Aslan, Reepicheep risks the journey on his own. In the end he is rewarded, for in the final Narnia book, *The Last Battle*, readers meet the Mouse once again in Aslan's Country. His honour and fame is highlighted by the narrator for he says that a character, Tirian, "knew that he was looking at one of the greatest heroes of Narnia, Reepicheep the Mouse who had fought at the great Battle of Beruna and afterwards sailed to the World's End with King Caspian the Seafarer."³⁶⁰ Reepicheep may have been questioned by Aslan as to his motives, but his heart and love for others enabled him to pass the test. He was rewarded with a new tail and eventually made it into Aslan's Country. But what exactly is Aslan's Country and why is this so significant for the Mouse?³⁶¹

Aslan's Country can be seen as heaven, a New Jerusalem, where all of Narnia exists in perfect condition and form.³⁶² The Narnia readers and characters within the books experience only a pale reflection of this true Narnia. While speaking with Emeth, a worshiper of another god named Tash, Aslan explains that though he followed another, his true goal and heart were connected to Aslan. Aslan tell him "Unless thy desire had been for me thou wouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek."³⁶³ Reepicheep, along with all the characters who make it to Aslan's Country in *The Last Battle*, sought out Aslan throughout their lives. Reepicheep was constantly driven to find this place and longed for it. But why is longing for Aslan's Country something which is positive while other things longed for are not? Lewis tells us in *Mere Christianity* that God is the only true thing that can make us happy. Placing focus on other things, like worldly goods or changeable humans, cannot ever bring us true happiness for they are

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 539-540.

³⁶⁰ Lewis, *The Last Battle*, in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 763.

³⁶¹ For an examination of Lewis' understanding of history and eschatology, see the thesis by Jacques Sys, "Le temps et l'histoire dans l'œuvre de C.S. Lewis" (Paris 8, 1986).

³⁶² Lewis interestingly uses a very descriptive image for the readers in order to conjure up the feeling of being in Aslan's Country and seeing the King and Queen of Narnia enthroned. He says that for Tirian it felt as though "you were brought before Adam and Eve in all their glory." Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 765. The image of a prelapsarian world is an interesting one, for it implies the perfect order. Humans, pre-Fall, would have been able to see the first parents enthroned for they would continue to have access to the Tree of Life. A similar image is brought up in *Perelandra* when Ransom sees the King and Green Lady seated together near the end of the story. It appears to be an image of which Lewis is fond of. See Lewis, *Perelandra*, 260-261.

³⁶³ Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 757.

fleeting.³⁶⁴ Why can these things never succeed? “God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other [...] God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.”³⁶⁵

We come then to what made Reepicheep’s honour different from the pride of Edmund and Eustace. Though Reepicheep cared about his tail and honour, his goal was always set on finding Aslan’s Country, on finding God. As a leader of other mice, he was benevolent, for they all loved and cared for him to the point that they were willing to mutilate themselves if Reepicheep could not get his tail back. Edmund at the start of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* had no care for Aslan or his siblings. He sought dominion over them through the promise of kingship, rejected their elevation to even the position of courtiers and was willing to entrap his brother and sisters for a little more Turkish Delight. Eustace lied about his experiences and continuously attempted to increase his ego and had little regard for others. It was not until these two boys were faced with real trials, Edmund with the sight of creatures being turned to stone and Eustace being changed into a dragon, that they truly repent and recognize the error of their ways. Reepicheep never needed such a lesson. His love for Aslan and others is apparent to the reader, even if we must move past his emphasis on honour. What is important, however, is that all three characters use their free will to turn towards Aslan, to love their neighbour and God. All three need love in some way, and in the case of Eustace and Edmund they probably show prideful tendencies because of their lack of love. Their Need-love and the freedom to change, enables them to receive Gift-love from Aslan and their friends who journey with them. They are active participants in the relational experience. They can only receive Aslan’s love when they are ready and truly need the love he is always willing to gift.

The Cosmic Trilogy

While *The Chronicles of Narnia* show young readers a correct order of love and that it is possible to change the focus of love when it is directed in the wrong way, the *Cosmic Trilogy* examines the

³⁶⁴ Lewis has been influenced by Boethius here once again. See Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, III.

³⁶⁵ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50.

idea of love in mature relationships. We should now turn to these more adult works of fiction written by Lewis. Of particular interest to us will be the examination of sex and the relationship between Mark and Jane Studdock.³⁶⁶

In *Out of the Silent Planet*, when the main character Ransom arrives on the planet Mars, he meets a number of sentient creatures. Unlike the beings on Venus, who are similar in form to humans, Mars is inhabited by strange looking beings. The difference lies in the time of their creation, Venus is post-Incarnation, while Mars was created before. Therefore, all creation after the Incarnation of Christ on Earth will be similar to humans, for God took on the shape of his creatures and according to Lewis all who come after that will reflect this reality.³⁶⁷

One such group of individuals is known as the hrossa.³⁶⁸ While there are many theological and ethical points raised by Lewis in this novel, an important discussion occurs between a hross named Hyoui and Ransom. Ransom is curious about the relationship between the hrossa and other beings in Mars, the séroni and pfiltriggi. Ransom begins by asking Hyoui if one of the groups ever move against the others with weapons, to claim something they desire. Hyoui does not seem to understand Ransom's question, therefore, Ransom asks if one group had food and another did not, would they attack each other? Hyoui responds by stating that God, who in this fictional universe is named Maleldil, would never stop providing food, so the hnau, a term used for all the beings of Mars, often share food with others. Hyoui does not seem to understand the point of the question which this highlights Ransom's fallen nature. The idea of withholding food, when there is a surplus, from those who require nourishment does not make sense to Hyoui. We see quite dramatically the difference in the realities Lewis presents and this is amplified when Ransom turns the conversation to reproduction. Continuing the train of thought concerning the amount of food, Ransom inquires about overpopulation. Ransom asks, would Maleldil expand the food supply if the hnau kept increasing in numbers?³⁶⁹ Hyoui's answer is interesting, he asks: "But why would we have more young?"³⁷⁰ The conversation is worth quoting here to get a better understanding of Hyoui's argument.

³⁶⁶ *The Cosmic Trilogy* also goes by the names *Space Trilogy* and *Ransom Trilogy* depending on where the books are published. It consists of three novels: *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*.

³⁶⁷ See, for example, chapter 11 of C.S. Lewis, *Perelandra*.

³⁶⁸ *Hrossa* is the plural form of *Hross*. These beings are described as possibly looking like otters.

³⁶⁹ Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (London: HarperCollins Publisher, 2005), 88.

³⁷⁰ Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*, 88.

Ransom found this difficult. At last he said: ‘Is the begetting of young not a pleasure among the *hrossa*?’ ‘A very great one, *Hmān*. This is what we call love.’ ‘If a thing is a pleasure, a *hmān* wants it again. He might want the pleasure more often than the number of young that could be fed.’ It took Hyoi a long time to get the point. ‘You mean,’ he said slowly, ‘that he might do it not only in one or two years of his life but again?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘But why? Would he want his dinner all day or want to sleep after he had slept? I do not understand.’ ‘But a dinner comes every day. This love, you say, comes only once while the *hross* lives?’ ‘But it takes his whole life. When he is young he has to look for his mate; and then he has to court her; then he begets young; then he rears them; then he remembers all this, and boils it inside him and makes it into poems and wisdom.’ ‘But the pleasure he must be content only to remember?’ ‘That is like saying, “My food must be content only to eat.”’ ‘I do not understand.’ ‘A pleasure is full grown only when it is remembered. You are speaking, *Hmān*, as if the pleasure were the one thing and the memory another. It is all one thing [...] What you call remembering is the last part of the pleasure, as the *crah* is the last part of the poem. When you and I met, the meeting was over very shortly, it was nothing. Now it is growing something as we remember it. But still we know very little about it. What it will be when I remember it as I lie down to die, what it makes in me all my days till then – that is the real meeting. The other is only the beginning of it...’³⁷¹

Much like Ransom’s reluctance to consume the fruit he found on Venus a second time, Hyoi does not understand why humans would want to continuously have sex, possibly not even wanting to reproduce.³⁷² Ransom is a fallen human, just as we readers are, so it is a difficult for us to understand Hyoi’s point of view. Yet, a few things stick out. First, the act of pleasure is limited in time. It occurs once and is over quickly, therefore, it is fleeting. Focusing our happiness on this short-lived experience is problematic in that it is unsustainable. Hyoi argues that instead that we should be looking at the larger picture. Sex is one chapter in a long story of life – the lover courts the beloved, builds the relationship, consummates the relationship, and remembers the beauty of the experience. This is strikingly different from post-lapsarian humanity, which often gets stuck on the consummation, never moving beyond it.

The second important aspect of Hyoi’s position is that the entire life experience can only be viewed at the end. Encounters, friendships and loves all need to be examined at the end of one’s life to truly understand their meaning and value. These experiences also lead us to become

³⁷¹ Ibid., 89-90.

³⁷² An interesting link can be made to Lewis’ critique of George Orwell here. Lewis is against the notion that sexuality should be freed from eros. Sex and eros should remain united for Lewis. If they are split the woman would simply become an object of pleasure according to Lewis. See C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 114-115.

productive, to write works of poetry and art. Much like Diotima's position in the *Symposium*, love/beauty seeks to produce. It not only reproduces itself in biological offspring, but also in works of art created in the act of remembering the pleasures we experience. Hyoui returns to the original question about food, and finally acknowledges that Maleldil created them, but if everyone were to have twenty children because they were driven by the desire of pleasure, food scarcity would inevitably become a problem. The fallen, or bent, as Hyoui calls those from Earth, humans have created an evil from a good thing. God commanded humans to be fruitful and multiply, so sex like all of God's creation was originally good. Instead, as Hyoui points out, it is the act of continuously seeking that pleasure which is a perversion; humans look for happiness in a short act. Overindulgence, like the consumption of Turkish Delight even when one is full or eating a fruit which has orgiastic properties just to experience that pleasure again, is questionable. These are like the little steps Screwtape used to pervert his human – slowly misusing good things to turn them bad.

The question of reproduction is also at the center of *That Hideous Strength*. In this case, however, one of the main characters, Jane Studdock, wishes to maintain her own identity and sovereignty over her body, while her husband Mark, questions their relationship because of many issues, principally her unwillingness to conceive a child. One of the stranger novels by Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* may be heavily indebted to Charles Williams.³⁷³ Not all readers and critics appreciate this third book in the *Cosmic Trilogy* as it deals with jumbled ideas – including Merlin,³⁷⁴ Logres and university politics of Lewis' time.

With so many themes and ideas running through this narrative, it would be impossible to cover everything in great detail here. Instead, focus will be placed on the relationship between Jane and Mark, the two main characters. Mark is an academic, a sociologist, who values his career and continuously seeks to reach the faculty's inner circle. Jane, his wife, is also a scholar, completing

³⁷³ Michelle Robinson, "C.S. Lewis's Cosmic Trilogy" *Touchstone* 31, no. 3 (2013): 39.

³⁷⁴ For a good overview of *That Hideous Strength's* plot and the role of Merlin and magic in Lewis' thought, see T.A. Shippey, "The Ransom Trilogy," in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, eds. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge Collections Online: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 237-250. Shippey tells us: "Merlin remains the most strikingly original figure in *That Hideous Strength*, with his importation of a medieval *magia* which Lewis insisted, in *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, was palpably different from the *goeteia* of the Renaissance. One of the most attractive features of the novel is indeed the little lectures which Cecil Dimble occasionally gives about Arthurian Britain, about magic and the *longaevi*, about Logres and Britain, even about Celticity, which have had (one suspects) a considerable effect on the many later retellers of the Arthurian story." T.A. Shippey, "The Ransom Trilogy," 246-247.

a PhD on John Donne. While she is a strong and independent person, she feels subjugated and unfulfilled in her marriage. A particular point of contention is the question of having children. While Jane is not opposed to having a child, she does not see it as her main goal at the moment. She wishes to complete her degree and live her life as much as possible. Coupled with her doubt concerning her role as a married woman, Jane begins to experience prophetic dreams. Not sure how to understand and deal with her dreams, she is eventually led to a woman named Grace Ironwood. Ms. Ironwood works at St Anne's, a location and organization under Ransom's protection and guidance.

While Jane's struggle in her marriage is evident prior to her visit with Ironwood, we get a much clearer picture of her mindset while she is waiting for her meeting and walking throughout the gardens of St Anne's. Jane seems to be transfixed by the garden at St Anne's (a possible insertion of an autobiographical element, for Lewis also had a love of gardens from the time his brother made one out of the lid of a cookie box). The narrator tells us "It reminded Jane of something. It was a very large garden. It was like – like – yes, now she had it: it was like the garden in *Peter Rabbit*. Or was it like the garden in the *Romance of the Rose*? Or the garden in *Alice*? Or like the garden on the top of some Mesopotamian ziggurat which had probably given rise to the whole legend of Paradise? [...] Freud said we liked gardens because they were symbols of the female body. But that was a man's point of view."³⁷⁵ Each of these images link to Lewis personally: *The Romance of the Rose* was a work he did quite a bit of research on in *The Allegory of Love*, he identifies Beatrix Potter as an important author in his youth, and Lewis Carroll's works would have been readily available to Lewis, not to mention Carroll was friends with George MacDonald, whom Lewis admired greatly. The idea of comfort is most likely being highlighted here, a return to Lewis' place of Joy. Childhood texts, romances and even Eden are being brought to the forefront of Jane's thought. This comfort is disrupted by Freud's male perspective. But the question of the female body sparks the memory of a quote for Jane, one which she finds in a book in the waiting room at St Anne's. "The beauty of the female is the root of joy to the female as well as to the male, and it is no accident that the goddess of Love is older and stronger than the god."³⁷⁶ To desire the desiring of her own beauty is the vanity of Lilith, but to desire the enjoying

³⁷⁵ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 72.

³⁷⁶ Though Venus was Cupid's, Amor's, mother, Lewis may also be drawing on Spenser's depiction of Venus here. In the Temple of Venus, in *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser claims that "So all the world by thee (Venus) at first was made." See Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, IV:x:47. Venus is depicted as a source of creation. Her husband, Adonis,

of her own beauty is the obedience of Eve, and to both it is in the lover that the beloved tastes her own delightfulness. As obedience is the stairway of pleasure, so humility is the - ””³⁷⁷ The quote is cut here by Lewis, but the point is clear. While Lilith desires to be desired, Eve desires the enjoying of her beauty. This distinction is problematic for Jane, for Eve gives herself totally to the other to be enjoyed, but Jane at this point in the narrative is unwilling to give herself over completely to her husband.

The experience forces Jane to think about her relationship with her husband. Remembering her thoughts from before getting married, Jane thinks:

Even when she had discovered that she was going to marry Mark if he asked her, the thought ‘but I must still keep up my own life’ had arisen at once and had never for more than a few minutes at a stretch been absent from her mind. Some resentment against love itself, and therefore against Mark, for thus invading her life, remained. She was at least very vividly aware how much a woman gives up in getting married. Mark seemed to her insufficiently aware of this. Though she did not formulate it, this fear of being invaded and entangled was the deepest ground of her determination not to have a child – or not for a long time yet. One had one’s own life to live.³⁷⁸

To become completely obedient, to give herself up to Mark by desiring to be enjoyed, is not in Jane’s nature. A child would be the symbol and last act which solidified Jane’s subjugation to her role of housewife, something she believed was used by Mark to keep her bound and prevent her from completing her PhD and living her life.

We should not be thinking that these feelings of doubt are one-sided. Mark too has a tendency to question his marriage and the relationship he has with Jane. After returning from his journey, which led him to an organization known as the N.I.C.E., the National Institute for Coordinated Experiments, Mark is not as truthful about his intentions as he should be. Jane also avoids explaining to Mark her dreams or visit to St Anne’s. Both are reluctant to share with the other.³⁷⁹ At their first meeting after being separated by large events in their lives, they simply

also holds a special role for Spenser as the Garden of Adonis is the area where human souls are produced. See Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, III:vi. For an examination of Adonis in Spenser, see William C. Johnson, “‘God’ as Structure in Spenser’s Garden of Adonis,” *English Studies* 63, n.4 (1982), 301-307. For a study on Venus and Adonis in Spenser and other thinkers, see also Malgorzata Grzegorzewska, “Metamorphoses of Men and Goddesses: The Story of Venus and Adonis and the History of Desire,” *European Journal of English Studies* 2, n.3 (1998): 306-324.

³⁷⁷ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 74.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

speak vaguely to each other, as strangers might. The narrator tells us “And so, all evening, the male bird (Mark) displayed his plumage and the female (Jane) played her part and asked questions and laughed and feigned more interest than she felt. Both were young, and if neither loved very much, each was still anxious to be admired.”³⁸⁰ Jane and Mark are behaving like Lilith, not Eve, desiring to be desired. They are a married couple playing at the mating rituals of birds (being the Dumb Beasts Aslan warns the Narnians about becoming again), showing plumage, external elements, while neglecting their true feelings and emotions, holding back important truths from one another.

Jane doubts Mark’s understanding of her point of view, but so does Mark doubt that Jane understands his. As the story progresses and N.I.C.E. is revealed to be a corrupt organization,³⁸¹ Mark’s life is put in danger. His first thought is how lucky Jane will be to have him gone. He believes that she seemed “to have in herself deep wells and knee-deep meadows of happiness, rivers of freshness, enchanted gardens of leisure, which he could not enter but could have spoiled.”³⁸² Mark does not question Jane’s love for him, but instead sees himself as something which could have tarnished Jane herself. We are also given the image of the garden once again, Jane this time has the garden within her, a reminder of the previous quote on Freud believing the female body to be a metaphor for the garden.³⁸³ But the contrast of views is dramatic here: Jane sees Mark as imposing on her freedom, while Mark sees Jane as a treasure which he would spoil if he were to remain in her life.

Towards the climax of the story Mark finally realizes his bent impositions on Jane.

He must give her her freedom. It would be quite unjust to think that his love for her had been basely sensual. Love, Plato says, is the son of Want. Mark’s body knew better than his mind had known till recently, and even his sensual desires were the true index of something which he lacked and Jane had to

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 112.

³⁸¹ The N.I.C.E. possesses many Nazi-like ideas – like the “purification” of the human race and the sterilization of those they deem “unfit.” Their goal is to colonize other planets, to outlive Earth, an idea often criticized by the angelic beings in Lewis’ trilogy. The N.I.C.E. also reject traditional norms, beauty and ethics, instead focusing on rationality, utility and self-interest. See David C. Downing, *Planets in Peril*, 53, 56. The idea of idea of humans perfecting themselves, escaping planetary destruction was problematic for Lewis. It was like a new temptation of the Serpent. Eve trying to become a god. See David C. Downing, *Planets in Peril*, 36-37, 39.

³⁸² Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 339.

³⁸³ “The beauty of the female is the root of joy to the female as well as to the male, and it is no accident that the goddess of Love is older and stronger than the god. To desire the desiring of her own beauty is the vanity of Lilith, but to desire the enjoying of her own beauty is the obedience of Eve, and to both it is in the lover that the beloved tastes her own delightfulness. As obedience is the stairway of pleasure, so humility is the - ” Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 74.

give. When she first crossed the dry and dusty world which his mind inhabited she had been like a spring shower in opening himself to it he had not been mistaken, He had gone wrong only in assuming that marriage, by itself, gave him either power or title to appropriate that freshness. As he now saw, one might as well have thought one could buy a sunset by buying the field from which one had seen it.³⁸⁴

Mark comes to the realization that Jane was not his to own, he could not lay claim to her, just as Jane rejected being under Mark's rule, a punishment for Eve's lapse in the Garden,³⁸⁵ Mark comes to acknowledge that he does not possess her in the way he would possess property or land. Instead, he partakes in the relationship with her, both should be giving equally, and neither should demand more than what they can give.

Jane too comes to realize her place should be with Mark and that she does in fact love him. Helped by the director of St Anne's, Ransom (from the two previous books), Jane is sent to meet Mark after all the events of the main plot are concluded.³⁸⁶ This final meeting is significant, for Ransom sends Jane off with a word of advice. He tells her: "Go in obedience and you will find love. You will have no more dreams. Have children instead."³⁸⁷ Just as Mark recognizes he should not rule over Jane, Jane comes to recognize the value of obedience.³⁸⁸ Returning to the cabin where Mark is staying, Jane hesitates but finally enters the room.³⁸⁹ Mark too hesitates, feeling sorry for his wife and all the demands he places on her as a person.³⁹⁰ The balance struck by Mark and Jane is interesting. They both come to recognize that they need something from their partners, but they also have things to give to the other. Mark wanted to possess Jane and reproduce with her, Jane

³⁸⁴ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 502.

³⁸⁵ "yet your desire shall be for your husband, / and he shall rule over you." Gen. 3:16b.

³⁸⁶ It can be noted at this time that Perelandra descends to Earth after a while, and the angels finally get to return to Earth, the Silent Planet. The Earth is known as the Silent Planet, because after the Fall the angels of our world shut us off from the outer planets. During the events of *That Hideous Strength* this barrier is removed and the angels of Venus and Mars enter our world and help to correct the wrongs done here. Ransom is also taken away at this point. While he returned to Earth a little worse for wear, his health was always a problem. However, much like Bilbo after holding on to the Ring of Power for so long after the events of *The Hobbit*, Ransom is unable to experience death. He must be brought back to Perelandra to finally die. See Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 513, 529.

³⁸⁷ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 530.

³⁸⁸ Such a conclusion may be controversial, and many scholars have explored Lewis' position on women and feminism. For some studies see: Gretchen Bartels, "Of Men and Mice: C. S. Lewis on Male-Female Interactions," *Literature & Theology*, 22 n.3 (2008): 324-338.; Candice Fredrick and Sam McBride, *Women Among the Inklings: Gender, C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams*, Contributions in Women Studies 191, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001).; Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *A Sword between the Sexes?: C. S. and the Gender Debates* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010). For a select bibliography on C.S. Lewis and gender, see Don W. King, "C.S. Lewis and Gender: 'Positively Medieval?'" *Christian Scholar's Review* 36, no. 4 (2007): 387-90.

³⁸⁹ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 534.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 531-533.

wanted to continue her life independently. But now both realize that if two people only need something from the other, and do not give as well, the relationship cannot be fulfilling.³⁹¹ Lewis has presented a perfect example of the relationship of love, and complexity, of love – love which is composed of both Need-love and Gift-love. Those who need require someone to give, and if you give, someone must be willing and able to receive on the basis of her/his need for this gift. Present is also Appreciative love, through Mark’s recognition and appreciation of Jane’s beauty, purity, and internal garden – a longing to capture her freshness for eternity.

Their growth as a couple, though it occurred separately, is highlighted by Mark’s final vision. Venus appears to him, while he is waiting for Jane, in a vision and effectively blesses their marriage bed.

Suddenly diffused light brightened and flushed. He looked up and perceived a great Green Lady standing by a doorway in a wall. It was not Jane, not like Jane. It was larger, almost gigantic. It was not human, though it was flame-coloured robe. Light came from it. The face was enigmatic, ruthless he thought, inhumanly beautiful. It was opening the door for him. He did not dare disobey (‘Surely,’ he thought, ‘I must have died’), and he went in: found himself in some place of sweet smells and bright fires, with food and wine and a rich bed.³⁹²

Lewis has depicted Venus as blessing the marriage bed of Jane and Mark. Venus is the older of the gods of love, older than Cupid. Remember the quote Jane read on her first visit to St Anne’s: “it is no accident that the goddess of Love is older and stronger than the god”³⁹³ Venus plays an important role in Lewis’ understanding of eros.³⁹⁴ Fittingly, Lewis has Venus prepare Mark and Jane a bed. This connects to Lewis’ argument that the sexual element of eros should be called Venus. Though Venus can exist without the eros, making it pure sexual desire, the element of Venus is necessary for eros to function. Yet, Venus must be brought to a minimum in order for eros to fully thrive.³⁹⁵ The quote on the goddess of Love being older and stronger has another implication: if Venus is sexual desire, and Eros, Cupid, is linked to a “proper” love, then Lewis is

³⁹¹ For an examination of Mark and Jane’s relationship, see Anne-Frédérique Mochel-Caballero, *L’Évangile selon C.S. Lewis: le dépassement du masculin-féminin dans la quête de Dieu* (Lille: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2011), 266.

³⁹² Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 533.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 74.

³⁹⁴ Lewis’ source for Venus may be Spenser. Similarity between his depiction of the Goddess and her role in love can be found in Spenser’s works. See, for example, Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, IV: x. See also, Spenser, *Epithalamion*, in *Edmund Spenser: The Shorter Poems* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), VI.

³⁹⁵ See C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 111, 117.

claiming that the sexual desire is stronger than the need for love. Sexual desire is harder to stave off, a point made clear by Ransom's inability to grasp Hyoi's understanding of sexual experience.

Returning, then, to Hyoi's conversation with Ransom briefly, we see two opposites of the notion of reproduction: the bent idea of having twenty children who you cannot feed, rejected by Hyoi, and Jane's reluctance to have any children to maintain her independence. In fact, Lewis most likely disagrees with both extremes. God did give the first commandment of be fruitful and multiply, but Lewis seems to be a centrist in this case. Hyoi was correct, for Lewis, since to reproduce just to experience the pleasure linked to it with no concern for the child's future is a perversion of God's divine command. On the other hand, Jane's withholding was also not right. She did not reject the idea of a child because she did not wish to be a mother, but instead because she feared her loss of sovereignty over her body. By the end of the story, Jane seems willing to at least be with Mark and try to make the relationship work.

We can see how Mark and Jane both came to renewed perspectives of their relationship. They are no longer birds showing plumage, but lovers entering a bower.³⁹⁶ Let us recall the final line of the vision Mark had: "and he went in: found himself in some place of sweet smells and bright fires, with food and wine and a rich bed."³⁹⁷ Lewis could be providing us a faint echo of Milton. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton breaks the third wall of his poem: "Here in close recess / With flowers, garlands, and sweet-smelling herbs / Epousèd Eve decked first her nuptial bed."³⁹⁸ Sweet smells and a nuptial bed are present in both narratives. Milton continues his description: "Straight side by side were laid, nor turned I ween / Adam from his fair spouse, nor Eve the rights / Mysterious of connubial love refused: / Whatever hypocrites austere talk / Of purity and place and innocence, / Defaming as impure what God declares / Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all. / Our maker bids increase, who bids abstain / But our destroyer, for to God and man? / Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source / Of human offspring, sole propriety, / In Paradise of all things common else."³⁹⁹ Milton attacks those who reject the value of love between a married couple, but also anticipates the notion of mutual rights. Connection can be made here also with 1 Corinthians 7:3 "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to

³⁹⁶ Interestingly, "Bauer" in German has an archaic use for meaning "birdcage."

³⁹⁷ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 533.

³⁹⁸ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV, 708-720.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, IV: 741-752.

her husband.” It is not only Adam who has rights over Eve, but Eve too has rights over her husband.⁴⁰⁰ While Milton does provide a postlapsarian view of sex, and how it became bent, Lewis has latched on to the more positive views of love within marriage and illustrated the give and take nature of love once again.⁴⁰¹ Pauline “Due Benevolence,” from 1 Corinthians,⁴⁰² giving conjugal rights to your partner, addresses the notion of needing and gifting. While Lewis is not directly connecting Jane and Mark’s last scene to Milton, similar themes are being raised by both in connection to the Bower. Mark and Jane’s marriage shows the reader the need for both parties to give and receive in a mutually beneficial way. They will, it is hinted, participate in conjugal rights at the end of *That Hideous Strength*. While both had issues and reservations to overcome, they did begin from a place of love and freely chose to change their ways.

Lewis has provided his readers with many examples of love. It becomes apparent that humans have the ability to make mistakes and become corrupt, for we are all subject to the Fall of Adam and Eve. But Lewis does not present a pessimistic view on our ability to change and purely

⁴⁰⁰ See fn. 751-752 in John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by Alastair Fowler, *Longman Annotated English Poets*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2013), IV: 751-752.

⁴⁰¹ For Lewis’ full position on sex, see his chapter on “Sexual Morality” in *Mere Christianity*. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 94-103. Lewis does not agree that the body or sex is something rejected by Christianity, and therefore it is not something which is innately bad. Instead, it is bent by humans, like all other natural desires we have. “I know some muddleheaded Christians have talked as if Christianity thought that sex, or the body, or pleasure, were bad in themselves. But they were wrong. Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions which thoroughly approves of the body – which believes that matter is good, that God Himself once took on a human body, that some kind of body is going to be given to us even in Heaven and is going to be an essential part of our happiness, or beauty and our energy. Christianity has glorified marriage more than any other religion: and nearly all the greatest love poetry in the world has been produced by Christians. If anyone says that sex, in itself, is bad, Christianity contradicts him at once.” It should be noted his view that only Christians produced the greatest love poetry is false and dated. However, Lewis goes on to say that we should not make sex our main interest. “There is nothing to be ashamed of in enjoying your food: there would be everything to be ashamed of if half the world made food the main interest of their lives and spent their time looking at pictures of food and dribbling and smacking their lips.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 98-99. Compare this also with Lewis’ position on sex in marriage in *The Four Loves*. “The great, permanent temptation of marriage is not to sensuality but (quite bluntly) to avarice. With all proper respect to the medieval guides, I cannot help remembering that they were all celibates, and probably did not know what Eros does to our sexuality; how, far from aggravating, he reduces the nagging and addictive character of mere appetite. And that not simply by satisfying it. Eros, without diminishing desire, makes abstinence easier. He tends, no doubt, to a pre-occupation with the Beloved which can indeed be an obstacle to the spiritual life; but not chiefly a sensual pre-occupation.” C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 118. We can see echoes of Hyoui’s position in Lewis’ argument. Married life enables the couple to focus more on the wellbeing of the other, and does not, according to Lewis, encourage sexual desires.

⁴⁰² Lewis explores Paul’s theology here arguing: “The older moral theologians certainly seem to have thought that the danger we chiefly had to guard against in marriage was that of a soul-destroying surrender to the senses. It will be noticed, however, that this is not the Scriptural approach. St Paul, dissuading his converts from marriage, says nothing about that side of the matter except to discourage prolonged abstinence from Venus (1 Corinthians 7:5). What he fears is pre-occupation, the need of constantly ‘pleasing’ – that is, considering – one’s partner, the multiple distractions of domesticity. It is marriage itself, not the marriage bed, that will be likely to hinder us from waiting uninterruptedly on God.” C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 117. For a study on virginity and celibacy in the early church, see Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent: Sex and Politics in Early Christianity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

love others. Nygren, in Lewis's view, was wrong, it is not only up to God to love us fallen creatures, we too must turn towards God and neighbour. Edmund changed his ways and saved the day after he originally chose candy and dominion over his siblings, Eustace cared for others after spending his life only looking after himself. Reepicheep, though appearing proud, cared for his friends and loyal followers, even risking his life to gain access to the unknown of Aslan's Country. Finally, both Mark and Jane contributed to the failure of their marriage, recognized the errors of their ways, and changed their points of view to make their relationship work. Free will exists, love is not just a gift from God, it is also something which must be willingly received by us humans. The Creator-creation relationship is one based on freedom to choose and willingness to love and be loved for Lewis. Let us now turn, then, to Lewis' final published work *Till We Have Faces*. A retelling of the Cupid and Psyche myth, where Psyche's sister Orual shows an unhealthy love for her beautiful sister, and a hatred for her divine brother-in-law.

Till We Have Faces and Possessive Love

Considered by many, including Lewis, to be his best work of fiction, *Till We Have Faces* is based on the story of Cupid and Psyche found in *The Golden Ass*, or *Metamorphoses*, of Apuleius. Lewis attempted to retell the story from the perspective of Psyche's sister Orual, a character created by Lewis. Lewis fell in love with the story by Apuleius in 1916. He continuously sought to write a version of this tale, eventually succeeding in 1956 to publish this work, his last work of fiction.⁴⁰³

Apuleius' version of the story is famous.⁴⁰⁴ It begins with a king and queen who have three daughters, Psyche being the most beautiful of them all. Her beauty is so great, that she begins to be worshipped by citizens of her father's realm. Venus is enraged by this, for her worship was diminished, she decides to send her son, Cupid, to deal with Psyche. Cupid scratches himself with one of his arrows and falls in love with Psyche. Eventually, Psyche is seen as a problem for her

⁴⁰³ Peter J. Schakel, "Till We Have Faces," in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, eds. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge Collections Online: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 281.

⁴⁰⁴ For studies on Apuleius' *Golden Ass* and the story of Cupid and Psyche, see Erich Neumann, *Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine. A Commentary on the Tale by Apuleius*, The International Library of Psychology (London: Routledge, 2002).; Josiah Osgood, "Nuptiae Iure Civili Congruae: Apuleius' Story of Cupid and Psyche and the Roman Law of Marriage," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 136, n.2 (2006): 415-441.; S. Parker and P. Murgatroyd, "Love Poetry and Apuleius' 'Cupid and Psyche'" *The Classical Quarterly* 52, n.1 (2002): 400-404.

father, and she is offered up as a sacrifice to the gods, only to be found by Cupid. He remains hidden from her but provides for her all that she needs. Her sisters, feeling Psyche may be being tricked, convince Psyche to look upon Cupid even though he placed a prohibition on her ever doing so. Psyche listens, sees Cupid, and is cast out of the home he provided due to her actions. While the poor Psyche is tested by Venus, who is jealous of her beauty, Psyche's perseverance, love for and by Cupid, and good nature eventually lead to her becoming a goddess. Her spouse, Cupid, is the catalyst for this gift of immortality by Zeus.⁴⁰⁵ Love, in Psyche's case has allowed her to transcend her human nature and reach the realm of the gods, echoing an earlier idea Diotima theorized in the *Symposium*.

Venus and Cupid each represent an aspect of love in this story. Venus is mixed and contradictory, she is linked to jealousy, jealousy of Psyche. We see her jealousy through her subsequent actions toward Psyche and the way in which she tasks her son, Cupid, with avenging his mother. Venus seals Cupid's task "with playful but incestuous open-mouthed kisses."⁴⁰⁶ Venus purposely attempts to make Psyche's life difficult. Cupid, on the other hand, is representative of erotic attraction. An attraction which cannot be resisted. It is "...[s]o great that one feels helpless; thus, when Venus orders him to make Psyche fall in love with a worthless man, he falls in love with her himself."⁴⁰⁷ Cupid, while described as immoral and irresponsible, is also a gentle and generous lover to Psyche. Even when she angers him, and he leaves her, he is devastated by the loss.⁴⁰⁸ Yet, Cupid is central to Psyche's growth. "'Cupid and Psyche' is the narrative in which Cupid finally comes of age. He is the morally upright husband of Psyche, father of pleasure, and the guide which leads humanity towards knowledge of the divine."⁴⁰⁹ This interpretation is at odds with the depiction of the cherub Cupid we are accustomed of seeing, but it fits with the views held by Platonic thinkers. Particularly the "Platonic idea of the Soul being perfected by Love and of the kiss as a means of transcendence..."⁴¹⁰ Apuleius responds to Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* and

⁴⁰⁵ See Apuleius, *The Golden Ass, or The Transformation of Lucius*, trans. Robert Graves (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), 96-143. For a summary see Thomas Bulfinch, "Cupid and Psyche" in *The Age of Fable; or. Stories of Gods and Heroes* (Boston: Sanborn, Carter, Bazing and Company, 1855, 3rd ed.), 115-128. See also C.S. Lewis' summary at the end of *Till We Have Faces*, C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* (New York: Mariner Books, 2012), 311-313.

⁴⁰⁶ Doris T. Myers, *Bareface: A Guide to C.S. Lewis' Last Novel* (Columbia: Missouri Press, 2004), 151.

⁴⁰⁷ Myers, *Bareface*, 152.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

creates a narrative. Psyche, representative of the Soul, struggles to rise on her own and relies on love and Cupid to lead to towards the divine.⁴¹¹

The influence of the Cupid and Psyche story can be found throughout Western Europe.⁴¹² The narrative strikes a chord relevant to those living in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Referencing Philippe Ariès, Jane Kingsley-Smith notes that “after the sixteenth century love and death came closer together.”⁴¹³ Kingsley-Smith notes that “eroticized death” can be found in works of art, like *Romeo and Juliet*, or Hans Baldung Grien’s *Death and the Woman* painted in 1518-1519. This eroticization derived from the plagues and commonality of death experience by those living in the period. This “led to a new secularity, emphasizing the pleasures of the earthly world and tragedy of loss.”⁴¹⁴ Why does Cupid become an example of eroticizing death?⁴¹⁵ What role does he fulfill? Kingsley-Smith notes:

Although Cupid’s imposition of desire is often a means of asserting patriarchal authority over powerful and transgressive women, thus tacitly identifying him with the adult male, he was also an archetype for the beautiful boy in early modern culture. This rendered him an object of pleasure for both men and women, capable of arousing a remarkable range of desires while blurring the distinctions between them.⁴¹⁶

Lewis’ story draws heavily from this narrative, but the lessons he seeks to present are different. The story is given to us through the narrator, Orual. We should be cautious of taking all Orual describes as truth, much like Eustace and his journal entries. She begins part one of her story with an accusation against the gods, “I will accuse the gods, especially the god who lives in the Grey Mountains.”⁴¹⁷ Just like John at the start of the *Pilgrim’s Regress*, Orual sees the gods as beings who only take from humanity and give nothing but pain and suffering. Orual loves her sister Psyche so much, to the point of possessiveness. Due to Psyche’s beauty⁴¹⁸ Ungit (Venus), stops the crops from growing out of jealousy. Psyche and Orual’s father are convinced that he must

⁴¹¹ Downing, *Planets in Peril*, 164.

⁴¹² For a detailed study of the role of Cupid in the Early Modern Period, see Jane Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid in Early Modern Literatures and Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

⁴¹³ Jane Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid in Early Modern Literatures and Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 61.

⁴¹⁴ Jane Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid*, 61.

⁴¹⁵ Though underplayed today with the cherubic image of Cupid, Cupid’s method of “spreading love” is by arrows. He inflicts a wound and therefore a link between love and wounds is implicit in his depiction.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁴¹⁷ Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, 3.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

sacrifice Psyche to appease Ungit and he sends her off to the brute, Cupid, separating her from Orual.⁴¹⁹

To Psyche, Orual gives the loving and gentle care of a mother. She also offers her protection, unselfishly defending her when their father agrees to expose Psyche on the mountain for “the Shadow-Brute” to wed or to devour, the outcome at that point not clear to anyone... Though much younger and thus not able to give back equally to Orual, Psyche is devoted and loving in her obedience while in their home. Together, both fill the void in each other’s life left by a dead mother (though they had different mothers) and by an emotionally cold and sometimes cruel father.⁴²⁰

We get a first glimpse at the bent love Orual has for her sister when the two discuss Psyche’s parting. Psyche remained calm and accepted her fate, to the point that Orual felt anger. Orual tells us “She made me, in a way, angry. I would have died for her (this, at least, I know is true) and yet, the night before her death, I could feel anger. She spoke so steadily and thoughtfully, as if we had been disputing with the Fox⁴²¹, up behind the pear trees, with hours and days still before us. The parting between her and me seemed to cost her so little.”⁴²² Psyche is the one in real danger, but Orual is angry that she is not acknowledging the “cost” of no longer seeing Orual again. The perspective of Orual is skewed from the start. Orual does not appreciate the danger Psyche is in for Psyche’s own sake, but only cares for the loss she will personally experience.

After being separated from Psyche, Orual feels angry and depressed from her loss, and on one occasion her tutor, the Fox, provides her with one, of many valuable lessons. He reminds her that: “To love, and to lose what we love, are equally things appointed for our nature. If we cannot bear the second well, that evil is ours.”⁴²³ It is hard not to see echoes of Augustine here. Lewis disagreed with Augustine’s self-chastisement for his tears at the death of his friend and mother, for mortals can be sad at their losses but must also understand that all things are changeable.⁴²⁴

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 48.

⁴²⁰ Nancy Enright, “C.S. Lewis’s Till We Have Faces and the Transformation of Love,” *Logos* 14, no. 4 (2011): 99.

⁴²¹ The Fox is the tutor of Psyche and Orual.

⁴²² Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, 71.

⁴²³ Ibid., 86.

⁴²⁴ For a more detailed examination of Lewis’ understanding of Augustine, see Joseph Zepeda, “‘To Whom My Own Glad Debts are Incalculable.’: St. Augustine and Human Loves in the *Four Loves* and *Till we Have Faces*.” *Journal of Inklings Studies* 2 (2012): 5 -26. Lewis’ main point of contention with Augustine is the idea of selecting love based on “security from loss and avoidance of suffering.” Zepeda, 10. This would necessarily require some form of calculation when it comes to human love and interactions, which as we have seen early, is rejected by Lewis’ understanding of Love. Zepeda notes, Lewis’ reading of Augustine is most likely incorrect because Lewis approaches him through an Early Modern lens. Lewis came to his interpretation of Augustine through Chaucer’s *Troilus and Cressida* or even Dante. Zepeda, 26. Finally, Joseph Zepeda notes that Augustine’s chastisement for the tears at his

Humans grow apart, they also grow old and die. It is up to us to decide how we react to this inevitable loss – it is why Lewis, being heavily influenced by Boethius, says God is the only petrol humans can run on, for all other sources of happiness are temporary.

Orual is so blinded by her sense of loss that she is the one who tempts Psyche into looking upon Cupid. Orual does not understand her sister's experience of *eros*, and this conflict is at the heart and climax of the novel. Since Psyche's marriage is rooted in her spiritual life, Orual's rejection of it and her unwillingness even to consider Psyche's perspective on her own relationship with her husband reveal the weakness of all three loves – (*storge*, *philia*, and *eros*) when unredeemed. Psyche's unusual marriage is the test case, the crucible that shows the *storge* and *philia* existing between the two sisters, particularly those of Orual for Psyche, to be found wanting and in need of redemption.⁴²⁵

While Psyche is living in a mansion, Orual is unable to see the building and this enforces her already existing doubts, jealousy, and suspicions.⁴²⁶

The height of Orual's anger with the gods and her true explanation of the love she has for Psyche is revealed near the end of the book. In a Spenserian style trial of the gods, like Mutability bringing her case before the gods in the *Faerie Queene's* Cantos of Mutabilitie, Orual accuses the gods of taking Psyche from her. She does not love her as an equal, however, but as a pet. It is worth quoting a few sections of her accusation at this point to get a better understanding of Orual's position. "Why did you lie to me? You said a brute would devour her. Well, why didn't it? I'd have wept for her and buried what was left and built her a tomb and...and...But to steal her love from me!"⁴²⁷ Orual would rather a brute, Cupid, kill her sister than have her sister be loved and

friend's death was not because he loves his friend too much. Instead, Augustine's account shows that he was an enemy to his friend on his deathbed. "...he mocked his baptism and tempted him from his eternal destiny." Augustine was an obstacle to his friend. "He loved too little, not too much." Zepeda, 8. So Augustine shed tears for his own sin, not for the loss of a friend. We can see Lewis continuously combatting Augustine on this point. For example, at the end of *The Last Battle*, when Narnia dies and all leave to Aslan's Country, heaven, Lucy sheds a tear. When Peter tries to question her, Lucy rebukes him. "So," said Peter, "night falls on Narnia. What, Lucy! You're not *crying*? With Aslan ahead, and all of us here?" "Don't try to stop me, Peter," said Lucy, "I am sure Aslan would not. I am sure it is not wrong to mourn for Narnia. Think of all that lies dead and frozen behind that door." [...] "Sirs," said Triran. "The ladies do well to weep. See, I do so myself. I have seen my mother's death. What world but Narnia have I ever known? It were no virtue, but great discourtesy, if we did not mourn." Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 753. While it may be that Augustine did not reject the idea of crying for his lost friend and mother, but that he lamented being an obstacle, Lewis attempts to correct this perceived error in Augustinian thought. Tears of mourning are not in vain or sinful – it would be a discourtesy to remain stoic in the face of a lost loved one.

⁴²⁵ Nancy Enright, "C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces* and the Transformation of Love," *Logos* 14, no. 4 (2011): 106.

⁴²⁶ Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, 115-116.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 290.

love another. Death was less of a problem for Orual. By taking Psyche, the gods took what little she had. She goes on to say:

You'll leave us nothing; nothing that's worth our keeping or your taking. Those we love best-whomever's most worth loving-those are the very ones you'll pick out. Oh, I can see it happening, age after age, and growing worse and worse the more you reveal your beauty: the son turning his back on the mother and the bride on her groom, stolen away by this everlasting calling, calling, calling of the gods. Taken where we can't follow [...] We'd rather you drank their blood than stole their hearts. We'd rather they were ours and dead than yours and made immortal. But to steal her love from me, to make her see things. I couldn't see [...] The girl was mine. What right had you to steal her away into your dreadful heights? You'll say I was jealous. Jealous of Psyche? Not while she was mine. If you'd gone the other way to work – if it was my eyes you had opened – you'd soon have seen how I would have shown her and told her and taught her and led her up to my level. But to hear a chit of a girl who had (or ought to have had) no thought in her head that I'd not put there, setting up for a seer and a prophetess and next thing a goddess...how could anyone endure it? [...] There's no room for you and us in this world. You're a tree in whose shadow we can't thrive [...] I was my own and Psyche was mine and no one else had any right to her [...] What should I care for some horrible, new happiness which I hadn't given her and which separated her from me? Do you think I wanted her to be happy, that way? [...] She was mine. *Mine*. Do you not know what that word means? Mine! You're thieves, seducers. That's my wrong.⁴²⁸

Orual shows the reader her true feelings here. She was not mad because of Psyche's plight and her suffering; she was angry that Psyche was taken from her. Psyche had no need for outside knowledge, only the knowledge that Orual provided her with. Orual even goes on to connect Psyche to a dog, to be fed by her and no one else.⁴²⁹ Psyche, on the other hand is much more generous with her sister. Being tested, she receives the box of beauty from Persephone and offers it to her sister.

Psyche is not persuaded, but with great pain and strong will ignores the pleas of her sister and obtains the box filled with the beauty of Persephone. Like Peter, asked by Jesus to affirm his love three times, even as he had denied Jesus three times, Psyche must re-enact the incident in which she failed in love (i.e., by giving in to her sister's pleas and thus disobeying her god-husband). She returns triumphant, bearing the cask. Her success leads not only to her own fullness of redemption, but also to Orual's, who is brought through these visions to a place of full repentance.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 290-292.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 292.

⁴³⁰ Enright, "C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*," 113.

Orual's possessive love is discussed by Lewis in *The Four Loves*. While exploring affection, *storge*, Lewis gives the example of siblings who grow up as best friends. Eventually one begins to surpass the other, goes to a different school or takes a different path in life. This could bring up resentment between the two. The inability to share in the other's life causes tension.⁴³¹ Lewis says this is most linked to Need-love, for the needs of one are no longer being met. "All these perversions of Affection are mainly connected with Affection as Need-love. But Affection as Gift-love has its perversions too."⁴³² Orual is clearly affected by Need-love, she desires Psyche to be completely her own, like when they were children, but she also is an over-doting sister. Her accusations that Psyche was taken from her, have within them an undertone of anger for the loss of someone to rule over/guide. Like the example of a mother who gives so much to her family, that everyone feels claustrophobic, Orual's sense that she is the only one who can provide, or should provide, knowledge to Psyche is a clear perversion of her role as sister. Orual's bent nature is best described by Peter Schakel in his essay examining *Till We Have Faces*.

Lewis's ideas are given structure by four Greek words for love. The first three Lewis, in *The Four Loves*, calls the 'natural loves', loves grounded in our human natures: *storgē* (affection), *philia* (friendship), and *erōs* (romantic love). The natural loves are good things, but they are subject to corruption. The comfortableness of *storgē* can decline into insensitivity or rudeness, or its need to give can degenerate into possessiveness and jealousy. *Philia* can lead to a sense of pride because others are excluded from a group of friends. And the exalted emotions that characterize *erōs* can be mistaken for transcendence and turn 'being in love' into a sort of religion. The natural loves are not self-sustaining. Without help, they will become self-centred and eventually slide into unlove and end up as a kind of hatred. Lewis's central point about love is that in order for the natural loves to remain loves, they must be infused with and transformed by a higher love. The fourth of the Greek words for love is *agapē*, divine love, selfless love.⁴³³

The same can be said for the two groups of love, Need and Gift. Need love requires Gift love, for anyone who is constantly in need and does not receive tends to turn corrupt. Just like in the few cases we explored individuals who needed but did not think they received enough in return: Edmund, Eustace, Mark and Jane, and now even Orual. Each required more than what was given to them, more than what others could provide, and only when given Gift-love by Aslan, Venus, or

⁴³¹ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 56-57.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴³³ Peter J. Schakel, "Till We Have Faces," in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, eds. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge Collections Online: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 286.

in the case of Orual, recognizing Psyche's love, could these characters grow and become their perfect selves.

Seeing the trials Psyche endured and noting that she was in fact a dangerous obstacle for Psyche,⁴³⁴ Orual eventually does see the error of her ways. She amends her story, to show that she recognizes the mistakes she made and retracts the accusations against the gods. She realizes that she was making statements which were not true. She tells the reader:

When the time comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which has lain at the center of your soul for years, which you have, all that time, idiot-like, been saying over and over, you'll not talk about joy of words. I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?⁴³⁵

The feelings Orual had for Psyche were perverted and only took into account her own feelings. As when Mark realized he did not own Jane, Orual realizes the same reality here. She ignored the trials and tribulations of her sister; she did not look at the bigger picture. Humans often take this point of view, the one they believe to be true, even if simply taking a step back could enlighten us. Orual's pleas and accusations do not take into account the larger story. Orual did not see that Psyche's true purpose was to transcend her humanity, and her accusations against the gods were false and conceited, so the gods ignored her pleas. Only when we come to recognise who we truly are, or what our goals are, when we have faces, can we truly meet and communicate with the gods. This is a relationship between the Divine and human free will. We must freely work on ourselves, improve ourselves by building a face in order to meet the gods. Love is not simple; it requires suffering and sacrifice. Orual needed Psyche's love, but she also should have been willing to gift her love to Psyche, who faced trials on her own, exacerbated by doubts imposed on her by the sister who claimed to love her.

Here we come to the central point. While Lewis presents his reader with the story of Cupid and Psyche, he does not retain every element of the original tale. In Apuleius' version, Psyche must retrieve a box of beauty from Persephone for Aphrodite. The descent and ascent of Psyche to Hades is nearly successful – she keeps the sweets in her hand for Cerberus, the two coins in her mouth for Charon, and she manages to avoid speaking with anyone. She avoids the three tests she

⁴³⁴ Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, 304.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 294.

faces in Hades as well – the lame donkey and man loading wood, the dead men swimming in the stream wanting to board the ferry, and finally the elderly weaver needing help with her loom.⁴³⁶ However, Psyche fails in a fundamental way. Through the entire narrative Psyche’s beauty is highlighted. She is even more beautiful than Aphrodite, Venus herself. Her lapse, then, is even greater for she opens the box of beauty to take some of it for herself, even if to please her divine husband.⁴³⁷ Her failure is her own, just as Eve failed in Milton’s Eden, or the Green Lady’s feather clothes in *Perelandra*. She did not need to improve what she already had.

Lewis changes this crucial failure, much like Tolkien changes the end of the Orpheus tale, as we will see in the coming chapters. How is Lewis’ ending different from Apuleius? While there are a few differences in Psyche’s descent, for example there is no mention of Cerberus or Charon, Psyche’s final test is the most significant change. While she originally opens the box to take a little beauty for herself, and Cupid saves her from the sleep her action causes her, in Lewis’ version Psyche gives the box of beauty to her sister Orual – the sister who was a burden for her in her most trying times, the sister who is not beautiful, is here given beauty by Psyche.⁴³⁸ In Apuleius, Psyche thinks of herself, but in Lewis she thinks of her beloved sister. Orual suffered for Psyche, Psyche suffered for Orual, and in the end both share in a transformation.⁴³⁹ Orual, who has been jealous throughout the narrative rejoices in Psyche’s beauty. She finally moves beyond the earthly and temporal. Orual is no longer jealous of her sister, nor is she embittered.⁴⁴⁰ Orual becomes barefaced, trusting in the Divine Nature.⁴⁴¹ Myers quotes from Lewis’ *Letters to Malcolm*: “For what I call ‘myself’ ...is also a dramatic construction...And in prayer this real I struggles to speak, for once, from his real being, and to address, for once ‘[the real Thou]’”⁴⁴²

⁴³⁶ Myers, *Bareface*, 133.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 134. Dorothy Myers links this transformation to *Mere Christianity* where Lewis states God will make us dazzling. See Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 205-206.

⁴⁴⁰ Myers, *Bareface*, 135.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁴⁴² C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer. Reflections on the Intimate Dialogue Between Man and God*. (Boston: Mariner Books, 2012), 81. Myers’ edits.

Lewis' Theology of Love: Always, Freely, Upward

The alteration to the Cupid and Psyche story is significant as it highlights Lewis' theology of love. Orual realizes she is a detriment to her sister. She believed Psyche belonged to her, as an object or pet. Orual wanted to give Psyche love, just as much as she wanted to receive Psyche's love. In the end, however, this was a possessive love, a love which does not seek to give freely. Though Orual may have believed her Gift-love was sacrificial, it was a gift which expected something in return. It was a gift which became a loan. Psyche, on the other hand, offers herself freely to her sister, someone who was a burden. She offers her sister beauty from the box of Persephone. Orual's salvation comes through the help of her sister, but also through Orual's own personal, and free, evolution.

Here, then, we come to Lewis' central idea, one which has been becoming clearer throughout this chapter. While thinkers like Nygren place all agency on God, Lewis takes a very different approach. Yes, the Fall of Adam and Eve changed human nature. We are more likely to do bad, as Paul notes in his letter to the Romans: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." (Rm. 7:15) This does not, however, mean that we cannot make good choices. They are harder to make, but not impossible. More importantly, while it is God who reaches down, actively calling out to humanity, it is possible for us humans to turn, of our own volition, toward Him. This is the foundation of Lewis' love theology. The Creator loves his creatures, but His creatures love him back. It is the central idea of love – a reciprocal experience.⁴⁴³ We can love those who do not love us, unrequited love, but true and fulfilling love is one where both parties receive and give love to each other.

Why is Lewis so at odds with thinkers like Nygren? The difference lies in their theology of salvation. Nygren takes on a Lutheran soteriology, one which removes the value of human works and emphasizes Justification by Faith. As argued by Lowell D. Streiker, in his critique of Nygren, Nygren's theology of agape is lacking in New Testament background. It "almost amounts

⁴⁴³ This is most clearly illustrated by Augustine, and then Richard of St. Victor's image of the Trinity as Love (Father), Beloved (Son) and the act of Loving (Holy Spirit). See, for example, Augustine, *On the Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna, ed. Gareth B. Matthews. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See also, Richard of St Victor, *On the Trinity*, trans. Christopher P. Evans in *Trinity and Creation: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Richard and Adam of St Victor*, ed. Boyd Taylor Coolman and Dale M. Coutler, 195-352. Victorine Texts in Translation: Exegesis, Theology and Spirituality from the Abbey of St Victor (New York: New City Press, 2011).

to falsification.”⁴⁴⁴ Nygren does not begin his theology of love from the New Testament, but instead approaches it through a lens of Reformation soteriology. This leads Nygren to, at times, have a “serious misunderstanding”⁴⁴⁵ of Paul. Nygren’s emphasis on unmerited grace overlooks Paul’s notion of working together with God, as found in 2 Corinthians 6:1 “As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain.” Paul’s letter to Philemon also shows the relationship between work and salvation, see, for example, Philippians 1:6⁴⁴⁶: “I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.” Or even Philippians 2:12⁴⁴⁷: “Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Paul views our role as co-workers with God in our own salvation.

We see Nygren’s misinterpretation most clearly when he discusses Paul. Nygren emphasises the fact that agape, for Paul, centers on the Theology of the Cross. We must, according to Nygren, always keep in our minds Christ Crucified. Love and the Crucifixion are one and the same.⁴⁴⁸ This bears a striking resemblance to his exploration of Luther. There Nygren notes that Luther rejects all egocentric love. For Nygren, Luther shifts focus from humanly to theocentric love – a shift from self to God.⁴⁴⁹ Nygren tells us the distinction is “Theocentric fellowship with God *versus* egocentric.” Nygren calls Luther’s reforms “Luther’s Copernican Revolution” and calls for “fellowship with God on the basis of sin, not holiness”⁴⁵⁰ We can never connect to God on the level of love, only through our sins. Christ descended to live with sinners, therefore, our fellowship exists there.⁴⁵¹

Nygren argues that Luther is against the medieval mystical ladder – the idea that humans can move along spiritual rungs towards the Godhead. We cannot move up to God. This ladder is found in mystical schools of thought.⁴⁵² Reason and speculation also cannot lead us to God, for

⁴⁴⁴ Lowell D. Streiker, “The Christian Understanding of Platonic Love: A Critique of Anders Nygren’s “Agape and Eros,”” *The Christian Scholar*, 47, no.4 (1964): 334.

⁴⁴⁵ Streiker, “The Christian Understanding of Platonic Love,” 334.

⁴⁴⁶ Streiker, “The Christian Understanding of Platonic Love,” 334.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 334.

⁴⁴⁸ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 116-117.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 681.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 684.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 686-687.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 700.

God is the primary actor.⁴⁵³ Nygren argues: “Love in the Christian sense is primarily God’s own love, displayed in all His beneficent works, but chiefly through the giving of His son.”⁴⁵⁴ Luther tried, according to Nygren, to separate Augustinian *caritas*, to remove the Hellenistic elements.⁴⁵⁵ He did this because, as Nygren claims, the *Theologia Crucis* is the only true theology. God is *Agape*, but it is the *Agape* of the Cross.⁴⁵⁶

Nygren’s perspective on the lack of human agency is in fact contradicted by the Biblical sources he attempts to uphold, as we have seen in a Pauline letters quoted above. Streiker also notes: “In the first three Gospels, Christ commands men to love. Love, therefore, is a matter of will and action. The love he commands is to be free of all restrictions, i.e. we are to love our enemies, strangers – all who are in need...The demand of Christ presupposes a new world situation, one in which such imperatives are real possibilities.”⁴⁵⁷ Of even greater importance is Streiker’s argument that while John sets the example of the Cross, humans are to look at this example and *imitate it*.⁴⁵⁸ Streiker agrees with Augustine and not Nygren on this point. He claims Augustine was right. Love is a human need and *eros* drives us. As found in Book One of Augustine’s *Confessions* we are made in God’s image, and we will only find rest in God. We must move towards the Divine always.⁴⁵⁹ “In this way, *Eros* is truly man’s quest for God. And without this quest, the so-called way of God to man would remain a trivial and irrelevant doctrine.”⁴⁶⁰

Lewis wholeheartedly agrees with Streiker on this point. Human freedom and agency play a role in our quest for God.⁴⁶¹ As God the Father tells the Son in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*: “I formed them free, and free they must remain.”⁴⁶² Our freedom is marred, or bent, but it still exists and continues to actively be part of our condition. Through Christ’s sacrifice this marred condition is ameliorated. Lewis illustrates this beautifully in his final section of *Mere Christianity*. While

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 702.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 724.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 739.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 740.

⁴⁵⁷ Streiker, “The Christian Understanding of Platonic Love,” 335.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 335.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 339.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 340.

⁴⁶¹ This position becomes clear when we look at all the influences on Lewis’ thought – Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien, George MacDonald, and John Milton. While many others were an influence on Lewis, they all share a common understanding in human agency in light of salvation.

⁴⁶² Milton, *Paradise Lost*, III:124.

discussing the Trinity and prayer, he shows the reader how both human agency and Divine action work together.

An ordinary simple Christian kneels down to say his prayers. He is trying to get into touch with God. But if he is a Christian, he knows that what is prompting him to pray is also God: God, so to speak, inside him. But he also knows that all his real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the Man who was God – that Christ is standing beside him, helping him to pray, praying for him. You see what is happening. God is the thing to which he is praying – the goal he is trying to reach. God is also the thing inside him which is pushing him on – the motivating power. God is also the road or bridge along which he is being pushed to that goal. So that the whole threefold life of the three-personal Being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary man is saying his prayer. The man is being caught up into the higher kinds of life – what I called *Zoe* or spiritual life: he is being pulled into God, by God, while still remaining himself.⁴⁶³

Through this brief passage we gain the perfect example of Lewis' understanding of human agency. Humanity remains themselves; they seek out God, but God is also seeking us out. As we try to rise above ourselves, as we seek to freely move upwards, God is acting as a bridge for us to climb. We cannot do it all on our own as Platonic eros would have us believe, Christian agape is also needed, but the desire to transcend exists within all of us. George MacDonald's influence can be felt here, we can learn from the Fall. Sinners can be saved, remember, even Lilith could gain salvation for MacDonald. How does this connect, then, to Lewis' understanding of love? Gift and Need are forever present. As social beings we need the love of our significant others, parents, friends, family and even enemies. We need God's love. We also have love to give – freely give with no strings attached. It is this ability to love (Gift-love) and need to be loved (Need-love), which is central to the human condition. There are some who reject human freedom and claim all human loves are corrupt and hold no value. Others who claim only God can love. How can they justify this love? How can God's love be directed at beings who can never need or want it? Lewis finds this proposition at odds with his understanding of the Christian faith, and Christian God.

This is strikingly visible in Lewis' stories. His characters recognize the error of their ways; realize they must change. Relationships, especially love, are based on freedom. Freedom to willingly love and not expect anything in return. Freedom to give oneself completely to the other, in the hopes that this love will change the lives of their beloved for the better. We all need, but for

⁴⁶³ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 163.

Lewis freely gifting is just as important as our need for love. The pattern in Lewis' works is visible. Edmund, Eustace, Mark, Jane, and Orual have character flaws. They each, in their own right, do not understand the true nature of Gift-love. Each expects something in return by demanding more from others than they are entitled to. Yet, free will reigns according to Lewis. All the flawed characters in Lewis' narratives change – they each experience a metanoia. Each comes to recognize they are wrong and can make a difference. They change within themselves and become better; they “find their faces.” And God, calling them, loving them, waiting for them, is there when they do. Let us now turn, then, to J.R.R. Tolkien to explore central ideas of love presented in his works of fiction. For there too, freedom and self-sacrifice find a central role in the fictive world of Middle-Earth.

Chapter 3: J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973)

The Role of Theology in Tolkien's Literature

Having explored the works of C.S. Lewis, we now turn to J.R.R. Tolkien. While these two thinkers were friends and colleagues, their methods of writing were quite different. This is most visible in the Christian elements of their works. Lewis is more direct; Aslan is Jesus-like, and the Narnia stories can be easily mapped on to Biblical narratives. Tolkien, on the other hand, avoids such direct comparisons. His intention was to produce a secondary world, a fairy story, which was able to stand on its own, even if it draws on historical stories, as we shall see. Tolkien creates a narrative where Christianity is not opposed, but also not the central element of the text. Walter F. Hartt, in his article "Godly Influences: The Theology of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis" best describes this difference: "Lewis explicitly, Tolkien less so, incorporate Christian themes into their writings. On the other hand, where Lewis is most aggressively apologetic Tolkien is most unhappy with the results. For Tolkien, the Narnia stories simply 'will not do.' The truth is, Lewis and Tolkien do not understand themselves as Christian authors in quite the same way."⁴⁶⁴ Perhaps Tolkien's Catholicism played a part in this, for he perceived his role as not one of proselytizing, but of reflecting the glory of Catholic belief. Where Tolkien viewed sub-creation, story making, as a celebration of the human capacity to create secondary worlds, Lewis' intentions centered upon his understanding that all stories must draw from and push forward the true myth of Christianity.⁴⁶⁵ For Lewis, the story is closed; there is no room for new or contradictory elements to the Christian myth.⁴⁶⁶

Ralph C. Wood goes so far as to argue that "Tolkien's work is all the more deeply Christian for not being overtly Christian."⁴⁶⁷ But why are there more obscure Christian elements in Tolkien's work to begin with?⁴⁶⁸ Wood acknowledges that Tolkien is writing a story which takes place before the Elect, Moses, Jesus or any of the other elements from the Judeo-Christian Bible. God has not

⁴⁶⁴ Walter F. Hartt, "Godly Influences: The Theology of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis" (See word doc for full ref).

⁴⁶⁵ Hartt, "Godly Influences," 24.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁶⁷ Ralph C. Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien: Visions of the Kingdom in Tolkien's Middle-Earth* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 4.

⁴⁶⁸ For an exploration of Tolkien's hidden theology and philosophy, see Irène Fernandez, *Et si on parlait du Seigneur des Anneaux: Le sens caché de l'œuvre de Tolkien*, édition revue et augmentée (Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 2005 [2003]).

revealed Himself in this sub-created world.⁴⁶⁹ Christ-like characters exist, Gandalf, Aragorn, Sam and Frodo,⁴⁷⁰ but these pale in comparison to the true Christ, or even Lewis' Aslan. While Wood is correct in this assertion, we can also find reasoning in Tolkien's stated objective: to create a foundational mythology for England.

Why did Tolkien feel the need to dedicate such a mythology to England when there already existed a plethora of Anglo-Saxon gods, like Woden and Thórr? Verlyn Flieger notes that the answer to this question comes from the link between mythology and nationalism.⁴⁷¹ For Tolkien, England should not be indebted to continental Europe for their myths, instead there should exist something homegrown, something English. Tolkien partially succeeds at constructing this myth, for he wrote numerous stories related to his mythology, which connect to varying degrees. As Flieger states:

What we have is what we get, and what we get is an unfinished symphony whose implications outrun its execution. Fragmentary, uncompleted, a vision often interrupted by its own fictive branchings, and kept from total fulfillment at least as much by its author's endless re-vision, the *Silmarillion* legendarium is at once a monument to one man's imagination, and as close as any one author has come to a mythology that might be called English.⁴⁷²

The complexity and various drafts of Tolkien's stories connect to his mindset as well: his intention to mimic medieval works. Tolkien modeled his myths on medieval manuscripts of Welsh, Scandinavian, and Irish tales. We find, for example, traces of the *Elder* and *Prose Edda* and the Four Ancient Books of Wales.⁴⁷³ Tolkien's expansive story, with the feeling of depth, led many early critics to disparage the *Lord of the Rings* (*LotR*), claiming the book would never last in popularity, nor would it be ever read more than once by the fans.⁴⁷⁴ But this was far from the truth, as Tolkien managed to create a legendarium which is extremely popular even to this day, spawning movies, television shows and inspiring droves of authors to write about dragons, orcs and goblins.

Tolkien's skills at myth making led to his early attempts at comparing England to Elfland. It had him create a mythology, now compiled by his son Christopher Tolkien, in the *History of*

⁴⁶⁹ Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien*, 5.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁷¹ Verlyn Flieger, *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2005), 6-7.

⁴⁷² Flieger, *Interrupted Music*, 138.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 56. For a more detailed account of Tolkien's sources, see chapter four in Verlyn Flieger, *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2005).

⁴⁷⁴ Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), 1-5.

Middle-Earth series. The complexity of his works, the history of the *Silmarillion*, for example, rivals that of medieval tales like Brynhild's story found in the *Völsunga Saga* and the many other fragments of her tale.⁴⁷⁵ Why is there so many versions of Tolkien's stories? Why did he merge them all into one "history"? The best model for understanding Tolkien's mythopoeic methodology comes from his allegorical tale *Leaf by Niggle* (written between 1938-39 and published 1945). In it, Niggle paints a large tree and continuously places other paintings on the branches to represent leaves. Tolkien spent his life writing stories, which he in turn tried to connect to his larger Middle-Earth legendarium.⁴⁷⁶ Having established the purpose behind Tolkien's stories, we can now shift to looking at his representation of love, and the important connection he makes between love, hope and faith.

Love, Hope and Faith as Foundations for Tolkien

Linda Greenwood, in her article "Love: 'The Gift of Death,'" argues: "In Tolkien's work, love motivates faith to reach beyond the boundaries of the known, to rekindle hope in the midst of the uncertain. Love turns death into a gift and transforms defeat into victory. This force of love permeates *LotR* and deconstructs the very world that it surrounds."⁴⁷⁷ Love, hope and faith are intertwined for Tolkien. The ability to freely love, as we saw in the previous section exploring C.S. Lewis, becomes central to the self-sacrifice of his characters, oftentimes in situations where the final outcome is unclear, where characters require faith.

Both hope and faith are supported by love: "Love is the only element that keeps the two alive."⁴⁷⁸ While God is never referenced in the *LotR*, his defining quality, love, is scattered throughout the narrative.⁴⁷⁹ But why are faith and hope so central? Why do they connect to love? Why include them in works of fantasy or fairy stories? Tolkien believes fairy stories take on the form of human longing, better yet, human mourning. Fantasy speaks to a mourning for the loss of eternal union with the divine, a longing for immortality and rejection of death. Death is often seen as the opposite of hope, a fount of despair. Tolkien's fantasy seeks to change this, illustrating how

⁴⁷⁵ For further comparison and analysis of Brynhild's manuscript history, see Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), 310-317.

⁴⁷⁶ Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth*, 43.

⁴⁷⁷ Linda Greenwood, "Love: 'The Gift of Death'" *Tolkien Studies*, 2 (2005): 171.

⁴⁷⁸ Greenwood, "Love," 173.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

death is a gift, one sought after by immortal elves, to ease the passing and decay of time.⁴⁸⁰ While the concept of death will be explored in greater depth later on, the link between love and hope can be highlighted at this time. The love within creation feeds the faith and hope of something better to come, not only in our day-to-day lives, but also beyond. It is our ability to love, to turn to others freely, which enables us to hope for the better – to have faith that our earthly sorrows can be overcome. Tolkien manages this by weaving hope within his mythology, by showing the readers love for others, love for the world, can overcome evil and suffering. Greenwood makes this clear:

What Tolkien has done, however, is to give a hint of perfection, a glimpse of the ultimate myth. Tolkien deconstructs reality in order to reveal the myth. Love allows myth and reality to stand side by side in harmony [...] The highest form of love is Divine Gift-love, and Tolkien uses the structure of myth to show the deconstructive qualities of this love that puts to death a more natural love that seeks to set limits.⁴⁸¹

Hope is meant to counter the fear of death but hope also holds at bay the despair in everyday life. For Tolkien, Christ is the greatest fairy story. He provides the ultimate sense of hope, for through Christ, we are drawn to see and understand the prime example of the eucatastrophe. Christ represents the greatest turn: “[t]his is *metanoia*, reversal, a reversal of the direction of the mind.”⁴⁸² The *metanoia* is a turn from despair to joy, dark to light. This turn is centered on Gift-love, Christ giving himself freely and completely to those who may not always be loveable – to the sinner and outcast. Christ’s resurrection is the happy conclusion to the fraught story of the crucifixion. Fantasy, in Western Europe,⁴⁸³ shares this element of the generally ending happy, with a sense of hope, in imitation of the Gospel, or Good News. Ralph C. Wood identifies three central eucatastrophes which are present in the Christian message: The Incarnation, the Good Friday/Easter story, and finally, the promise of the Second Coming.⁴⁸⁴

Through this understanding of hope, let us now turn to examples of love in Tolkien’s works. Emphasis will be placed on the works published within his lifetime; however, *The Silmarillion* will also play a central role in our analysis. Though posthumously published and

⁴⁸⁰ Greenwood, “Love,” 185.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 193.

⁴⁸² Verlyn Flieger, *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien’s World*, 2nd ed. (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2002), 29.

⁴⁸³ Flieger links Tolkien’s position with that of Erich Auerbach, notably to the concept of *mimesis*. Western literature is generally seeking to reproduce the resurrection. Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 29. For an English translation of Auerbach’s German work see, Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. William Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁴⁸⁴ Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien*, 8.

compiled by Christopher Tolkien in 1977, *The Silmarillion* has been accepted as canonical by the readership of Middle-Earth and though debate surrounds the content of the text, the posthumous work has shaped the understanding of Tolkien's corpus as a whole. As Tom Shippey argues in *The Road to Middle-Earth*:

It is true, of course [...] that these (*The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales*) are posthumous works which never reached the final shape intended by their author. But in the first place their author never reached a final intention, so his wishes are not being flouted; in the second place, he clearly very deeply wished to see the materials on which he had worked for so long at last published, as his son records; and in the third place, *The Silmarillion* has by now found millions of readers to confirm its existence as a substantial text.⁴⁸⁵

Fëanor and the Silmarils, Aulë and the Dwarves

We should begin with an important tale in Tolkien's work, one which connects *The Silmarillion* to the *LotR*: the creation of the silmarils by Fëanor. At the dawn of time the high angels, known as the Valar, created two trees to light the world.⁴⁸⁶ From these trees poured out a liquid light, which Fëanor, "the mightiest in all parts of body and mind, in valour, in endurance, in beauty, in understanding, in skill, in strength and in subtlety,"⁴⁸⁷ forged into three jewels known as silmarils.⁴⁸⁸ Fëanor's love for these jewels increased over time, as they were beautiful to behold. Elves, Valar, and the lesser angels, Maiar, all came to him constantly wishing to see the gems. Over time Fëanor became possessive of the jewels and began to hide them away so none could see them. On one night, however, Melkor, a Satan-like figure, approached the two trees of light and destroyed them with the help of the giant spider, Ungoliant.⁴⁸⁹ While darkness covered the face of the world, the Valar asked Fëanor to give up the jewels he made in order to revive the trees. Fëanor refused them for he did not want to part with his greatest craft.⁴⁹⁰ Unbeknownst to them, however,

⁴⁸⁵ Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth*, 226.

⁴⁸⁶ Much of Tolkien's work explores the difference between the natural and supernatural. For an examination of the role played by the supernatural in Tolkien's thought, see Irène Fernandez, *Tolkien, une voie vers le surnaturel* (Geneva: Ad Solem, 2003).

⁴⁸⁷ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: Harper Collins, 1999), 108.

⁴⁸⁸ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 68. Verlyn Flieger notes that the silmarils play many important roles in Tolkien's legendarium. They are metaphorical, literal objects and symbols of desire. See Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 107. See also, Verlyn Flieger, "The Jewels, the Stone, the Ring, and the Making of Meaning," in *There Would Always be a Fairy-Tale: More Essays on Tolkien* (Kent: The Kent University Press, 2017). Particular emphasis concerning the silmarils can be found on pages 100 to 105.

⁴⁸⁹ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 78-79.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

the silmarils had already been stolen from Fëanor's vault by Melkor and brought to the distant land of Beleriand, part of Middle-Earth.

Fëanor's love for the gems is a perverted form of love according to Tolkien. The elf, illustrating what Plotinus warned against,⁴⁹¹ placed overemphasis on the beauty they possessed and did not look to the good.⁴⁹² The trees from which the light sap derived were not of Fëanor's making. He should have had no issue giving up his jewels for the betterment of all, for the light to return to the world. Yet, he was unable to separate his desire and love for the stones from the greater good. This stubbornness leads to a grave sin on the part of Fëanor. While attempting to cross the ocean to reach the lands where Melkor had taken the silmarils, a group of elves, the Teleri, tried to prevent his crossing by use of their ships. In response, Fëanor killed many of them, shedding blood in the Undying Lands, where no blood had ever been spilt. He also set fire to their boats, ships which they learnt to build and perfect on their own, ships which they had pride in.⁴⁹³ This is an act which Tolkien emphasises as a horrible deed. Fëanor's destruction of the ships built by shipwrights illustrates contempt for the work of others. A sin particularly grievous because he is a smith and refused to destroy the work of his hands.⁴⁹⁴

The drawing of blood, the introduction of violence and the burning of the ships led to the Valar issuing a decree or doom upon Fëanor and all those who follow him. Called the Doom of Mandos, after the Vala who issues it, or the Doom of the Noldor, for it was placed on the Noldor who followed Fëanor, the Doom states that all those who seek the silmarils are doomed to suffer and die.

Tears unnumbered ye shall shed; and the Valar will fence Valinor against you, and shut you out, so that not even the echo of your lamentation shall pass over the mountains. On the House of Fëanor the wrath of the Valar lieth from the West unto the uttermost East, and upon all that will follow them, and ever snatch away the very treasures that they have sworn to pursue. To evil end shall all things turn that they begin well; and by treason of kin unto kin, and the fear of treason, shall this come to pass. The Dispossessed shall they be for ever.

⁴⁹¹ Plotinus follows in Diotima's path, arguing humans can use the beautiful ladder to transcend themselves toward God since all creation finds its source in Him. However, in some instances humans can remain stuck on the beautiful and become trapped, not progressing towards the divine, but believing themselves to be content with what they have acquired. In these cases, individuals do not wish to procreate in beauty, but believe they are happy in the presence of the beautiful. This is where beauty can become problematic for Plotinus. See Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, trans. Stephen Mackenna and B.S. Page. (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1917).

⁴⁹² Dominic O'Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 94.

⁴⁹³ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 93.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

Ye have spilled the blood of your kindred unrighteously and have stained the land of Aman. For blood ye shall render blood, and beyond Aman ye shall dwell in Death's shadow. For though Eru appointed to you to die not in Eä, and no sickness may assail you, yet slain ye may be, and slain ye shall be: by weapon and by torment and by grief; and your houseless spirits shall come then to Mandos. There long shall ye abide and yearn for your bodies, and find little pity though all whom ye have slain should entreat for you. And those that endure in Middle-earth and come not to Mandos shall grow weary of the world as with a great burden, and shall wane, and become as shadows of regret before the younger race that cometh after. The Valar have spoken.⁴⁹⁵

The term 'doom' here does not imply a destruction from the curse. Instead, 'doom' is used in the Old English sense, a judgement. More specifically, it is not the Doom of Mandos which will bring upon the Noldor their misery and suffering, instead it is their own actions which will lead to their downfall. Greed and suspicion are not forced on them by the Doom, but they are by products of their actions. A people willing to kill for ships, is a people already down a dangerous and destructive path. In fact, Fëanor and his sons burn the ships after only half the Noldor crossed the sea, splitting the group almost immediately after the Doom is pronounced. Their comradeship and unity is already perverted.

In the end Fëanor did not survive his quest and was killed, consumed by the fire burning within him.⁴⁹⁶ It is interesting to note that Fëanor, in Tolkien's created language, means "consuming." His entire life is based on a consuming fire, as at his birth he consumed all his mother's energy leaving her with nothing,⁴⁹⁷ this eventually leads to his father remarrying. While Fëanor's wife balanced him for a time,⁴⁹⁸ his jealousy of his father's affection for his half-brothers, and then his hatred for Melkor, leads to his ruin.⁴⁹⁹

Tolkien's point is clear; there are loves which are not positive, that carry with them the risk of becoming perverted, corrupt, and devouring. The case of Fëanor shows one trapped on a rung of the beautiful ladder. The glory of the silmarils prevented Fëanor from seeing beyond them, to

⁴⁹⁵ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 94-95.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁹⁷ Fëanor's mother, Miriel, can bear no more children and her soul eventually leaves her weary body. Flieger notes the similarities with Miriel giving all the Fëanor and not being able to have children, and Fëanor's unwillingness to destroy the silmarils, as he claims he will never be able to create anything in their like again. Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 108.

⁴⁹⁸ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 65.

⁴⁹⁹ For a good examination of the feminine/masculine dynamic in Fëanor's life and relationships, see Melanie A. Rawls, "The Feminine Principle in Tolkien," in *Perilous and Fair: Women in the Works and Life of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Janet Brennan Croft and Leslie A. Donovan (Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 2015).

the true source, God.⁵⁰⁰ “Fëanor falls prey to the temptation to love to exclusion and possess without sharing his own creation.”⁵⁰¹ Fëanor’s fall is not one of pride. It is the unnatural focus on something he created with his own hands, at the detriment of God’s created world.⁵⁰² Yet, his actions inevitably lead to the fall of other elves. All the wars faced by the elves of Middle-Earth in the First Age, and even into the Third as we shall see in the case of Galadriel, derive from Fëanor’s obsession with his silmarils.⁵⁰³

How should Fëanor have responded? We are given a story which shows the correct way to love something we have created. This can be found in the story of Aulë and the Dwarves. Aulë is a Vala, who after seeing a vision of elves and humans at the start of creation, could not wait to meet Ilúvatar’s (God’s) children. He took it upon himself to try and create beings like those he saw in his vision. What he created, in the end, were dwarves, a poor reflection of the elves and humans Ilúvatar would create. While the dwarves were made strong, and could withstand Melkor, Aulë was only a craftsman/sub-creator. He did not have the divine spark which could make the dwarves autonomous. Their movement was dependent on him – they were automata. Seeing this, Ilúvatar asks Aulë if he wanted to create automatons or servants to dominate. Aulë did not want the submission of the dwarves, instead he sought to teach and love them.

And the voice of Ilúvatar said to him: ‘Why hast thou done this? Why dost thou attempt a thing which thou knowest is beyond thy power and thy authority? For thou hast from me as a gift thy own being only, and no more; and therefore the creatures of thy hand and mind can live only by that being, moving when thou thinkest to move them, and if thy thought be elsewhere, standing idle. Is that thy desire?’

Then Aulë answered: ‘I did not desire such lordship. I desired things other than I am, to love and to teach them, so that they too might perceive the beauty of Eä, which thou hast caused to be. For it seemed to me that there is great room in Arda for many things that might rejoice in it, yet it is for the most part empty still, and dumb. And in my impatience I have fallen into folly. Yet the making of thing is in my heart from my own making by thee; and the child of little understanding that makes a play of the deeds of his father may do so without thought of mockery, but because he is the son of his father. But what shall I do now, so that thou be not angry with me for ever? As a child to his father, I offer to thee these things, the work of the hands which thou hast

⁵⁰⁰ There are allusions to the Abraham narrative here as well, with particular emphasis on the willingness to sacrifice something so cherished. See Gen. 22:1-19. While Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac his son, Fëanor’s sacrifice would be just as powerful. He is being asked to destroy the greatest jewels he, or anyone, has ever created.

⁵⁰¹ Flieger, *Splintered Light*, 109.

⁵⁰² Shippey, *Road to Middle-Earth*, 241.

⁵⁰³ Flieger, *Interrupted Music*, 141.

made. Do with them what thou wilt. But should I not rather destroy the work of my presumption?’⁵⁰⁴

As a Vala, Aulë notes that he was made by a Creator God, and therefore, he too is a creator, in the image of his father. This is where Aulë differs from Fëanor. While Aulë also loved his creation/children, he is willing to destroy them because of Ilúvatar’s displeasure. However, much like Abraham and his sacrifice of Isaac, Ilúvatar stops Aulë from killing the dwarves and gives them life, though they were placed into a sleep from which they would only wake after Elves and humans appeared in the world. Aulë passed the test and dwarves flourished.⁵⁰⁵ He did not put his own creation above that of the Creator. Fëanor failed his test, and elves suffered.

Self-Sacrificing Love: Beren and Lúthien

Tolkien’s legendarium is large and complex, filled with many names, characters, and side stories. It would be impossible to do justice to this massive set of tales, therefore, for the purpose of this dissertation, focus will be placed on two important marriages: that of Beren and Lúthien, the centerpiece of all of Tolkien’s mythology, and of the human couple Éowyn and Faramir. These two case studies serve to illustrate an important feature of Tolkien’s understanding of love; the role of self-sacrificing and self-giving is at the heart of the proper order of love – the free will to give to the other completely, regardless of one’s desires or fears.

This is the chief story in Tolkien’s mythology, and it is heavily inspired by the tales of Orpheus and Eurydice⁵⁰⁶ as well as Admetus and Alcestis. Beren, a mortal man, meets Lúthien, the daughter of an Elf King, Thingol, and a Maia (an angelic being), Melian, while dancing amongst the trees.⁵⁰⁷ Beren is captivated by Lúthien’s beauty, his mind becomes transfixed, and he spends hours simply admiring her. This is not one-sided, however, for the love between the two becomes so great that Lúthien brings Beren to meet her father Thingol. As in many troubadour poems or tales of courtly love, Thingol rejects Beren’s request to marry his daughter.⁵⁰⁸ In order to avoid having to give his blessing, he sends Beren off on an impossible quest. Beren is to seek

⁵⁰⁴ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 37-38.

⁵⁰⁵ For the story of Aulë and the dwarves, see J.R.R. Tolkien, “Of Aulë and Yavanna” in *The Silmarillion* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), 37-42.

⁵⁰⁶ For a detailed examination of this connection, see chapter 4 of this thesis.

⁵⁰⁷ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 192-194.

⁵⁰⁸ The divide between the immortal Lúthien and mortal Beren is quite striking. As with many medieval before him, the poor can love the rich, and the immortal can love the mortal. See, for example, Jean Leclercq, *L’amour vu par les moines du XII^e siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 131.

out the devil-like Melkor and take from his crown one jewel. This jewel was created by the elf-smith Fëanor and is known as a silmaril.

Beren leaves to complete his task, Lúthien is locked in a tower and Thingol believes the issue to be resolved. Thingol's understanding of the grave situation he placed himself, his family and kingdom in, is tainted by his disdain for Beren. His wife, Melian, warns him of the dangers she foresees, but he ignores the counsel of his angelic wife. Thingol's belief that the issue is resolved is proved wrong almost immediately and Lúthien's love for Beren is too great to be thwarted so easily. Fearing for Beren's safety, Lúthien escapes from her tower, seeks out her lover and aids him in the completion of the task. Through her actions, Lúthien turns the traditional storyline of a knight saving the damsel on its head. She takes on the role of hero saving her mortal beloved. With her help Beren manages to take the silmaril from Melkor's crown, only to have his hand bitten off by a wolf, Carcharoth, guarding Melkor's keep.⁵⁰⁹ The stone technically remained in the consumed hand, so Beren and Lúthien return to Thingol seeking his blessing for a completed task, which Thingol reluctantly gives.

Fearing the carnage of Carcharoth who consumed the silmaril, Beren heads back north to ensure the safety of the local population, but the battle which ensues leads to his death. Lúthien, grieving for her lost beloved, travels to the halls of Mandos.⁵¹⁰ Once there she sings a song of such beauty that Mandos, an angel-like being overseeing the dead, is moved to pity.

The song of Lúthien before Mandos was the song most fair that ever in words was woven, and the song most sorrowful that ever the world shall hear. Unchanged, imperishable, it is sung still in Valinor beyond the hearing of the world, and listening the Valar are grieved. For Lúthien wove two themes of words, of the sorrow of the [elves] and the grief of Men...And as she knelt before him her tears fell upon his feet like rain upon stones; and Mandos was moved to pity who never before was so moved, nor has been since.⁵¹¹

Echoes of Orpheus and the Middle-English *Sir Orfeo* may be heard when reading this passage. As in the lay of *Sir Orfeo* Lúthien is successful in gaining back her deceased lover.⁵¹² However, in

⁵⁰⁹ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 214.

⁵¹⁰ Mandos is the equivalent of Hades for the souls of elves who "die." It is important to note that elves cannot truly die in Tolkien's legendarium. Instead, their physical bodies are destroyed and their spirits travel to Mandos to wait for the end of time.

⁵¹¹ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 220.

⁵¹² For a more detailed examination of the Orphic nature of this tale, see chapter 4 of this thesis. While the original tale of Orpheus ends in failure, the medieval lay ends in success. Translated to modern English from Middle English by Tolkien, *Sir Orfeo* is the story of a King who loses his wife, Heurodis, to the King of Fairy. Orfeo grieves for his wife, gives up all worldly goods, gives over his kingship to a steward and goes into the woods as a hermit to play his harp. Eventually stumbling upon a hunting party of elves, Orfeo follows them back to the land of fairy and strikes a

order to leave Mandos with Beren, she must sacrifice her immortality. For them to be together, she must be willing to die a mortal's death.⁵¹³

Lúthien freely accepts her fate. The reader witnesses a eucatastrophe. She offers her immortality in exchange for Beren to live the remainder of his natural life with her. In so doing, she has made a sacrifice. She has freely given herself for another. The central theme of the tale is the sacrificial nature of love being presented by Tolkien, Gift-love. Connected to this love, what makes it so potent, is the free will which accompanies the sacrifice. The story begins with the meeting of the lover and beloved. Beauty captures them and pushes them up the ladder. From there, as C.S. Lewis would say, the sexual draw of sight is converted into self-giving Gift-love. Beren freely risks his life for Lúthien's heart on an impossible quest, while Lúthien leaves the safety of her tower to seek out and help her beloved. Finally, the ultimate form of self-giving takes place, Lúthien, in an act which reflects the Agape of the Cross, sacrifices her immortality for Beren. The actions both characters take show their ability choose to give themselves for the other. It also reflects the roles hope and faith play for Tolkien. There are many times in the story where all seems lost, but the love shared between these two characters overcomes the despair and sorrow. In the end we are given a story of hope, a tale where odds are overcome, and evil does not win – where death is suspended for a little while.

The importance of this story is reflected in the place the tale of Lúthien has within Tolkien's mythology. We first come upon the story in the *LotR*, where Aragorn recounts it to the four hobbits in the middle of the night, while on the run from the Ring Wraiths. Aragorn decides to narrate this story on Weathertop, after rejecting darker, more negative, stories related to Sauron. The power of the narrative is illustrated in this particular scene. At night, in the dark, only hopeful stories should be recounted. Speaking of evil things would only give power to the enemies Aragorn and the hobbits are running from. The tale of Lúthien ends up acting as a barrier, slowing down the Ring Wraiths, as they wait until the story is complete before attacking.⁵¹⁴

deal with the Fairy King. The Fairy King offers Orfeo, who played his harp so beautifully, anything he desires. Orfeo asks for Heurodis and the King agrees to honour his promise. While we do not hear from Heurodis again, Orfeo takes back his throne and the readers are left with the impression all is well for Sir Orfeo. For Tolkien's translation of *Sir Orfeo*, see J.R.R. Tolkien, trans., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl and Sir Orfeo* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975).

⁵¹³ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 221.

⁵¹⁴ For the scene on Weathertop and the chase of the Ring Wraiths, See J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Book 1, chapter 11.

Lúthien represents a positive and hopeful example of Gift-love. Eros begins with the recognition of beauty and does not fizzle out once the beautiful object is obtained. Instead, it seeks to reproduce.⁵¹⁵ And reproduction is what occurs as Beren and Lúthien, return to Middle-Earth, and have a son of whom many heroes of Tolkien's universe are descendants. While this is a world without Christ, there are Christ-like acts. Lúthien's sacrifice for Beren falls into this category. Therefore, Beren and Lúthien illustrate the centrality of Gift-love, a love which expects nothing in return, and which sacrifices the self for unknown consequences. This reflects Lewis' understanding of Gift-love, as a true gift does not expect anything in return, nor does it even anticipate benefits from the sacrifice. Lúthien gives up her immortality for the uncertainty of what comes after death. Her sacrifice is without any known benefit.

Finally, we should make note of Tolkien's emphasis on the sorrows of love. For even in this story of hope, sorrow is felt by some. Like some Roman thinkers before him,⁵¹⁶ Tolkien's love does contain within it an aspect of despair. It is found throughout his works, but heavily present in this tale. The song which Lúthien sang before Mandos had sorrow woven in. It is grief which is mustered when the Ainur, another name for the angel-like beings, remember the melody. For Tolkien there is always a risk to love – an inevitable sorrow. Lúthien believed she had lost Beren and would have to live on indefinitely never to see his face again. While she was reunited with him through her mortality, the world, and Lúthien's immortal parents, lost the most beautiful of the children of Eru, God.⁵¹⁷ Sorrow and grief are tied to love in Tolkien's mind, someone will always be exposed to grief, but this does not mean we should avoid it. Instead, love and its corollary, grief, are always central aspects of being a relational creature, where the I is always seeking out the Thou.

Thingol and Melian: A Positive Outcome from Negative Actions

The story of Beren and Lúthien would have never been possible if it were not for the meeting of Lúthien's parents. Thingol and Melian's meeting represents an important precursor to the Beren/Lúthien and Aragorn/Arwen meetings. Thingol and Melian stumble upon each other, much

⁵¹⁵ Plato, *The Symposium*, 211c-211d.

⁵¹⁶ See, for example, Ovid, *The Love Poems*, trans. A. D. Melville. Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁵¹⁷ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 193.

like Beren and Lúthien, in a wood and become transfixed.⁵¹⁸ Melian is a Maia, an angelic being, who possesses echoes of Orphic traits, much like her daughter. When Melian sings, the Valar and Maiar stop their work to listen to her song, so too do the birds and fountains. Thingol, on the other hand, is an elf, one of the three elves selected to see the Trees in Valinor before they were destroyed by Melkor and the giant spider, Ungoliant. Having decided to lead his people from Middle-Earth to the Valinor, the angelic lands, Thingol stumbles upon Melian in a forest. At this meeting an “enchantment fell on him.”⁵¹⁹ Though neither speaks, Thingol takes Melian’s hand and a “spell was laid on him.”⁵²⁰

Thingol is captivated and forgets his mission and duty to his people. He leaves them without a king and guide at a crucial point in their history. This is a first sign that Thingol may be going bad, becoming bent. His love of Melian’s beauty has him forget his ‘divine’ purpose: to bring his people to the angelic realm. This foreshadows his reluctance to give up his daughter to Beren. Thingol is the opposite of a pattern we can find in some classical stories, for example, in Virgil’s *Aeneid*. While Aeneas loves Dido and is captivated by her, he recognizes that he must bring his people to the future location of Rome. Of course, Aeneas has his people, and the gods, encouraging him to move on, but so does Thingol. Thingol knows his people depend on him, and he knows the beauty and peace which awaits them. However, he still fails to fulfil his objectives and remains behind, eventually reuniting with the remnants of his people who chose to wait for him and not finish their journey to Valinor. Another point often overlooked was that Melian could have travelled to Valinor with Thingol and remained with him, even if Thingol’s tasks were completed.

Throughout his life, Thingol will continuously make errors like this one. We see his personality evolve throughout the *Silmarillion* and each time he moves in a worse direction. A good example of this comes when Galadriel, a relative of Fëanor who traveled with him and witnessed, though did not take part in, his revolt, tells Thingol what happened on their journey. Thingol first hears of the silmarils through Galadriel and finds out about the Doom of the

⁵¹⁸ Stumbling upon a beautiful woman in the forest or natural setting is an often-used medieval motif. Examples can be found in Boccaccio, and even Dante’s *Purgatorio*, when the Pilgrim stumbles upon Matilda and is temporarily transfixed by her beauty. Not all turn out for the best, for Tolkien, as in the case of Eöl and Aredhel, while others form great unions like Tom Bombadil and Goldberry.

⁵¹⁹ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 54.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

Noldor.⁵²¹ Thingol's curiosity is sparked. His wife, of a higher stature, who has been around since the start of creation, warns Thingol to avoid Fëanor's sons and his jewels.⁵²² This is but one warning given to the Elf King about his involvement with the silmarils.

Having been warned and informed about the Doom which lies on anyone who seeks to take the silmarils, Thingol, of his own free will, assigns Beren the task of retrieving one from Melkor. Thingol cannot give up his daughter to a mortal man. He does not trust men, nor does he take them into his service,⁵²³ except for Turin. Melian warns her husband of the doom that awaits him, Thingol realizes that he cannot kill Beren directly, since he promised his daughter, Lúthien he would have safe passage. However, sending him on an impossible quest, especially since he is a mortal man whom Thingol looks down on, would be a way of ridding himself of Beren. It would also bring the possibility of owning a silmaril should Beren succeed against all odds.⁵²⁴

Thingol fails to listen to his wife, instead his free will draws him into the Doom, and he sends Beren on this quest. Beren does not truly recognize the gravity of the mission, but also insults Thingol by telling the King: "For little price [...] do Elven Kings sell their daughters: for gems, and things made by craft."⁵²⁵ Unkind words for a potential father-in-law, but Beren strikes at something important here. Lúthien is the fairest of all the Children of Ilúvatar (God). To set a price on her, the value of a beautiful silmaril, but a gem none the less, in a way shows the perversion of Thingol's mind. This is only reaffirmed by Melian, who tells Thingol that he will lose in either case now. Either Lúthien will be lost to them forever, or he will die from the doom he brought on to himself.⁵²⁶

And lose he does. Lúthien gives up her immortality, eventually to die a mortal's death and be lost to all who once loved her, including her immortal parents. Thingol eventually receives his precious silmaril, when he hires dwarves to cast it into a necklace called the Nauglamir, everyone recognizes it to be the greatest thing created by elves and dwarves.⁵²⁷ The dwarves and Thingol

⁵²¹ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 146. When Fëanor left Valinor to hunt down his Silmarils, the Vala Mandos, made a proclamation often called the Doom on the Noldor. Any who got involved with the silmarils would bring death and suffering upon themselves. This is not a curse, as much as a prophesy – as the original meaning of "doom" would imply.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 147.

⁵²³ Hope Rogers, "No Triumph Without Loss: Problems of Intercultural Marriages in Tolkien's World." *Tolkien Studies* 10 (2013): 75.

⁵²⁴ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 195.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 279.

are unwilling to part with it, a fight ensues, and he is killed by the dwarves, starting the uneasy relationship between elves and dwarves.⁵²⁸ Melian the Maia leaves Middle-Earth, having lost her husband and her daughter. She must live the rest of her immortal life without those she once loved.⁵²⁹

Why then include this as a positive tale? Thingol may have failed, but his actions created positive outcomes.⁵³⁰ Had he and Melian continued their original journey to Valinor, Beren and Lúthien would have never met. Through their union, they produced a son, Dior, who was the forefather of many important characters in the *LotR* - Aragorn, Elrond, Arwen to name a few. Thingol's choice to find the silmaril and add it to the Nauglamir is also relevant. After Thingol's death, Beren finds the jewel.⁵³¹ He brings it to Lúthien to wear. Her beauty is intensified. "Lúthien wearing that necklace...was the vision of greatest beauty and glory that has ever been outside the realm of Valinor; and for a little while the Land of the Dead that Live became like a vision of the Land of the Valar, and no place has been since so fair, so fruitful, or so filled with light."⁵³² This extreme beauty may have led to Beren and Lúthien, now both mortals, dying faster than they would have without it. Mortals can only endure a certain level of beauty,⁵³³ but the image presented by

⁵²⁸ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 280.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁵³⁰ Contrast this with the tale of Eöl and Aredhel: Eöl and Aredhel illustrate a coerced meeting. Eöl sees Aredhel, the sister of Turgon and aunt of Idril, one day in the forests of Nan Elmoth. Eöl falls in love with her immediately and desires her for himself. Eöl "set his enchantments about her so that she could not find the ways out..." (*Silmarillion*, 154) Aredhel, stuck within the forest, eventually learns to love Eöl and the two have a son Maeglin. Note the similarities to the Thingol/Melian meeting, where Thingol is trapped by Melian's beauty. The difference here, however, is that Eöl is forcing himself upon Aredhel without her knowing, while Melian and Thingol both acted out of their own free will. As in many of Tolkien's couples, a difference in stature also exists between the two. Eöl is a dark elf, one who never saw the lights of the trees in Valinor, while Aredhel is sister to the great king of Gondolin, of the House of Fingolfin, and forced to marry beneath her through trickery. The distinction in social position is highlighted by the fact that Eöl resents the light elves, his wife's people. He perceives that when the light elves returned from Valinor with Fëanor, they took over all the land which originally was held by dark elves. Added to this is the sense of superiority on the part of the sons of Fëanor, which Eöl loathes. His marriage, for example, is never truly accepted by Aredhel's family or social equals. Eöl's sentiment is quickly passed on to his son, Maeglin. Distrust and resentment in part leads to Maeglin causing the downfall of Gondolin. Eöl and Aredhel are also doomed, as the captive wife eventually flees to return to her brother's city, Gondolin. This leads to Eöl being put to death in Gondolin after he goes to retrieve her. For the meeting of Eöl and Aredhel, see J.R.R. Tolkien, "Of Maeglin," in *The Silmarillion*, (London: HarperCollins, 1999), 151-161. For a brief analysis of Eöl and Maeglin, see Tom Shippey, *Road to Middle-Earth*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 252-253.

⁵³¹ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 282.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 283.

⁵³³ A similar tale, and possibly connected to this notion is that of Cupid and Psyche, already examined in C.S. Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*. Similarly, we find Moses having to cover his face to protect the Elect after speaking with God, though they see his radiance. Exodus 33:21-23; 34:33-35.

Tolkien is striking - Lúthien and the silmaril, two perfect images of beauty apart, united are too much to behold. Fëanor's greatest craft and Eru's greatest creature come together.

With the death of his mother and father, Dior, Thingol's Heir, retrieves the silmaril. Once again, this is a consequential event in the history of Middle-Earth. For Dior passes down the silmaril to his daughter, Elwing, and eventually it is given to her husband, Eärendil.⁵³⁴ Readers of the *LotR* will know this name well. For Eärendil,⁵³⁵ Elrond's father, travels through the sky with the silmaril on his brow, and Galadriel captures some of this light in her phial. Frodo and Sam make great use of this light on their dark and perilous journey. So Thingol's choice of sending

⁵³⁴ Readers are introduced to Eärendil's story for the first time in book two of the *LotR*. There Bilbo, with the help of Aragorn, composes a poem, noted as one of Bilbo's greatest, recounting the life of Eärendil the Mariner. Eärendil loved the sea and sailed in his ship Vingilot. He fell in love with, and married, Beren and Lúthien's granddaughter Elwing. Eärendil spent much of his time sailing and searching for his parents. For more detail on Tuor and Idril, see the sections dedicated to them below (Fn. 52). The sons of Fëanor attacked the city where Elwing resided she jumped into the ocean with the silmaril she had from her mother and father's quest. Ulmo saved her and turned her into a swan enabling her to fly to her husband. Eärendil and Elwing eventually reach Valinor, but Eärendil, a half-mortal, was not allowed to enter. Instead, the Valar set him and his ship up in the sky, with his wife's silmaril, where he continues to shine in the night. Eärendil and Elwin had two sons: Elrond and Elros. For Bilbo's version of the Eärendil story, see Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 306ff. See also, chapter twenty-four of Tolkien's *Silmarillion*, Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 295ff.

⁵³⁵ Eärendil is the son of Tuor and Idril, the second of the human/elf unions in the First Age of Middle-Earth. Tuor, a man, is selected by the Vala Ulmo to bring word to the elvish king, Turgon of Gondolin, that his hidden city was not safe from Melkor. Turgon, in his pride, does not heed Tuor's counsel, but Tuor remains in Gondolin and falls in love with Turgon's daughter Idril. They wed and have a son Eärendil. When Gondolin is finally attacked by Melkor, Idril's cousin, Maeglin, who was jealous of Tuor since he lusted for Idril, tried to kill her and the child Eärendil. Tuor rescues them, and escapes with his wife and child. While not much is known about Tuor and Idril's end, we know that they sailed into the West and it is rumoured that Tuor was given access to Valinor and possibly became immortal, one of the only cases recorded. The union between Tuor and Idril is an interesting example, as they are well matched and have a different ending from that of Beren and Lúthien, where death was the outcome. Their characteristics also seem to complement each other. Melanie A. Rawls notes "Idril is a well-balanced personality, and Tuor, who also combines masculine and feminine traits as a counselor and a warrior, matches her well." See Melanie A. Rawls, "The Feminine Principle in Tolkien" in *Perilous and Fair: Women in the Works and Life of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Janet Brennan Croft and Leslie A. Donovan (Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 2015), 106. The special nature of Tuor is also highlighted by the fact that he was given the option to live forever in Valinor as an immortal. See Linda Greenwood, "Love: 'The Gift of Death,'" *Tolkien Studies* 2 (2005): 187. Remember Beren was not given this same benefit. Attention, however, should be drawn to the different circumstance Tuor finds himself in as compared with Beren. Beren cannot have access to immortality because he died by the time the Valar are involved. Mandos is clear, his authority is limited. Beren can be sent back to live out the rest of his mortal life, but he cannot be brought back and given immortality. Tuor, on the other hand, never experiences death. So being given immortality is still a possibility for him. His son, Eärendil, and his half-elven heirs will from this point forward have a choice between mortality and immortality. But why is Tuor given access to Valinor when no other mortal is? It is possible that Tuor is an exception to the rule since the Valar could not stop all humans from dying. Therefore, the decision concerning Tuor must have had other aspects which we the readers were not made aware of, particularly since we are not truly ever certain of Tuor's final outcome. At the end of his life, Tuor felt called to the sea. "Therefore he built a great ship, and he named it Eärrámë, which is Sea-Wing; and with Idril Celebrindal he set sail into the sunset and the West, and came no more into any tale or song. But in after days it was sung that Tuor alone of mortal Men was numbered among the elder race, and was joined with the Noldor, whom he loved; and his fate is sundered from the fate of Men." (*Silmarillion*, 294). This is a good example of the depth of Tolkien's works. We have no true knowledge of Tuor's end.

Beren on a quest which brought Thingol nothing but loss, in fact had great and positive consequences on the entire history of Middle-Earth. Uniting the lines of elves and Ainur, and through his daughter's union with Beren, bringing in the blood of humans, led to the birth of the great heroes. His lust for the silmaril aided in the success of the battles against Melkor, and through Frodo and Sam, Sauron. Just as Eru tells Melkor and the Ainur at creation, "And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined."⁵³⁶ Thingol thought only of his love for his beautiful wife, then daughter, and finally, for the silmaril he greatly desired - even to the detriment of his life and wife. But his sin, a *felix culpa*, led to greater things, events and births which changed the course of the battle against Melkor and Sauron. Through Thingol's bent loves, a greater plan was put in motion.

Two important aspects of Tolkien's thought are at play here. Firstly, in both the characters of Thingol and Lúthien we see the importance of free will. Each has the ability to freely make choices, but both come to very different ends. While Lúthien is self-sacrificial, giving up her life for the unknown, Thingol is self-preserving, seeking to keep or increase what he possesses. For Tolkien, as for Lewis, free will is an important part of the human condition for Tolkien (even if both are elves). The second aspect is the role of hope. We saw the message of hope clearly illustrated in the tale of Beren and Lúthien. It is also present in the story of Thingol, though. Yes, it is shrouded, and we must be careful readers to see the importance of his poor choices, but when Sam links himself to the larger story of the silmaril in the *LotR*,⁵³⁷ he is highlighting the hope which comes from Thingol's failed actions. As with many thinkers before him, Tolkien sees hope even in the bad. Lucifer's fall, or the fall of the First Parents, all lead to greater, more hopeful, outcomes, a *felix culpa*, like the Incarnation.

The Free Will of Tolkien's Characters

We come to a debated question amongst Tolkien scholars. While none would argue against the Free Will of humans and Hobbits, the freedom of elves is something questioned by a number of

⁵³⁶ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 5-6.

⁵³⁷ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 400-401.

Tolkien critics. Verlyn Flieger in her article, “The Music and the Task: Fate and Free Will in Middle-Earth” claims that elves in Tolkien’s works do not truly have freedom.⁵³⁸ Flieger notes that Fëanor is a good example of how elves are fated. In the story, Fëanor is asked by Yavanna to give the silmarils over to the Valar. This would bring back the light to the dying Trees, destroyed by Melkor and Ungoliant. Fëanor refuses this, but his refusal is of no real consequence. The Silmarils have already been stolen by Melkor and could not have been given over. She notes:

As an Elvish example I offer the most exceptional of the instances cited above, the perplexing passage in *The Silmarillion* wherein, after the Darkening of Valinor, Yavanna asks Fëanor to give her the Silmarils to renew the Two Trees. His response is explicit and noteworthy. “This thing I will not do of free will.” If we are to believe Ilúvatar, Fëanor does not have free will, thus its deliberate introduction here is confusing—superfluous if Fëanor has free will, and even more superfluous if he doesn’t. Or else Tolkien is making a point. I choose to think he’s making a point, and that he intends the phrase to operate at two different levels. One level is Fëanor’s, his response to his perceived coercion by the Valar to give up the jewels. The other, larger level is Tolkien’s, for when the tidings come that Melkor has stolen the Silmarils, he, in the voice of the narrator, adds the otherwise unnecessary comment that, “The Silmarils had passed away, and all one it may seem whether Fëanor had said yea or nay to Yavanna; yet had he said yea at the first, before the tidings came from Formenos, it may be that his after deeds would have been other than they were. But now the Doom of the Noldor drew near.” This, as I [Flieger] read the situation, is exactly Tolkien’s point. Fëanor is fated to lose the Silmarils, and the Silmarils are fated to pass out of his keeping. He could not give them to Yavanna if he chose, for they are no longer his.⁵³⁹

She continues by stating: “Fate—the Music⁵⁴⁰—cannot be changed by an Elf. Thus, the Silmarils are gone, their fate already decided and out of Fëanor’s control. But his interior psychology could

⁵³⁸ Verlyn Flieger, “The Music and the Task: Fate and Free Will in Middle-earth.” *Tolkien Studies* 6 (2009): 151-181. In this important article, Flieger explores the root of the word *fate* and the connection it has to the Anglo-Saxon *wyrd*. For a more detailed philological analysis, outside the scope of this thesis, see Flieger’s article. It should be noted, however, that Flieger states that the word *wyrd*, used often in *Beowulf*, is most commonly translated as fate. See Flieger, “The Music and the Task,” 156. Tom Shippey notes, however “The *Beowulf*-poet often ascribes events to *wyrd*, and treats it in a way as a supernatural force. King Alfred brought it into his translation of Boethius too, to explain why divine Providence does not affect free will: ‘What we call God’s fore-thought and his Providence,’ he wrote, ‘is while it is there in His mind, before it gets done, while it’s still being thought; but once it’s done, then we call it *wyrd*. This way anyone can tell there are two things and two names, forethought and *wyrd*.’ A highly important corollary is that people are not under the dominion of *wyrd*, which is why ‘fate’ is not a good translation for it.” See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth*, 152.

⁵³⁹ Flieger, “The Music and the Task,” 166.

⁵⁴⁰ The Ainulindalë, or Music of the Ainur, is *The Silmarillion*’s creation story. Much like how Aslan hummed Narnia into existence, Tolkien also utilizes music as a creation mechanism. During the Ainulindalë Ilúvatar creates the Ainur. Each Ainu knows a certain theme from the divine mind. Ilúvatar then tells the Ainur to begin playing their theme. While they do so individually a first, the Ainur eventually begin to play off each other creating an orchestra of sound. Though unity exist in the song, Melkor soon begins to hijack the music. Three times Melkor will attempt to break the

be changed, and that change could affect the nature of his subsequent actions.”⁵⁴¹ This can be contrasted with Tom Shippey, who notes that: “People can ‘change their luck’, and can in a way say ‘No’ to divine Providence, though of course if they do they have to stand by the consequences of their decision.”⁵⁴² If we push the Fëanor story further, it was his choice to hide the silmarils away in a vault which was the problem. Yes, Flieger is right, he fails the test when Yavanna asks for them, but the loss of the Silmarils can be linked back to Fëanor’s decision to leave the jewels behind. As Shippey argues, Fëanor must live with those consequences. We are faced with a distinction central to Tolkien’s thought: Fate and Free Will are not completely linked. Fëanor is free to give the silmarils, that they have already been stolen from him does not matter. His choice is free. More importantly, their loss is a consequence of his free choice to leave them behind and not bring them with him, for at the summit in Valinor with his brother, the silmarils would have been protected and Melkor could not have taken them.

While not about elves, Flieger does provide us with a way in which Fate works in connection to the Ring and Frodo. The way in which the Ring comes to Bilbo and then Frodo is an important one for Flieger. She notes:

The few statements which seem to indicate free will are spoken by the characters themselves (for example, Frodo’s “I will take the Ring” at the Council of Elrond). Likewise, statements implying an external controlling force—for example Gandalf’s comment to Frodo that “something else” was at work (though he does not say what) in Bilbo’s finding of the Ring, or his further statement that Bilbo was “meant to find the Ring” in which case Frodo also was “meant to have it” – seem deliberately vague and obscure. They recall Tolkien’s comment, cited above, that Elves “would have said” that Bilbo was ‘fated’ to find the Ring but not necessarily fated to surrender it. These are presumptive Elvish interpretations of events made at second hand and after the fact. Within the narrative, Bilbo’s finding of the Ring is made to seem accident or chance, while his surrender of it is portrayed as a reluctant act of will (Bilbo needs a little help from his friend). Tolkien was first of all trying to depict the complex, often impulsive and unpremeditated ways in which we respond to circumstances, ways in which separate people’s separate actions perform impinge upon one another and upon the world around them. Second, he was offering a structure within which those actions could be both

theme, with some of the Ainur changing their music to fit that of Melkor. In the end, however, Ilúvatar’s theme wins out, but woven into the music of the world is sorrow. The Ainulindalë is not the direct creator of the world, for the Ainur need to enter Arda to make it real, but the music serves as a guide to the history of creation. See, Tolkien, “Ainulindalë” in *The Silmarillion*, 3-12.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 168.

⁵⁴² Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth*, 152.

framed and accounted for—the paradox introduced at the beginning of this discussion.⁵⁴³

Flieger has highlighted a complex idea here. One which is beyond the scope of this paper, but the example of the Bilbo and Frodo's possession of the Ring, or their Fated finding it, is important. We have in this case something beyond the two Hobbits at work. While it could be Ilúvatar, it is never confirmed. But their actions are important. Bilbo and Frodo both exercise freedom. They are both brought face-to-face with the Ring, and both freely accept the task. Both are faced with temptations, both are not as successful as we the reader hope they could be, but their character wins out. What role does fate play in this case then? Does Ilúvatar moving the Ring into the path of the two Hobbits remove their freedom? No, not at all. God is acting within Time and working with what he has. Just as evil is used to bring about good, so too are the good vehicles for the Divine. For Bernard of Clairvaux, when Gabriel approaches Mary at the Annunciation, God knows she is a perfect vessel, but the angels still hold their breath – they wait for her reply...she could say no.⁵⁴⁴ The distinction then comes between free will and Divine action. God trusts in Abraham, but Abraham is still tested. He is to show a willingness to sacrifice the son he has longed for. God's Covenant with Abraham is upheld, because Abraham uses his freedom correctly.

Flieger's position, which acknowledges human agency, but detracts from that of elves is not shared by all Tolkien scholars. Thomas Fornet-Ponse, for example, in his article "'Strange and Free' – On Some Aspects of the Nature of Elves and Men," has done well to defend the notion of elven freedom. He notes:

I [Fornet-Ponse] want to argue that both Men and Elves are able to decide between alternative options of action and to act according to the decision (thus producing a different world than were the case if the decision would have been another). Theologically, this is important for the concept of providence which does not work without freedom but challenges it. Philosophically, it denies a complete determinism. [...] [I]t is very important to distinguish between a determinism (based on interpretations of scientific experiments) and the theological notion of providence since the three monotheistic religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam claim the existence of both human freedom and divine providence—but raise the question of the “mechanism” with which providence works in human history thereby addressing the issue of determinism. This is important for Middle-earth because the existence of a

⁵⁴³ Flieger, “The Music and the Task,” 165.

⁵⁴⁴ See, for example, the sermons on the Magnificat and Fiat by Bernard of Clairvaux. There we see the notion of the angels holding their breath while awaiting Mary's response. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Magnificat: Homilies in Praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, trans. M.-B. Said and G. Perigo, Cistercian Fathers Series (Michigan: Kalamazoo, 1979).

creator god and the music of the Ainur strongly evoke the notion of providence and, consequently, raise the question how it works. Although human free will in Tolkien's work is denied by no scholar I know, the question of elvish free will is a little bit more complicated.⁵⁴⁵

Providence here does not negate free will but works with it. God knows behaviour patterns and works with them, as in the cases of Mary and Abraham mentioned above, or even Frodo and Bilbo. Fornet-Ponse goes on to explain that elves do in fact have, and exercise freedom, on numerous occasions. There is evidence that elves are free, and not simply bound to the Music of the Ainur (*Ainulindalë*). It is worth quoting him at length here because the argument he makes is clear and concise:

[T]here are several indicators that [The Music of the Ainur] does not determine particular events—at least not by determining the actions of individual people—but only the main course of action in Arda. Therefore, it is important to remember that the Music of the Ainur does not take place in time but in the Timeless Halls and the Valar “had entered at the beginning of Time,” wherefore they have to achieve what they have sung in the Music. This distinction between time and timelessness (or eternity) is very important for an understanding of providence and divine foreknowledge, since a divine knowledge of all events in time does not necessarily imply a divine determination of these events, because God is beyond time and therefore, for him does not exist an “earlier” or a “later.” [...] Furthermore, only with the coming of Elves and Men do the Ainur perceive that they prepared their dwelling with their music because they came with the third theme (at least according to the *Ainulindalë*) and no Ainur participated in their making. “Therefore when they beheld them, the more did they love them, being things other than themselves, strange and free, wherein they saw the mind of Ilúvatar reflected anew, and learned yet a little more of his wisdom”. **There, Elves and Men alike are depicted as “strange and free” which would seem a strange statement if Elves did not have a free will.** For the free will of the Ainur is paramount to Melkor's fall even if he proves to be Ilúvatar's “instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined”—a clear reference to the theological position (e.g. of Thomas Aquinas) that God is able to create good out of evil. This is supported by the paragraph before Ilúvatar's statement concerning the gift and virtue of Men because there it is claimed that the Ainur did not understand fully the theme by which Elves and Men entered into the Music, they restrained from adding anything to their fashion. “For which reason the Valar are to these kindreds rather their elders and their chieftains than their masters; and if ever in their dealings with Elves and Men the Ainur have endeavoured to force them when they would not be guided, seldom has this turned to good, howsoever good

⁵⁴⁵ Thomas Fornet-Ponse, “‘Strange and Free’ – On Some Aspects of the Nature of Elves and Men” *Tolkien Studies* 7 (2010): 67-68.

the intent.” **This implies both free will and affecting events of Elves and Men because if Elves were determined to act, it would be senseless to differentiate between guidance and force.**⁵⁴⁶

This brings us back to Flieger’s example of Fëanor. Yes, the Silmarils were out of his possession by the time he was asked to give them up, but he still had the freedom to offer them to Yavanna. “Fëanor’s answer to Yavanna’s request implies his belief in free will and in the possibility of the Valar to constrain him to give the silmarils.”⁵⁴⁷

We return then to Lúthien and her sacrifice, and this is what is at risk when removing elven agency, if she is fated and did not freely select to offer her immortality up for the safety of her lover, Beren, then her sacrifice holds no impact. Much like arguments against the Docetists, who claimed Christ was crucified as God and only appeared to suffer, Lúthien’s lack of freedom would eliminate the power of her choice. This does not, however, mean Ilúvatar did not know Lúthien would give up her immortality and merge the lines of elves, humans and Ainur. In fact, divine action may have had a part to play in this union as well, since as was noted many of the heroes of Middle-Earth descend from Lúthien and Beren, but the freedom of Lúthien to offer herself for Beren is what makes the sacrifice worthy. If it was forced upon her, would it be as impactful? Would she not have just been Ilúvatar’s puppet? Would Ilúvatar not be guilty of the very sin he questions Aulë about, the creation of automata? Lúthien’s moral character is what allows for the divine plan to work, she is freely willing to give Gift-love. As Fornet-Ponse argues: “On the one hand, it is important to notice the essential difference of Men and Elves regarding their fate after death and the emphasis on Man’s freedom from the Music. On the other hand, to deny Elvish free will and their affecting events collides with several other passages.”⁵⁴⁸ So let us turn to another story which illustrates the free will of elves, and the importance of the Gift of Death in Tolkien’s work.

⁵⁴⁶ Fornet-Ponse, ““Strange and Free,”” 77-78. My emphasis.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 78.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 84.

Arwen and Aragorn

Tolkien often reproduces stories in sets of three to illustrate their importance,⁵⁴⁹ and no greater example of this exists than the story of Aragorn and Arwen. For just as Melian and Thingol met in a forest by chance, as did Beren and Lúthien, Aragorn and Arwen, their descendants, meet in the same way. Neatly tucked into the appendix A of the *LotR*, Tolkien provides his readers with a version of the story of Aragorn and Arwen's meeting. His choice to include the tale where he does is an interesting one, it enhances the first-time reader's understanding of the importance of these two characters. Without the appendix very little is known of Arwen or her relationship to the King of Gondor.

⁵⁴⁹ The importance of sets of three is also highlighted by the absence of a set. For example, in the First Age there were to be three Human-Elf unions. The first, Beren and Lúthien, already covered, the second, Tuor and Idril (Fn. 52), and finally, the union of Túrin and Finduilas. Yet, only Beren and Lúthien, and Tuor and Idril are successful in their relationship. While sets of three highlight important ideas Tolkien is trying to emphasise, failed sets also illuminate central aspects of his works. Túrin is an example of failure of free will. The story of Túrin is one of the great tragedies in Tolkien's legendarium. As a child, Túrin's father was captured by Melkor, tortured and made to watch as his family experienced many hardships thanks to a curse placed on them by Melkor. Túrin's mother, fearing for her son sent him to live with Thingol in Doriath after which Túrin lost contact with her. Numerous events shape Túrin, but the one which is of interest here is his meeting of a young woman whom he names Níniel. Níniel signifies "Tear-maiden," and she has no recollection of who she truly is. How did Túrin find Níniel? It is clear that he was intended to be among the men to unite with the elves, much like Beren and Tuor, but his love interest, the elf Finduilas, was captured by orcs. Instead of seeking her out and saving her, as Beren would have done for Lúthien, or as Lúthien actually did for Beren, Túrin was convinced by the dragon Glaurung to seek out his lost mother and unknown sister. Túrin abandoned Finduilas to her fate, and decided to find his mother and sister who were in fact safe. It is through his search of his mother that he stumbles upon Níniel, lost and without memory. The two eventually marry and she became pregnant with Túrin's child. Túrin was a fearless warrior and eventually slew Glaurung, but was gravely injured. Níniel, fearing for her husband's life went in search of him to heal his wounds only to find Glaurung barely alive, but speaking his last words. He tells Níniel that her true name is Nienor and that she is Túrin's sister. Níniel reacts in horror at the thought that she has married, and is now pregnant with her brother's child. In grief, she kills herself by jumping off a cliff into a river. Though her body was never found, her last words to Túrin were: "Farewell, O twice beloved!" (*Silmarillion*, 267). Túrin was not aware of the truth given to Níniel by Glaurung since he was not conscious at the time, but when Túrin hears a man named Brandir explain that Níniel was Túrin's sister, Túrin goes mad and kills him thinking Brandir a liar. Eventually Túrin comes to realize that Brandir was telling the truth, and Túrin ashamed of all his actions asks his sword to take his life. The sword, responding to Túrin's pleas speaks: "Yea, I will drink thy blood gladly, that so I may forget the blood of Beleg my master, and the blood of Brandir slain unjustly. I will slay thee swiftly." (*Silmarillion*, 270). Túrin's life ends in suicide and a question the reader of this tale is left with is how much of Túrin's misfortune was thanks to Melkor? In fact, Túrin does not think before he acts. He does not save Finduilas, when she is clearly in trouble. He does not trust Brandir, who is telling the truth. Túrin's misguided actions are as much responsible for his outcome as Melkor. For the story of Túrin see J.R.R. Tolkien, "Of Túrin Turambar" in *The Silmarillion* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 235-271. Túrin is linked to the story of Kullervo in the *Kalevala*. It is also one of the most complete stories in Tolkien's legendarium besides *The Hobbit* and *LotR*. We find versions of it in published *Silmarillion*, but also in the *Unfinished Tales* under the title: "Nar i Hîn Húrin." See Shippey, *Road to Middle-Earth*, 261. For a complete tale see J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Children of Húrin* (London: HarperCollins, 2007). For Tolkien's version of the Kullervo story see J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Story of Kullervo*, ed. Verlyn Flieger (London: HarperCollins, 2018). For an examination of suicide in Tolkien, see Lisa Courtas, "Hope without Guarantees," in *Tolkien's Theology of Beauty: Majesty, Splendor, and Transcendence in Middle-Earth* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 168-184.

Let us turn to the story briefly at this point to see the significance of the Melian/Thingol and Beren/Lúthien tales. After the death of his human father, Aragorn is taken by his mother to Rivendell for protection.⁵⁵⁰ Aragorn is the heir to the throne of Gondor, a descendant of Elros, Elrond's brother. Elrond and Elros, the children of Eärendil, are given the choice of being elves or humans. While Elrond elects to remain an immortal elf, his brother chooses to be mortal. Therefore, Elrond, by taking in Aragorn, was in fact offering protection to his brother's line.

In Rivendell Aragorn stumbles upon Arwen singing in a wood.⁵⁵¹ He is smitten by her, even calling out to her by the name Tinúviel, a name originally given to Lúthien by Beren which means nightingale. Though Arwen acknowledges that she is not Lúthien, she notes how many have called her by that name as she is very near Lúthien in likeness. Aragorn's mother warns him of the dangers of loving an elf and does not seem to be in favor of such a union. Elrond too is wary, since he is unwilling to let his daughter go. Unlike Thingol, however, Elrond is more accepting of his daughter's agency.⁵⁵²

While both parents look upon their union as unfavorable, Galadriel, Arwen's maternal grandmother, who spent much of her life with Melian and Lúthien, supports Aragorn and Arwen's relationship. She clothes Aragorn in elegant attire to catch the eye of her granddaughter and speed up the union of these two lovers.⁵⁵³ Galadriel's role here should not be underestimated – she incubated Aragorn and Arwen's love for one another. Elrond, needing some assurances, decides to give Aragorn a task. This is not the double-edged sword of Thingol's silmaril quest. Instead, Aragorn is charged with claiming the kingship and throne of Gondor.⁵⁵⁴ Aragorn accepts and while there are a few meetings between Arwen and Aragorn in the main story of *LotR*, not much truly stands out without this extra information.

When we first meet Arwen in book two of the *Fellowship of the Ring*, Frodo sees her seated in the House of Elrond. Her description hints at the beauty and pedigree which she possesses.

...[S]o like was she in form of womanhood to Elrond that Frodo guessed that she was one of his close kindred. Young she was and yet not so. The braids of her dark hair were touched by no frost; her white arms and clear face were flawless and smooth, and the light of stars was in her bright eyes, grey as a cloudless night; yet queenly she looked, and thought and knowledge were in

⁵⁵⁰ J.R.R. Tolkien, *Return of the King*, (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 414.

⁵⁵¹ Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 415.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 417.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, 418.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 419.

her glance, as of one who has known many things that the years bring. Above her brow her head was covered with a cap of silver lace netted with small gems, glittering white; but her soft grey raiment had no ornament save a girdle of leaves wrought in silver. So it was that Frodo saw her whom few mortals had yet seen; Arwen, daughter of Elrond, in whom it was said that the likeness of Lúthien had come on earth again; and she was called Undómiel, for she was the Evenstar of her people.⁵⁵⁵

The next time we hear of Arwen, she sends a standard to Aragorn for the battles to come in book five of *Return of the King*.⁵⁵⁶ Following the destruction of the Ring of Power, Arwen and Aragorn are wed.⁵⁵⁷ Aragorn reclaims his kingship, and therefore, Elrond consents to the union, doing what Thingol was never able to do. Arwen gives up her immortality, offering to Frodo her passage into the West, to Tol Eressëa, an island within sight of Valinor.⁵⁵⁸ Elrond and Arwen have a conversation near the end of *LotR*, one to which the reader is not made privy,⁵⁵⁹ but we can only guess at the emotions both father and daughter must be feeling. Elrond is losing his beloved daughter; Arwen will be separated from her family forever and takes on to herself the uncertainty of death – an end nobody truly understands. To this, we must also add the loss of Lúthien for the elves all over again. As Arwen is the image of Lúthien, the Eldar, a term used for Tolkien's elves, once again have to face the grief of losing one of their own – love and grief are intertwined. How is Arwen able to give up her immortality? Arwen, a descendent of Eärendil has this option.⁵⁶⁰

Joy also comes from this union, however, as Aragorn and Arwen, according to the appendix, have a son, whose line will rule over Gondor throughout the Fourth Age.⁵⁶¹ But the bitterness of death is ever present in this tale. For once his son comes of age, Aragorn decides to die before he is overtaken by decrepit old age. Arwen finally notes the bitterness of death: “But I say to you, King of the Númenoreans, not till now have I understood the tale of your people and their fall. As wicked fools I scorned them, but I pity them at last. For if this is indeed, as the Eldar say, the gift of the One to Men, it is bitter to receive.”⁵⁶² There is much to unpack here, but not all is relevant to this thesis. It should be highlighted that Aragorn is a descendent of the Númenorean

⁵⁵⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien, *Fellowship of the Ring*, (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 298.

⁵⁵⁶ Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 43.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁵⁵⁸ After Fëanor and his followers left Valinor to chase after the silmarils, a ban was placed by the Valar on any returning to the undying lands. Instead, all returning elves are to reside on Tol Eressëa on the coast of Valinor.

⁵⁵⁹ Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 308.

⁵⁶⁰ Hope Rogers, “No Triumph Without Loss: Problem of Intercultural Marriage in Tolkien's World,” *Tolkien Studies* 10 (2013):83.

⁵⁶¹ Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 421.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, 422.

kings. These were the children of Elros, who lived and ruled on the island of Númenor.⁵⁶³ While they were free to sail eastwards toward Middle-Earth, the Valar placed a ban on their sailing to the West, where Valinor was. The appetite of humans was stoked by Sauron, since humans fear death and desire the immortality of elves. Sauron convinced the Númenoreans they could become immortal by residing in the Undying Lands of Valinor.⁵⁶⁴ The men of Númenor break the ban, sail West and the Valar ask Eru to step in. God sinks Númenor, much like Atlantis, and swallows the Númenoreans who arrive on the shores of Valinor alive into the mountains.⁵⁶⁵ Arwen, an elf, would not have originally understood this transgression, particularly since many elves see death as a gift from God.⁵⁶⁶ Think of Elrond, or Melian, who have lost their children and loved ones, who must watch the world slowly decay, without time diminishing them. For these immortals the weariness which comes with being an immortal in a fading world is too great to endure at times.⁵⁶⁷ To break the ban was something foolish according to the elves.⁵⁶⁸ Only on her husband's deathbed does Arwen truly grasp the sorrows that death brings with it.

Aragorn is not inclined to agree with his Queen. “‘So it seems,’ he said. ‘But let us not be overthrown at the final test, who of old renounced the Shadow and the Ring. In sorrow we must go, but not in despair. Behold! We are not bound for ever to the circles of the world, and beyond them is more than memory. Farewell!’”⁵⁶⁹ A glimpse of Tolkien's Christian hope can be seen in Aragorn's statement,⁵⁷⁰ even when he has no notion of Christianity. We find it hidden throughout

⁵⁶³ For the full story of Númenor, see *The Akallabêth* in Tolkien's *Silmarillion*.

⁵⁶⁴ The undying lands did not offer immortality. Instead, their name is derived from the fact that those who live there are in fact immortal and undying in their own right.

⁵⁶⁵ This is reminiscent to the Book of Numbers, where much like the Valar, Moses tells God the people are rebelling and he cannot truly deal with the transgression. Even the punishment of being swallowed into the earth is found in Numbers: “. . .and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households. . .” Numbers 16:32.

⁵⁶⁶ Tom Shippey notes that death is one of Tolkien's focuses. Tolkien perceives death as a gift or reward, unlike Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which presents death as a punishment. See Shippey, *Road to Middle-Earth*, 237.

⁵⁶⁷ For an exploration of Tolkien's elves and their possible reincarnation, see Michaël Devaux, “Fragments on Elvish Reincarnation,” ed. Michaël Devaux, with assistance of Christopher Tolkien and Carl F. Hostetter, in *La feuille de la Compagnie n.3: Tolkien l'effigie des elfes* (Paris, Bragelonne, 2014).

⁵⁶⁸ No greater image of the gift of Death can be found than in the story of Húrin, Túrin's father. Knowing Húrin is in grief, after seeing the suffering of his son and daughter, Melkor releases him after his children were all dead. Húrin finds his wife, Morwen, Túrin's mother, when she is just about to die. Morwen asks her husband about her children and their fate, having lost contact with them and not knowing what truly happened. Húrin does not tell her their story and she dies in relative peace not knowing the horrible lives her children were forced to endure. Húrin claims “She was not conquered.” Death acts as a gift, freeing us from the troubles of the Fallen world. See J.R.R. Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 275.

⁵⁶⁹ Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 422.

⁵⁷⁰ Link to Augustine dismissing his friend's baptism in book IV of *Confessions*. A last temptation on the deathbed. See Joseph Zepeda, “‘To Whom My Own Glad Debts are Incalculable’: St. Augustine and Human Loves in *The Four Loves* and *Till We Have Faces*.” *Journal of Inklings Studies* 2 (2012): 8.

Tolkien's mythology. It is a promise by Eru that humans who die will have a part to play in the recreation of the world. While elves are bound to the material world and know not what will become of them, humans, the Edain, have the promise of being part of the Great Music which will come at the end of time. There is hope for an afterlife, a hope which Aragorn does not wish to give up on in his last hours. As readers, however, we must ask ourselves: what does happen to Aragorn after death? Tom Shippey notes that while Aragorn was good, he did not have access to Christianity or the sacraments. Tolkien does not subscribe to Lewis' *clara visio*. Here Lewis proposed that all humans have a vision of God at their death, and depending on their reaction, no matter what their religious condition, their salvation would be determined. Those who are righteous would of course react well to God, while those who are not will respond negatively.⁵⁷¹ Tolkien disliked this idea, instead Shippey does draw our attention to Tolkien's theory put forward by King Théoden – that upon his death he will journey to the halls of his fathers and there they will wait together for their reward/the Last Battle.⁵⁷² Théoden presents the afterlife as a waiting hall, a place where the dead congregate until the true afterlife begins.

Death in Tolkien is complex. Thomas Fornet-Ponse notes, in his article, “‘Strange and Free’ – On Some Aspects of the Nature of Elves and Men”:

Although using the conception of a houseless *fëa*, or philosophically speaking of an *anima separata*, Tolkien leaves no doubt on the natural union of body and soul for incarnate creatures and the unnaturalness of their separation. In this, he shows great similarities to C.S. Lewis's explanations in which Men's spirit was once dominant over the body but becomes after the Fall a mere indweller. The freedom of the Elvish *fëar* concerning their re-birth or reincarnation after a death of illness, violence or grief supports the claim of Elvish and human freedom. A key element which Tolkien stresses several times is the difference of Elvish and human *fëar* concerning their fate—Elves being bound to Arda as long as it lasts, Men destined to leave Arda.⁵⁷³

With this in mind, Aragorn's wish to avoid temptation becomes something which must be elaborated on. Why does he wish to avoid fearing death? Why are humans afraid of death, something which is a gift, in the first place? Fornet-Ponse draws our attention to the root of this fear.

Human fear of death is explained out of this Elvish perspective as an effect of Melkor because he “has cast his shadow upon it, and confounded it with

⁵⁷¹ Shippey, *Road to Middle-Earth*, 202.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 203.

⁵⁷³ Fornet-Ponse, “‘Strange and Free,’” 73. Note that Arda here refers to the earth. Middle-Earth, Valinor, Beleriand, are regions of Arda.

darkness, and brought forth evil out of good, and fear out of hope.” This leads Men to understand death not as a gift but as a punishment and, further, to long for immortality, while Tolkien underscores several times that without the influence of Melkor (or of Sauron in the case of the Númenoreans) Men would have accepted death and died without reluctance. Whereas Elves do know what they have to expect after a death by illness or violence—the halls of Mandos and after a certain amount of time a reincarnation—this is not known from Men. In view of the end of Arda, it is the exact opposite: Although the Valar declared to the Elves “that Men shall join in the Second Music of the Ainur” nothing is known of the fate of Elves.⁵⁷⁴

Here then, we see Aragorn’s objections to her views. He has already conquered Sauron, defeated the minion of Melkor, to fear death now, to become like his forefathers and lament the Gift of Death given to humanity by God, would be to undo all that he has accomplished. He is successful on his deathbed. He has succeeded in avoiding fear of death – Aragorn dies without reluctance. He freely embraces the created order.

After Aragorn’s death, Arwen returns to Lothlórien, where her grandmother Galadriel once ruled before leaving to Tol Eressëa with Frodo. There she dies alone in the Golden Wood.⁵⁷⁵ Arwen’s choice to be mortal was a difficult one. She was forced to choose between her father/people, and the mortal she loved.⁵⁷⁶ In the end she selected uncertainty. By become mortal, Arwen had no knowledge of what was to come, nor did she have a good grasp of what it would mean to be separated from her family forever. This is highlighted by her revelation and despair at her husband’s deathbed. Linda Greenwood notes “Arwen’s love for Aragorn mirrors the love one must have for God. This love must transcend man’s duties to those he loves here on earth for his absolute duty towards God.”⁵⁷⁷ Greenwood makes a connection to Luke 14:26: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.” Arwen’s role is greater than she knows. She represents a renewal of the merger of the Eldar and Edain, a merger we saw in Beren and Lúthien. The Children of Eru are once again one through Arwen and Aragorn’s descendants. This brings hope to the people of Middle-Earth and is most likely the reason Galadriel aided Aragorn on the quest for her granddaughter’s heart, for she foresaw the outcome.⁵⁷⁸ Though the divine plan is

⁵⁷⁴ Fornet-Ponse, ““Strange and Free,”” 74.

⁵⁷⁵ Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 422-423.

⁵⁷⁶ Rogers, “No Triumph Without Loss,” 77-78.

⁵⁷⁷ Linda Greenwood, “Love: ‘The Gift of Death,’” *Tolkien Studies* 2 (2005): 188.

⁵⁷⁸ Galadriel often works in the background, using her gift of foresight she manages to push along central events in the *LotR*. This is a possible reason for her ban, the only elf still banned by the Valar, to return at the end of the Second

important, Arwen truly does love Aragorn. Her sacrifice for that love, and the hope it brings to the people, is her own life. She brings both sorrow and joy. “Sorrow and joy are both a necessary part of what Tolkien calls the Consolation of the Happy Ending or the Eucatastrophe.”⁵⁷⁹ Arwen’s story represents this perfectly, it is sorrowful because of the loss of her immortality and the uncertainty it brings, but joyous in the outcome of the mortal life she lived. Arwen places hope in her self-sacrifice, her Gift-love. Through her freedom to choose, she aids in the salvation of God’s creation and renews Middle-Earth after Sauron’s destruction.

Éowyn and Faramir: Self-Sacrificing Love

Éowyn⁵⁸⁰ represents an interesting case in Tolkien’s works and her relationship to the men in her life is particularly relevant for the notion of love. This is especially the case, as both Éowyn and Faramir are human, and more relatable to the readers.⁵⁸¹ She is portrayed as a female knight and a courtly woman.⁵⁸² We are first introduced to her when Aragorn, Gimli, Legolas and Gandalf go to Meduseld to meet King Théoden. There, Éowyn sees Aragorn and eventually acts as cupbearer offering him a drink.⁵⁸³ Her noticing of Aragorn is highlighted and the readers are left with the impression that Éowyn may have feelings for Aragorn. These feelings are confirmed at a later point when Aragorn parts with the Rohirim to seek out the aid of the dead/ghost oath breakers. Éowyn’s response to the discovery of Aragorn’s plan is one of dismay. She warns him against going on this journey. When he does not relent, she turns her attention to going with him. Éowyn’s main fear is that of being left by the side, as a pawn used by the men around her – to be cast aside while the men seek the glory of battle. When she realizes Aragorn will not give in, she tells him the people who follow him believe in him and love him: “Neither have those others who go with

Age. Some examples of her involvement in the unraveling of Sauron: gifts to Fellowship which benefit them greatly, her finding and clothing of Gandalf upon his return after the battle with the Balrog, her destruction of Sauron’s fortress in Mirkwood, and finally, her aiding in the union of Aragorn/Arwen. Many other events are thanks to Galadriel, not least of which was Sam planting of Mallorn Tree in the Shire after the Scouring.

⁵⁷⁹ Greenwood, “Love,” 189.

⁵⁸⁰ Tom Shippey notes that names starting with “Eo” are connected to horses, as the Rohirim are horse riders. See Shippey, *Road to Middle-Earth*, 123. Shippey also notes how the Rohirim are not depicted as “barbarians” generally are in literature. Instead, they are human and have complex feelings. See Shippey, *Road to Middle-Earth*, 126.

⁵⁸¹ This can be debatable, as most humans in Tolkien exceed our expectation. In fact, there is much evidence that the reader should relate more to the Hobbits than the kingly Aragorn and wizard-like Faramir.

⁵⁸² Phoebe C. Linton, “Speech and Silence in *The Lord of the Rings*: Medieval Romance and the Transitions of Éowyn,” in *Perilous and Fair: Women in the Works and Life of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Janet Brennan Croft and Leslie A. Donovan (Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 2015), 260.

⁵⁸³ Tolkien, *Two Towers*, 140, 150.

thee. They go only because they would not be parted from thee – because they love thee.”⁵⁸⁴ Éowyn is projecting her feelings, she in fact would not be parted from Aragorn, for she loves him.

Éowyn is not left behind so easily,⁵⁸⁵ while Aragorn parts to seek out the dead, Théoden and the Rohirim ride to Gondor to aid Denethor and his city. Though Éowyn is ordered to remain behind by her King and Uncle, Théoden, she refuses and takes on the clothing of a male warrior. Taking Merry along with her, who was also told to stay behind, Éowyn rides to the Battle of the Pelennore Fields. There she shows her true courage, killing the Witch King, lord of the Nazgûl.⁵⁸⁶ The battle leaves her wounded, however, and she is sent to the House of Healing in Gondor.⁵⁸⁷ Éowyn’s role in the battle highlights her position as a warrior of Rohan. Tolkien models Éowyn on Norse warrior women like Brynhild. She is a shieldmaiden, part of the wider tradition of warrior women in literature.⁵⁸⁸

Still feeling something for Aragorn, Éowyn eventually meets Faramir, brother to Boromir and son of Denethor, Steward of Gondor. Together Faramir and Éowyn build a relationship, as both are sidelined in the remainder of the battle as a result of their injuries.⁵⁸⁹ Their shared grief at the losses of the war and their predicament led them to falling in love. It is worth quoting their dialogue here at length:

And Éowyn looked at Faramir long and steadily; and Faramir said: “Do not scorn pity that is the gift of a gentle heart, Éowyn! But I do not offer you my pity. For you are a lady high and valiant and have yourself won renown that shall not be forgotten; and you are a lady beautiful, I deem, beyond even the words of the Elven-tongue to tell. And I love you. Once I pitied your sorrow. But now, were you sorrowless, without fear or any lack, were you the blissful Queen of Gondor, still I would love you. Éowyn, do you not love me? Then the heart of Éowyn changed, or else at last she understood it. And suddenly her winter passed, and the sun shone on her. “I stand in Minas Arnor, the Tower of the Sun,” she said; “and behold! The Shadow has departed! I will be a shieldmaiden no longer, nor vie with the great Riders, nor take joy only in the songs of slaying. I will be a healer, and lover

⁵⁸⁴ Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 55.

⁵⁸⁵ For a study of Éowyn’s link to war brides, see Melissa A. Smith, “At Home and Abroad: Éowyn’s Twofold Figuring as War Bride in the *Lord of the Rings*,” in *Perilous and Fair: Women in the Works and Life of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Janet Brennan Croft and Leslie A. Donovan (Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 2015).

⁵⁸⁶ Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 128ff.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵⁸⁸ Leslie A. Donovan, “The Valkyrie Reflex in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*: Galadriel, Shelob, Éowyn, and Arwen,” in *Perilous and Fair: Women in the Works and Life of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Janet Brennan Croft and Leslie A. Donovan (Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 2015), 243.

⁵⁸⁹ See, for example, Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 287, 289.

of all things that grow and are not barren.” And again she looked at Faramir.
“No longer do I desire to be a queen,” she said.⁵⁹⁰

Éowyn finally moved on from Aragorn and the idea of glory which she had in her mind: glory of battle and war, grief, and sorrow. Éowyn believed that dying was the way to fame, and her female gender needed to be rejected for such fame to be granted to her. By casting off her love of Aragorn, which was in a way her attempt at connecting to his prowess and deeds,⁵⁹¹ Éowyn finally can become herself, take on her own personality. But how can she shift from Aragorn to Faramir? Ralph Wood notes that romantic love does not have intention. One does not choose to love, but ‘falls’ in love. “Tolkien knows that *eros* in the classic sense does not mean genital arousal but a longing that summons us out of ourselves, a desire for an object radically other than ourselves, a yearning that itself brings satisfaction greater than any grossly satisfied appetite.”⁵⁹² Éowyn finds this “radical other” in Faramir. Something other than herself, something which loves her back equally in a way Aragorn could never love her, since he loved another. Faramir also has what Éowyn lacks, “Faramir embodies in a male, those positive feminine characteristics lacking in [Éowyn’s] life.”⁵⁹³ Faramir also offers love which accepts all aspects of Éowyn’s character. He does not reject certain elements, nor does he ask her to suppress part of herself. “Faramir loves the public and private aspects of Éowyn’s identity, thereby enabling a resolution between her individual and cultural needs.”⁵⁹⁴

Lisa Courtas draws our attention to the fact that Aragorn knew Éowyn’s main attraction to him was her “dream of being exalted alongside him.”⁵⁹⁵ This is evident in Éowyn’s statement to Faramir when she says she no longer desires to be queen. We should ask ourselves, queen of what? The answer is clearly Gondor, with Aragorn being king. Faramir is attracted to Éowyn’s grief and beauty. “This tragic blend of beauty and sorrow is associated with the transcendental feminine. As the light and beauty are the sources of beauty, brave sorrow draws from the depth of being is likewise beautiful.”⁵⁹⁶ This attraction eventually leads to Faramir and Éowyn marrying,⁵⁹⁷ and

⁵⁹⁰ Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 291-292.

⁵⁹¹ Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien*, 80-81.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵⁹³ Melanie A. Rawls “The Feminine Principle in Tolkien,” in *Perilous and Fair: Women in the Works and Life of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Janet Brennan Croft and Leslie A. Donovan (Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 2015), 110.

⁵⁹⁴ Donovan, “The Valkyrie Reflex,” 250.

⁵⁹⁵ Courtas, *Tolkien’s Theology of Beauty*, 238-239.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁵⁹⁷ Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 307.

Aragorn gives Éowyn his blessing. Aragorn tells her: “I have wished thee joy ever since first I saw thee. It heals my heart to see thee now in bliss.”⁵⁹⁸ Her beauty in Faramir’s eyes highlights an aspect of Tolkien’s thought, particularly that “[b]eauty and strength are not mutually exclusive in Tolkien’s representation of this female character; naturally, therefore, *both* inspire those who look upon her...”⁵⁹⁹ Aragorn, Faramir and even Merry are affected by this mix of beauty and strength.

Éowyn is also a perfect blending, on Tolkien’s part, of Marian and Valkyrie archetypes.⁶⁰⁰ Éowyn at first is unmarried and a warrior, which exemplifies the Valkyrie model.⁶⁰¹ On the other hand, once she meets and marries Faramir, she takes on the role of healer, a change that is of her own free will and not forced upon her by the males in her life.⁶⁰² “The Marian glory of self-sacrificial display in Éowyn’s confrontation with the Nazgûl now finds its fulfillment in the Marian expression of healer.”⁶⁰³ “The renunciation of power, moreover, is a quality displayed both in Mary’s humility as well as the Valkyrie tradition.”⁶⁰⁴ Viewing Éowyn through this lens helps to reveal an extremely complex character, and her relationship with both Aragorn and Faramir enables her to reflect and develop a personal identity. Éowyn is a human example of free will and self-sacrifice. She freely changes and offers her life in battle for those she loves. She also comes to realize her value does not reside in her ability to die on a battlefield, but instead rests in her ability to heal, love, and inspire. She takes on aspects of Faramir to highlight her existing female traits. As Courtas notes, many critics fail to see Tolkien’s complex theological framework and attempt to simplify his characters, but “...Tolkien was reinventing ancient and archetypal images to dignify women and ‘humanize’ men.”⁶⁰⁵ While some narratives highlighted virginity as the source of female power, invoking the image of Mary, “Tolkien modifies the traditional paradigm by demonstrating that strength comes from personal character rather than physical purity.”⁶⁰⁶ Éowyn is the embodiment of personal character, and her growth draws attention to Tolkien’s emphasis on free will, while also highlighting the strength of his female characters.

⁵⁹⁸ Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 308.

⁵⁹⁹ Linton, “Speech and Silence,” 275.

⁶⁰⁰ Courtas, *Tolkien’s Theology of Beauty*, 244.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁶⁰² Linton, “Speech and Silence,” 277.

⁶⁰³ Courtas, *Tolkien’s Theology of Beauty*, 248.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 258.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁶⁰⁶ Linton, “Speech and Silence,” 276.

Tom and Goldberry

Before drawing conclusions regarding Tolkien's distinct contribution to our understanding of love, one last couple should be highlighted as it is both perplexing and interesting to many readers. This couple, like Éowyn and Faramir, also represents a complementary union – something which Tolkien often presents in his work. Very little is known about Tom's identity. Much has been debated about his role in Middle-Earth, particularly since Frodo seems to have such a hard time with pinpointing who Tom is. In the end, Tom is most likely an Ainu, angelic being, and his wife, Goldberry is a water nymph of sorts. While much can be said about Tom and his ability to jokingly play with the Ring in *LotR*, for our purposes here let us turn to a series of poems published by Tolkien in 1962 entitled "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil."

Within this poem we are introduced to Tom and Goldberry's playful nature. One day, while out by the river Tom's beard was hanging over the water. "There his beard dangled long down into the water: / up came Goldberry, the River-woman's daughter; / pulled Tom's hanging hair. In he went a-wallowing / under the water-lilies, bubbling and a-swallowing..."⁶⁰⁷ Tom eventually frees himself and goes on his way, but he is clearly marked by this meeting. Goldberry's role as a playful and mischievous nymph is clear in this scene. She is causing trouble for Tom who is simply enjoying his walk in the summer meadows.

After dealing with other nuisances, like Old Man Willow and the badgering Badger, Tom finds his way back to Goldberry. This time Tom "caught her, held her fast! Water-rats went scuttering / reeds hissed, herons cried, and her heart was fluttering. / Said Tom Bombadil: 'Here's my pretty maiden! / You shall come home with me! The table is all laden: / yellow cream, honeycomb, white bread and butter/ [...] Never mind your mother / in her deep weedy pool: there you'll find no lover!'"⁶⁰⁸ Goldberry at no point refuses him, and they are wed soon after. "Old Tom Bombadil had a merry wedding, / crowned all with buttercups, hat and feather shedding; / his bride with forgetmenots and flag-lilies for garland / was robed all in silver-green."⁶⁰⁹

The relationship between Tom and Goldberry seems a symbiotic one. While Tom chopped the wood, she "combed her tresses yellow"⁶¹⁰ and did the washing. Both of these acts by Goldberry

⁶⁰⁷ J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil," in *Tales from the Perilous Realm* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 175.

⁶⁰⁸ Tolkien, "Adventures," 180.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

seem to signify larger work within the forest – like “washing” being connected to rain irrigating the forest. Throughout the *LotR* they both support each other. Tom fetches her waterlilies for her basins, while Goldberry holds court with the hobbits. Though it appears that Tom entrapped Goldberry, she is his equal in many respects throughout the story, she was also the one who entrapped Tom first. In fact, her beauty and power has the ability to change even the way Frodo speaks to her, as he unexpectedly bursts into poem and song when addressing her.⁶¹¹ Their relationship and stature within the *LotR* is identified by Ralph Wood as being analogous to Adam and Eve before the fall.⁶¹² They have no moral distinction and the Ring, which corrupts almost everyone, has no power on Tom or Goldberry. Neither seems to even care about it.

We can see the importance of Goldberry by her description, as colour plays a central role for Tolkien. Goldberry is linked to the colours of green and yellow which “signal a close relationship with nature.”⁶¹³ Much as in the case of Wood who links Tom and Goldberry to the pre-lapsarian couple, Kris Swank takes a different approach, without linking Tom to Adam. Swank argues that Tom seeks knowledge of other things because they are independent, something other. He wants to understand and know things other than himself. Tom does not own anything or seek to be a ruler over them – he is simply the Master.⁶¹⁴ Mastery comes from knowing things and understanding them for what they are. “And knowledge, in Tolkien’s world, is power.”⁶¹⁵

Again, while the relationship between Tom and Goldberry can be suspect at first, the way in which they work together and complement each other, makes the reader recognize quickly that this is a marriage of equals. Tom and Goldberry aid and love one another. In addition, there is the benefit of the relationship between Tom and Goldberry, particularly in the Old Forest where they reside. Their union brings balance to a forest which is wild and dangerous. Tom maintains control of the evil which can take root, for example in the older trees, Huorns, and Goldberry brings refreshment to the forest through rain. Tom’s relationship with Goldberry also means that he is out searching for flowers for her on two occasions when Frodo and the other hobbits are in danger. If not for Goldberry, Tom would have never found them and saved them.⁶¹⁶ Positive results come

⁶¹¹ Tolkien, *Fellowship of the Ring*, 163.

⁶¹² Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien*, 42.

⁶¹³ Kris Swank “Tom Bombadil’s Last Song: Tolkien’s ‘Once Upon a Time,’” *Tolkien Studies* 10 (2013): 190.

⁶¹⁴ Swank, “Tom Bombadil’s Last Song,” 192.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁶¹⁶ See Tom’s explanation of his chance encounter with the hobbits in Tolkien, *Fellowship of the Ring*, 166.

out of their union. Both Tom and Goldberry give up part of their former lives to unite and complement the other.

Frodo and Sam

Having explored the marriages in Tolkien's legendarium, we should turn now to the final case of love between Frodo and Sam. The relationship between Sam and Frodo is one which shows the extent of Gift-love, particularly on the part of Sam, arguably the true hero of the entire *LotR*. Sam is Bilbo's gardener and, he makes fast friends with Frodo. Having heard much of the conversation between Gandalf and Frodo concerning the Ring of Power, Sam is sent by Gandalf to help Frodo on his journey. The two soon develop a strong and lasting friendship. Ralph Wood notes that friendship is an interesting relationship, as it is preferential and excludes certain individuals. It is a relationship which claims one is better than another and can be seen as something against the Christian message.⁶¹⁷ Yet, the relationship between the two is self-giving none the less, for they both give up much for the benefit of all creation.

Sam's love of Frodo can be seen on several occasions, but a few important moments can be highlighted at this time. The first example comes at the end of book two of the *LotR*. When Frodo decides he must go to Mordor on his own, he attempts to abandon the entire Fellowship. Soon Sam realizes the decision Frodo has made and chases after his friend to accompany him on his dangerous journey.⁶¹⁸ Sam becomes a central pillar for much of the adventure, aiding Frodo throughout, even carrying his friend towards the end of the journey when Frodo can no longer walk due to the weight of the Ring.⁶¹⁹ Sam is also willing to risk his own life, taking the Ring from Frodo when he believes Shelob killed him, and then going to rescue Frodo when he overhears that Frodo is not in fact dead, but only knocked out by the giant spider.⁶²⁰

Two passages which show the extent of Sam's love for Frodo occur while Frodo is sleeping. The first event is when Gollum is searching for rabbits to eat. Sam is watching Frodo in his sleep, remembering his recovery in Rivendell and noting the state of Frodo at the moment. "Frodo's face was peaceful, the marks of fear and care had left it; but it looked old, old and

⁶¹⁷ Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien*, 125-126.

⁶¹⁸ Tolkien, *Fellowship of the Ring*, 533.

⁶¹⁹ Tolkien, *Return of the King*, 258.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, 203.

beautiful, as if the chiseling of the shaping years was now revealed in many fine lines that had before been hidden, though the identity of the face was not changed. Not that Sam Gamgee put it that way to himself. He shook his head, as if finding words useless, and murmured: ‘I love him. He’s like that, and sometimes it shines through, somehow. But I love him, whether or no.’”⁶²¹ Sam’s affection for his Master is stated directly here, he feels a special bond to Frodo from the start and their journey only enhances it.

The second example of Sam’s love has unintended consequences, and perhaps shows Wood’s point concerning friendship being exclusionary. While Frodo and Sam are asleep on their journey, Gollum slowly begins to build a bond and trust with Frodo. Gollum’s heart is changing. While Frodo sleeps, Gollum reaches out to touch his new friend. Sam wakes, sees this, and becomes suspicious of Gollum. He makes accusations against Gollum, who in turn withdraws and hardens his heart to the hobbits ever after.

Gollum looked at them. A strange expression passed over his lean hungry face. The gleam faded from his eyes and they went dim and grey, old and tired. A spasm of pain seemed to twist him, and he turned away, peering back up towards the pass, shaking his head, as if engaged in some interior debate. Then he came back, and slowly putting out a trembling hand, very cautiously he touched Frodo’s knee – but almost the touch was a caress. For a fleeting moment, could one of the sleepers have seen him, they would have thought that they beheld an old weary hobbit, shrunken by the years that had carried him far beyond his time, beyond friends and kin, and the fields and streams of youth, an old starved pitiable thing.⁶²²

Gollum was having an internal debate. He may have changed his plan on bringing Frodo to Shelob the spider who would paralyze him, but instead Sam’s hostile response, one of mistrust and perhaps jealousy since Gollum was the only other person, besides Bilbo, who understood the burden of the Ring, caused Gollum to continue with his original plan.⁶²³

Gollum did eventually lead Frodo and Sam to a dangerous position, but Frodo’s pity towards Gollum enabled for this scene to occur. As Augustine claims in the *Confessions*, through God’s love he became lovable, so too does Gollum become lovable to the reader through Frodo’s love and pity.⁶²⁴ Gollum becomes humanized, an old hobbit who has lost everything for his

⁶²¹ Tolkien, *Two Towers*, 321.

⁶²² *Ibid.*, 403.

⁶²³ It should be noted that even if Sam did not reject Gollum at this point, Gollum would never have agreed to destroy the Ring in his mental state. To that, we should add that the only way to get to Sammath Naur and the destruction of the Ring was through Sam and Gollum playing their particular roles.

⁶²⁴ Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien*, 132.

possession of the Ring. Frodo's entire success is his ability to show mercy, pity, and love,⁶²⁵ particularly since he fails in his quest with the Ring in the end. "Love and mercy have been the ultimate victors, and in them Frodo and Sam have proven themselves to be triumphant."⁶²⁶

The love Frodo and Sam share, their friendship, is expressed "as a thing of exquisite beauty, even holiness."⁶²⁷ The love they have for one another not only aids them on their journey but is a symbol of their Hobbitness.⁶²⁸ Sam's love for Frodo is complete Gift-love, while Frodo illustrates Need-love. Sam is willing to give up everything he has in life, including life itself, to aid Frodo on his quest. Sam casts aside his family, and the Shire he so loves, even after seeing its destruction in the Mirror of Galadriel, in order to help Frodo on his mission. Frodo, on the other hand, needs Sam's support and strength. Without Sam's willingness to give, Frodo would have nothing to lean on or to draw strength from. Together Sam and Frodo illustrate the very greatest relationship between Gift and Need loves.

Tolkien's Understanding of Love

While many names and tales from Tolkien's work have been explored, one important notion is clear: flourishing forms of love, the ones which bring us out of ourselves, are loves which freely sacrifice. They are loves which cast aside earthly things and look beyond the self to the greater good. They are also loves which bring about hope in the face of sorrow. Beren and Lúthien exemplify this, as do Aragorn and Arwen. Both couples freely sacrifice for their beloved. Both also face extremely bleak odds but bring hope to God's created world. Their actions and self-giving sacrifice correct the damage done by Melkor and Sauron. They rejuvenate God's creation, unite the lines of Elves and Humans, and their children rule justly. Éowyn's newfound love for Faramir plays a similar role. By shifting from a shieldmaiden, to a healer, Éowyn offers her people a care they truly require after the hurt of war. During the Battle of the Pelennor Fields she was the warrior and defeated the Witch King, after the battle was over, she served as a healer for her new people. She no longer sought self-glory, vainglory, but to help and heal those in need. The same

⁶²⁵ Greenwood, "Love," 190.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁶²⁷ Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien*, 135.

⁶²⁸ Ralph Wood claims that Eru may incarnate in the form of a Hobbit in Tolkien's Middle-Earth for they are the humble of Middle-Earth. See Ralph C. Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien*, 164.

can be said for Sam. He gives up all for Frodo, to keep Frodo safe, to keep the Ring on the path to destruction.

We return then to the start of this chapter: hope, faith and love are the central elements for Tolkien's thought. He does not seek to convert, nor does he want to proselytize. Instead, like the fearful hobbits on Weathertop gaining courage from hearing the story of Beren and Lúthien, his stories kindle hope. Darkness can be overcome; sorrow is passing. A Fool's Hope can change the tides, but we must be active. We must take that first step out the door and keep our feet, "It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to."⁶²⁹ While the stories give hope and teach us the strength of love, they also tell us that we must be active participants. Éowyn could not have been forced to change, she needed to come to her own realization that becoming Aragorn's Queen was not her destiny. Lúthien needed to escape her tower, follow her dead lover to the Halls of Mandos, to gain him back. So too did Thingol need to put aside his pride for the sake of his family. While some freely make the right choices, others do not. The consequences of those choices are visible to the reader. Lúthien mothers a line of heroes. Thingol loses his life over a piece of jewelry and subjects his wife to an eternity of sorrow and loneliness. Free will and self-sacrifice are the hallmarks of love for Tolkien.

This is an argument also reflected in the works of C.S. Lewis, as was highlighted in Chapter 2. It makes sense then, that both Lewis and Tolkien select similar stories to frame major works. Tolkien draws from the story of Orpheus and his quest to regain his lost love Euridice, as depicted in the tale of Beren and Lúthien. The seeds of this myth are scattered throughout his narratives. Like Tolkien, Lewis also retells the Orphic story in his *The Silver Chair*. With a moral bearing a striking similarity to his final work *Till We Have Faces* it is focused on Cupid and Psyche. Just as Orpheus is instructed not to look back, Psyche is told to not look upon her loving husband, nor to look into the box of beauty collected from Persephone. The relevant insight of both Orpheus and Psyche is that they both fail in the classical versions. They turn away from the gift of the gods, back to earthly worries or cares. Orpheus looking back to see if his wife follows; Psyche, by gazing upon her husband's divine form and seeking the beauty contained within the box, even after Apuleius' narrative identifies her as a beauty rivaling Venus. Though the beauty in the box is a godly gift, it is still a humanly concern for beauty which causes Psyche's fall. Why then do Tolkien

⁶²⁹ Tolkien, *Fellowship of the Ring*, 98.

and Lewis use these stories of failure as their framework? Why do they change their outcomes? How does the story of Orpheus aid us in understanding their theology of love? What connects the notion of love connected with sorrow and grief in Greco-Roman tales with that of Tolkien and Lewis? Having selected key narratives of both thinkers and their literary works, we can now turn to their main argument – proper love must ever be directed beyond itself towards the divine. Earthly goods, as we shall see in our exploration of Boethius’ interpretation of the Orphic Myth, are fleeting and only God is an everlasting source of joy. Sorrows of love come from loving changing things, Elrond and Thingol’s grief for the loss of their daughters is natural yet misses the point. Lucy’s tears, in *The Last Battle*, were justified, but the human gaze must always be beyond, towards Aslan, Eru, and Yahweh.

Chapter 4: Orpheus, Looking Forward and Gift-Love

As we have explored in the previous chapters, both C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien place a strong emphasis on the notion of Gift and Need-Love. Sacrifice is needed, humans must be willing to give, but to also open themselves up to the possibility of needing and being loved. Both authors contrast those who desire love but refuse to give up anything of their own, like Fëanor, and those who are willing to give parts of themselves freely like Éowyn. Edmond wanted dominion for himself, over the safety of his siblings, but eventually realized he must sacrifice himself for the true love and respect of others. It is through these stories that readers begin to gain a clearer picture of Lewis and Tolkien's understanding of love. Gift-love is sacrificial, imitating Christ on the Cross – a total giving of the Self to the Other regardless of reciprocation. While both authors drew from various sources and myths to inspire their works, one myth, which both men reference, is that of Orpheus and his lost love Eurydice. As we have examined in Tolkien's central narrative of Beren and Lúthien, while the Orpheus myth holds a special place for Tolkien, but Lewis also recounts this classical story in *The Silver Chair* (1953)⁶³⁰. It is not a surprise then, that other members of Tolkien and Lewis' circle produced works on Orpheus. Owen Barfield, a member of the Inklings, was most likely encouraged by Lewis to work on a play entitled *Orpheus: A Poetic Drama*. In it, Barfield draws on the Orpheus narrative and produces a theatrical script. Thanks to the work of John Ulreich Jr., combing through letters of C.S. Lewis, we now have access to the entire play which was thought to be lost.⁶³¹ It is believed that Lewis was the one who encouraged Barfield in his writing, and provided positive feedback on a draft he reviews in 1947.

The Orpheus myth clearly had an impact on Lewis, Tolkien, and their circle of friends. It is quite possible this was the case because of the myth's prevalence in the Middle Ages and Renaissance,⁶³² as Lewis highlights for us in his essay "Myth Become Fact," Orpheus may be significant for Christians. The connection lies in Orpheus' seeking to resurrect his dead wife which

⁶³⁰ Amanda M. Niedbala also draws our attention to that fact that Lewis' *Silver Chair* is part Odyssean journey and represents a movement from paganism to Christianity. See Amanda M. Niedbala, "From Hades to Heaven: Greek Mythological Influences in C.S. Lewis' *The Silver Chair*," *Mythlore*, 93/94 (2006): 71-93.

⁶³¹ For the entire play, see Owen Barfield, *Orpheus: A Poetic Drama*, ed. John Ulreich, Jr. (West Stockbridge: The Lindisfarne Press, 1983).

⁶³² For an examination of Orpheus and Orphism in the Renaissance, see Jean-Michel Roesli, "La magie thérapeutique du chant poétique d'Orphée dans l'œuvre et la pensée de Marsile Ficin et de quelques auteurs de la Renaissance," in *La Raison du merveilleux à la fin du Moyen Âge et dans la première modernité: textes et images*, Dominique de Courcelles, ed. (Paris: Garnier; Rencontres 399. Colloques, congrès et conférences sur la Renaissance européenne 102, 2019), 145-184.

the medieval variants of the story will have him succeed. In this way, he represents the hope for, or fulfillment of, the Christian message and is connected, tangentially, to the old myths of the dying god. Lewis reminds us of Balder or Osiris, and links this, for Christians, to “a historical Person crucified...By becoming fact it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle.”⁶³³ Myth becoming fact is the center of both Lewis and Tolkien. While Orpheus is not Christian, both authors draw on medieval precedents to come to important conclusions. We should turn then to an exploration of the historical reception of Orpheus to gain a fuller understanding of why this text held an important place for our authors.

Brief History of Orpheus: Argonaut, Musician, Lover

Lewis is quick to note that in old versions of the Orpheus myth, “the hero is simply a great musician and a bereaved husband.”⁶³⁴ This in fact seems to be the focus of many of the Greek and Roman versions of the story. Orpheus’ music has the power to change the course of rivers, captivate animals – it was the power over nature which he possessed. The link to music was so strong that stories claim Orpheus’ head continued to sing and play his lyre even after being dismembered by the Bacchae.⁶³⁵ There was also a strong belief that Orpheus was in fact a historical figure. The Muses, after his death, buried his limbs on Mount Olympus, where his music could still be heard.

While the origins of Orpheus vary, he is at times called the son of Apollo, or of Dionysus. The mystery cult around Orpheus was fast to spread. Aiding this was the idea that Orpheus had secret knowledge and shared some of it with others. Plato, for example, claims Orpheus introduced philosophy and poetry, agriculture, and homosexual love.⁶³⁶ While Plato and his readers may have held this view of Orpheus, other representations do not necessarily match this depiction.

We first see Orpheus’ name mentioned in a fragment of a 6th century BCE poem. It most likely comes from the court of Polycrates of Samos (r. c.540-522). This is not the husband of

⁶³³ C.S. Lewis, “Myth Become Fact” in *God in the Docks*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 66-67.

⁶³⁴ C.S. Lewis, *Spenser’s Image of Life*, ed. Alastair Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 114.

⁶³⁵ M. Owen Lee, *Virgil as Orpheus: A Study of the Georgics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 1. For a study of the relationship between music and Orpheus see: Vanessa Agnew, *Enlightenment Orpheus: The Power of Music in Other Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Agnew notes how Orpheus’ music prevented his, and his crews, capture by the sirens. It lulled a dragon, and enabled Jason to take the fleece. It also aided in Orpheus’ travels to Egypt, where he gained secret knowledge and brought it back to Thrace. See Agnew, 11.

⁶³⁶ Lee, *Virgil as Orpheus*, 2.

Eurydice we have come to know. Instead, it is Orpheus as an Argonaut. A common depiction of the early Orpheus, who also appears in a frieze at Delphi alongside Argo, Castor and Pollux, is one preparing for a voyage. Here, however, Orpheus is standing alongside an unnamed lyre player which permits the link to music, notably the lyre, to take shape. These two representations of Orpheus the Argonaut are interesting as they do not truly match up with the later classical and medieval depictions associated with Western culture. Yet, some connections are beginning to be made, for example, Argo's journey is linked to the journey to the land of the dead. "And Orpheus, too, may have been depicted as sailing on that same voyage to the world of the dead because the *katabasis* that made him "famous of name" among his followers were already circulating in the 6th century."⁶³⁷

Eurydice still does not exist in the story and will only appear a century later. When she does, the tragic ending we generally expect is nowhere to be seen. M. Owen Lee notes that in many pre-Virgilian variants of the tale, there is no hint of a sad ending. Isocrates (436-338 BCE), Moschus, the Alexandrian poet (2nd c. BCE) and Diodorus Siculus (1st c. BCE) all provide, or hint at, successful endings to Orpheus' journey.⁶³⁸

There does, however, exist an Attic sculpture, older than most of the literary versions of the Orpheus story, which may depict the loss of Eurydice. Known today as: "Orpheus, Eurydice and Hermes," and held in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale of Naples, it appears to show Eurydice being taken away from Orpheus by Hermes. Lee, however, does not see this as a loss, but as a vision. "...[O]rpheus is being granted a vision of immortality, perhaps of Persephone, in Hades."⁶³⁹ Why? Plato, writing closest to the time of the creation of this Attic relief, notes that Orpheus is shown a *phasma* in Hades. Hermes, known as the god who escorts souls, brings Eurydice's phantom to see Orpheus. "Thus did Orpheus, in a privileged moment, learn the secrets of life and death."⁶⁴⁰ Whether or not this is in fact a loss of Eurydice or a revelatory vision, the western account of the Orpheus story was forever changed by the Roman Virgil (70-19 BCE), who reinterpreted the story to fit his needs as a poet. As with much of the classical period, during

⁶³⁷ Lee, *Virgil as Orpheus*, 4.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

Virgil's time it was not only common to retell a myth, but to also add or change aspects of it, and Virgil does exactly this.⁶⁴¹

Virgil's Georgics

Probably completed around the 29 BCE, Virgil's *Georgics* explores agriculture. Divided into four parts, the fourth part of this poem is of interest due to the story of Orpheus and Eurydice tucked away near the end of the poem. *Georgics* IV focuses on the person of Aristaeus, a beekeeper who suffers a loss of his bees. He decides to ask his mother, Cyrene, for advice. She sends her son to seek out Proteus. Aristaeus manages to find Proteus and captures him, even as he shapeshifts in his grasp. We find out, along with Aristaeus, that the loss of his bees is linked to Orpheus' loss of Eurydice. For Aristaeus chased her and this distraction led to her death. For his bees to be recovered, Aristaeus must offer sacrifices to the gods.

So, what is the Orphic story according to Virgil? On their wedding day, while near a riverbank, Eurydice is distracted by Aristaeus, is bitten by a water snake and dies.⁶⁴² Her companions and attendants wail and cry at her loss. Orpheus, grieving for his wife, takes his lyre and finds his way to the underworld. His music has an effect in Hades, just as it did on earth. He comes to the attention of Proserpina and Hades and is reunited with Eurydice. Orpheus' song of love, desperate love, reaches the height of magic. He is able to defeat death ("la sconfitta della morte").⁶⁴³ Proserpina, however, places a condition that he must not look back as he climbs out of the underworld. Forgetting the prohibition, Orpheus looks back at the nearing of the overworld and his wife is taken from him a second time.⁶⁴⁴ Eurydice sadly exclaims: "'Who,' she cried, 'has doomed me to misery, who has doomed us? / What madness beyond measure? Once more cruel fate / Drags me away, and my swimming eyes are drowned in darkness. / Good-bye. I am bourn

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁴² Virgil added this idea of the serpent. He often uses the idea of the snake in his writings. For example, at the start of the *Georgics* he states Jupiter added venom to snakes to keep humans striving to survive (I:125-145). We also find it in the Fourth *Eclogue*, where a boy (Polio's son) would be born to restore the Golden Age. This would bring about the death of the serpent (IV:24). The Fourth *Eclogue* in fact is often interpreted as foreshadowing the coming of Christ because of this death of the serpent and many other references similar to Judeo-Christian tradition. For more, see M. Owen Lee, *Virgil as Orpheus: A Study of the Georgics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 13 and Jean-Michel Roesli, "Christianisation de la Sibylle et de Virgile dans l'*Oratio Constantini ad sanctorum coetum*," *Apocrypha* 32 (2021) (forthcoming).

⁶⁴³ Alessandro Perutelli, "L'episodio di Aristeo nelle Georgiche: struttura e tecnica narrativa," *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici*, 4 (1980): 62.

⁶⁴⁴ Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. C. Day Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), IV: 490-492.

away.”⁶⁴⁵ While Aristaeus may have distracted her, and Eurydice was killed by a snake, here we have cause to believe, though they both share responsibility, that it was in fact Orpheus who has doomed his wife to misery, inducing her “second” death. Orpheus laments this loss of his wife and never loves any human again. He is eventually found by the Bacchae and torn apart, his severed head still crying out his wife’s name: “Eurydice!”⁶⁴⁶

The *Georgics* explores the relation between man and nature and is believed by some scholars to have been written as advice to farmers.⁶⁴⁷ So why do we find the story of Orpheus within this poem? In fact, the Aristaeus-Orpheus story was only added at a later date. Virgil had already written this section about his friend Gallus, a poet. But since Gallus was disgraced and committed suicide, Augustus ordered Virgil to rework the fourth *Georgic*.⁶⁴⁸ Virgil made a conscious decision to focus the last section of the *Georgic* on love as a central human experience. But he also wrote a story of loss which enables him to provide a discrete allusion to his friend who is absent from the work.⁶⁴⁹ The loss of Orpheus may also be Virgil expressing the pain of loss of his friend.⁶⁵⁰

Why bees? Virgil’s father was most likely a beekeeper, therefore, Virgil had knowledge of bees.⁶⁵¹ There is also the political and religious dimension to the image of bees. Like other winged creatures, bees were connected to the transformed soul. We find, for example, in the works of Porphyry souls of the dead, which will be reborn, called *melissai* (bees). A similar name, *Melitodes*, is used for the priestesses of Persephone. To this is added the symbolism of honey, representative of immortality, and the long history of “telling the bees” of a death in the family in European and American culture.⁶⁵² Bees are connected to the afterlife.

In addition to the religious significance of the bees, Virgil also recognizes the political implications. The bees are a metaphor for human society. For the bees, *amor* is aimed entirely at productivity expressed by their love of flowers, pollen, and even reproduction.⁶⁵³ Orpheus contrasts the bees’ *amor* productivity with the tragedy of human experience wherein “unlike the

⁶⁴⁵ Virgil, *Georgics*, IV: 494-497.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., IV: 525.

⁶⁴⁷ Charles Segal, *Orpheus: The Myth of the Poet* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 36.

⁶⁴⁸ Segal, *Orpheus*, 37; Marcel Detienne, “Orphée au miel” *Quaderni Urbinati de Cultura Classica*, 12 (1971): 9.

⁶⁴⁹ Detienne, “Orphée au miel,” 9.

⁶⁵⁰ Paola Gagliardi, “I due volti dell’Orfeo di Virgilio,” *Hermes*, 140 (2012): 294.

⁶⁵¹ Lee, *Virgil as Orpheus*, 93.

⁶⁵² Ibid., 93.

⁶⁵³ Segal, *Orpheus*, 38-39.

bees, man cannot reconcile himself to the conditions of life and nature, does not accept the fundamental facts of existence, challenges death itself...⁶⁵⁴ Orpheus' decision to refrain from sexual relations after the loss of Eurydice could be interpreted as a criticism of Virgil; one which rejects a way of life associated with Venus. Charles Segal notes: "The juxtaposition of *nulla venus* (ln. 516) and the barren winter waste [of *Georgics* III] is suggestive,"⁶⁵⁵ unlike the productive bees, Orpheus rejects life. "The contrast between the life and activity of book 4 and the lifeless inertia of book 3 is one important structural contrast of the poem."⁶⁵⁶

Another question which bothers historians and literary scholars is the connection between Aristaeus, his bees and Orpheus. What is the link between these two stories? A possible connection can be found in the role of the beekeeper. As Marcel Detienne notes, a beekeeper must approach his bees as a good spouse. The bridegroom (beekeeper) must be faithful. Aristaeus fails this. He chased Eurydice and was unfaithful to his bride (the bees). Therefore, the bees, who represent purity and chastity, left their unfaithful keeper.⁶⁵⁷ This loss is juxtaposed with Orpheus' loss of Eurydice. The outcome of the two stories is very different though. While Orpheus fails, he turns back and loses his wife a second time, Aristaeus regains his bees. Aristaeus follows the instructions of Proteus; Orpheus does not heed Proserpina.⁶⁵⁸ Aristaeus listens to his mother and Proteus' advice and offers the sacrifice of four bulls and four heifers.⁶⁵⁹ Orpheus turns back to Eurydice. The success and failure may return to the political dimension of the *Georgics*. Aristaeus is a farmer (*pius agricola*) and Orpheus is a gleeman (*poeta-cantore*).⁶⁶⁰ Virgil may be praising the simplicity and usefulness of the peasant life.⁶⁶¹

Finally, Orpheus' decision to remain celibate⁶⁶² is contrasted with the bees' productivity. His final fate, being torn apart, is not just a murder but "a religious act of sort (*inter sacra deum*,

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., 39.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., 48.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., 48.

⁶⁵⁷ Detienne, "Orphée au miel," 11-12.

⁶⁵⁸ Gian Biagio Conte, "Aristeo, Orfeo, e le "Georgiche": una seconda volta," *Studi classici e orientali*, 46, n.1 (1998): 112, 116-117.

⁶⁵⁹ Alessandro Perutelli, "L'episodio di Aristeo nelle Georgiche: struttura e tecnica narrativa," *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi Classici*, 4 (1980): 64. Perutelli also notes how this moves the narrative forward as this sacrifice rectifies the transgression of Aristaeus chasing Eurydice.

⁶⁶⁰ Gagliardi, "I due volti dell'Orfeo di Virgilio," 123.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 127.

⁶⁶² Of importance here is that both Lewis and Tolkien, will not follow Virgil in this aspect. As we have already seen in chapter 3 of this thesis, Beren and Lúthien produce a child Dior, who fathers many of the heroes in Middle-Earth. The same can be said for the characters in Lewis' *The Silver Chair*. Both authors give precedence to the first commandment given to Adam and Eve by God be fruitful and multiply.

etc [ln. 521]) and vindicates nature's laws."⁶⁶³ Virgil has provided a social commentary, one which emphasises life and productivity over the rejection of natural roles. Orpheus lives his life as a celibate poet and singer. His alteration to the Orpheus story fits his needs, a happy ending would not have achieved the same results. The next Roman author to follow in Virgil's footsteps, will also utilize a sad ending for his benefit, though making his own changes at the same time. The author, of course, is Ovid.

Ovid's Metamorphoses

Ovid takes the story of Orpheus and transforms it from "tragic *humanitas*" to "heroic *humanitas*." He accomplishes this by making Orpheus more human, focusing on his love. This love which is not sacrificed or rejected after the death of Eurydice, but transferred to young men.⁶⁶⁴

Much like in Virgil, Ovid's book ten of the *Metamorphoses* begins on Orpheus' wedding day. With Naiads in attendance, Eurydice is bitten by a snake and dies. Orpheus goes down into the underworld and sings before Proserpina and Hades. Recalling the rape of Proserpina and noting that all humans die and must eventually return to Hades, Orpheus makes his plea before the King and Queen of the dead. In Virgil's telling, all the underworld pauses to hear Orpheus's song. Hades relents, summons Eurydice, and gives Orpheus the familiar prohibition of not looking back (ln.50-51). Once again, however, as Orpheus approaches the light of the world, he turns back. Eurydice is pulled back down and says her farewell (ln.56-62).

Orpheus does not give up as easily as in Virgil. Instead, he remains in the underworld and tries to cross the Styx again. This time, however, his way is blocked, and he is forced to return to the overworld. Book 10 continues to give us various "songs of Orpheus," each of which connect in some way to our main narrative, but the conclusion is truly reached only in book eleven. There the reader finds out that the Maenads, seeing Orpheus, and knowing he rejects women and only sleeps with young men, get in a fury, tear him apart and scatter his limbs. Bacchus, angry with the loss of his priest, turns the Maenads to trees (ln.67-84). While violent, his end culminates in Orpheus' shade meeting Eurydice in the Elysian fields where they are finally reunited and Orpheus is able to turn backwards without fear of losing his wife again (ln.61-66).

⁶⁶³ Segal, *Orpheus*, 48.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 56

Ovid's decision to omit Orpheus' celibacy and remove the connection to Aristaeus reveals an intention to transform the moral of the story from a lesson in agriculture, productivity or piety by elevating it to art.⁶⁶⁵ "Ovid's Orpheus exemplifies not only the victory of love but also, in a certain sense, the victory of art. It is both as a poet and as a lover that Orpheus wins over the deities in the underworld of book 10."⁶⁶⁶ The difference here lies in the worldviews of the authors. "Ovid allies love and art as the major creative forces in a world of arbitrary powers. In Virgil's firmer and harder world order, love and art, though capable of miracles, are also potentially aberrant and destructive."⁶⁶⁷

Yet, love and art are not always successful for Ovid when united. Orpheus' story is connected to the tale of Pygmalion, a story of artistic failure.⁶⁶⁸ Pygmalion, after seeing the Propoetides, the first prostitutes, decided he was no longer interested in women. As a sculptor, he endeavours to sculpt the perfect female form. While praying to Venus, and trying to hide his true intentions, Pygmalion asks for a wife like his sculpture. He returns home, kisses the statue, only to realize his wish is granted and his sculpture is now alive.⁶⁶⁹ Although Orpheus' story is often seen as tragic, Pygmalion comes out as a truly tragic figure. While Orpheus is reunited with Eurydice in Elysium, Pygmalion is limited to a living statue. After his death, the statue will presumably continue on with no hope of reuniting with Pygmalion in the afterlife. Perhaps, on the other hand, it is an ironic commentary – where Orpheus only embraces a shade, and Ovid's Pygmalion embraces "a voluptuous flesh-and-blood woman."⁶⁷⁰

Both Virgil and Ovid clearly had agendas when presenting the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. While their original intentions are of interest, the way in which they were interpreted and transmitted in Western Europe throughout the Middle Ages, and into modernity, is of even more importance to this thesis. For it is through a lens, a particular and specific lens, that most medieval works, such as Boethius and the lay *Sir Orfeo*, as well as Lewis and Tolkien, seem to come to this central story. The success of the Orphic myth can be attributed to the way in which subsequent authors draw from its complexity in their own works. As Charles Segal argues: "The

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., 58.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., 70.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., 72.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., 85.

⁶⁶⁹ See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. David Raedurn (London: Penguin Books, 2004), X:243-297. Spenser utilizes a similar story with False Florimell in Book III of *The Faerie Queene*.

⁶⁷⁰ Segal, *Orpheus*, 88.

myth of Orpheus seems most successful when it is not reduced to one or two of its elements (for example, love and death only) but expresses man's attempt to see his life in a twofold perspective, that is as part of nature and as unique in its emotional and intellectual consciousness. In this respect the myth brings together man's capacity for love and his capacity to deal with loss and death through the expressive power of art."⁶⁷¹ Both the concepts of loss and death will continue to be addressed when turning to *Sir Orfeo* and Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*.

*Boethius Heeded: Sir Orfeo and the Consolation of Philosophy*⁶⁷²

The Middle-English lay *Sir Orfeo*, written around 1325 CE,⁶⁷³ diverges from its Classical predecessors in various ways. It is particularly relevant for Tolkien who produced a modern translation⁶⁷⁴ and Lewis, who often comments on its importance. *Sir Orfeo* tells the tale of King Orfeo and his wife Queen Heurodis. While out one day in May with her ladies in waiting,⁶⁷⁵ Heurodis falls asleep in the shadow of a grafted tree, *Ympe-Tre*. There she dreams of a fairy king and his hunting party. The fairy king warns Heurodis that she will be taken back with him, on the morrow, to his kingdom. Waking in terror Heurodis goes mad and ravages her body, clawing at her face (77-82).⁶⁷⁶ Fearing for her safety and state of mind, her ladies in waiting return to their queen's court and summon aid. Hearing of his wife's condition Orfeo rushes to her promising to protect his queen from her would be captor. Knowing her fate to be set, the Queen warns her

⁶⁷¹ Segal, *Orpheus*, 193.

⁶⁷² This section "Boethius Heeded: *Sir Orfeo* and the *Consolation of Philosophy*" is an article I already published. For the original see: Joseph Vietri, "Sir Orfeo, Death and *Katábasis*" *Les Études classiques* 83 (2015): 415-426.

⁶⁷³ Friedman, 175. For a critical edition of *Sir Orfeo* see Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, *The Middle English Breton Lays* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute of Publications, 1995). Laskaya and Salisbury not only provide detailed footnotes on various interpretations of the lyrics of *Sir Orfeo*, but they also present modern diction for various Middle English words used.

⁶⁷⁴ See J.R.R. Tolkien, trans. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl and Sir Orfeo* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975). There is also evidence that Tolkien produced a Middle-English version of this text as well. While the dating of this cannot be certain, it most likely was produce between 1942-1944. This version attempts to reaffirm the poetic rhyme of the lay. For a version of the Middle-English text, a commentary, and discussion of the link to Tolkien, see, Carl F. Hostetter, "Sir Orfeo: A Middle English Version by J.R.R. Tolkien," *Tolkien Studies*, 1 (2004): 85-123. For connection between the elves in *Sir Orfeo* and those found in the *Hobbit*, see Thomas Hillman, "These Are Not the Elves You're Looking For: *Sir Orfeo*, *The Hobbit*, and the Reimagining of the Elves," *Tolkien Studies*, 15 (2018): 33-58.

⁶⁷⁵ May is a time when fairies are particularly active in the medieval world.

⁶⁷⁶ All references of lyrical lines from *Sir Orfeo* correspond to those found in Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, *The Middle English Breton Lays* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute of Publications, 1995).

husband that the fairy king will take her no matter what the cost, or where she may be, even if it means harming her physical body and tearing her limbs (165-174).⁶⁷⁷

As promised, though under heavy guard, Heurodis is stolen away from Orfeo and the king loses his beloved. Orfeo, lamenting the loss of his queen, gives up his kingdom, appoints a steward and instructs him to hold a parliament to elect a new monarch should he fear the true king has died (201-217). Sir Orfeo abandons all wealth and goes into the woods bringing only his harp, as he is a great musician (241-248). Ten years later, Orfeo spots his lost wife hawking with a group of fairies. Observing them from afar, he locates the entrance to the fairy world in the face of a rock. Orfeo is adamant in his goal to reclaim his wife. Entering the land of fairies, Orfeo makes his way to the throne of the fairy king. There he plays his harp with great skill and is offered any reward he desires by the king of fairies. Orfeo asks for Heurodis which the fairy king at first refuses, only to concede shortly after due to his promise of recompense (469-473). Unlike the Virgilian or Ovidian versions of the tale there is no trap nor snare set by the Fairy King. Orfeo and Heurodis are reunited; they return to their kingdom and take back the crowns they lost (593-596).

Why such a divergence in the story? Who is the fairy king? Where is the original *katábasis* and *anabasis*, descent and ascent? In order to understand the changes made to the story it is first important to understand what Orpheus represents for the medieval audience. While the Greco-Roman world had their tales of Orpheus, Judaism and Christianity amalgamated the surrounding classical world into their belief system. Similarities between Orpheus and King David⁶⁷⁸ were soon discovered. David was from the line of patriarchs, while Orpheus was sometimes depicted as a descendant of Apollo.⁶⁷⁹ Both men played music; both had power over death.⁶⁸⁰ The similarities between David and Orpheus can be seen in medieval depictions of both men, oftentimes in similar surroundings, with animals listening to their songs and enthroned as monarchs. The lines between the two men became blurred. For the medieval, Orpheus was also a king, hence the birth of King Orfeo.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁷ Some echoes of Orpheus' final demise Virgil and Ovid's account is present here. The Fairy King threatens to take Heurodis even if she is torn apart in the process.

⁶⁷⁸ Links between Christ, David and Orpheus also exist, especially with regards to their abilities to overcome death.

⁶⁷⁹ For the examination of the *interpretatio judaica* and the *interpretatio christiana* see Jean-Michel Roessli, "De l'Orphée juif à l'Orphée écossais: Bilan et perspectives," in John Block Friedman, *Orphée au Moyen Âge*, trans. Jean-Michel Roessli (Paris, Cerf; Vestigia: Pensée antique et médiévale 25, 1999), 259-310.

⁶⁸⁰ John Block Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 148.

⁶⁸¹ Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, 155.

While *Sir Orfeo* gives a contemporary account of the Orpheus myth, for example the fairies are out falconing when we first meet them, it also builds on prior alterations to the original tale. King Alfred's translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* centers the Orpheus tale in a romantic frame, placing it in a fairy tale time whereby Orpheus retreats into the forest to wait upon his lost wife Eurydice.⁶⁸² Whether the *Orfeo* poet knew of King Alfred's Boethius translation, or the Orphic tale recounted by Ovid, is not clear. John Block Friedman, however, believes that certain erroneous elements indicate that the *Orfeo* poet did possess a limited knowledge of these two sources.⁶⁸³ For example, Orfeo is a descendant of King Pluto and King Juno.⁶⁸⁴ These errors show partial knowledge of primary texts, but support a filtered knowledge, one passed down through other tales or lays⁶⁸⁵ that could have been sources for the *Orfeo* poet. Potential sources include poems, authored by Thierry of St. Trond and Godfrey of Reims, which highlighted the romantic elements in the Orpheus story.⁶⁸⁶

While Orpheus sets out in search for Eurydice in the classical versions of this tale, Orfeo does not actively search for his queen. In fact, he is under the assumption that he will possibly never find her again. He warns his steward that he should call a parlement when he believes the king has died, in order to elect a new monarch. "And when ye understond that y be spent, Make you than a parlement, And chese you a newe king" (215-217). [And when you understand that I have been spent, make you then a parlement, and chose yourselves a new king.]⁶⁸⁷ Orfeo clearly believes his wife is gone forever, and her departure from the human world supports his understanding of the situation.

Heurodis' first vision of the fairy king occurs under an *ympe-tre*, a grafted tree. These trees are generally fruit trees, though not all fruit trees are grafted, and are linked to erotic and

⁶⁸² Ibid., 161.

⁶⁸³ Ibid., 189.

⁶⁸⁴ The fairy king's role as Pluto, Hades, seems to be overlooked by the poet. There is also confusion with the sex of Juno, a female, being identified as a king.

⁶⁸⁵ The *Lay D'Orphey*, though referenced in *Sir Orfeo* is in fact a missing manuscript which may have influenced the *Orfeo* poet's work. *Sir Orfeo* in itself acted as inspiration for a Scottish ballad, composed in the sixteenth century, entitled *King Orphius*. For a modern French translation of this ballad see Jean-Michel Roesli, "De l'Orphée juif à l'Orfée écossais: Bilan et perspectives," in John Block Friedman, *Orphée au Moyen Âge*, trans. Jean-Michel Roesli (Paris, Cerf; Vestigia: Pensée antique et médiévale 25, 1999), 303-306.

⁶⁸⁶ For a more detailed account of these tales see John Block Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 164-165.

⁶⁸⁷ The translations of *Sir Orfeo* are my own. I have attempted to keep them as close to the original meaning as possible, and therefore, have only "modernized" the language. In some cases, I have deferred to Anne Lasakaya and Eve Salisbury's diction of words all of which can be found in Anne Lasakaya and Eve Salisbury, *The Middle English Breton Lays* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute of Publications, 1995).

otherworldly experiences. Arthurian legends, for example, have Lancelot abducted by sorceresses while sleeping under an apple tree.⁶⁸⁸ Lancelot, Guinevere and Heurodis all disappear under an *ympe-tre*.⁶⁸⁹ Guinevere and Heurodis were both Maying when they disappeared.⁶⁹⁰ Curtis R.H. Jirsa, drawing on the history of arboreal folklore, illustrates how sleeping under certain trees could be detrimental. Examining Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* and Lucan's *De Bello Civili*, we see that sleeping under a yew tree can cause death.⁶⁹¹ Bartholomaeus Angelicus' *De Proprietatibus Rerum* warns of "the yews' noxious shadow to those who slumber beneath it."⁶⁹² Angelicus' works were in fact translated into English by John Trevisa in 1398 and therefore the *Orfeo* poet would most likely have been aware of these superstitions, perhaps not through direct knowledge of the text but through common understanding of the time. It is also important to note that these warnings are not connected solely to yew trees, but to others as well.⁶⁹³ For Jirsa we should not connect the *ympe-tre* with any specific tree, nor should we claim the *Orfeo* poet had direct knowledge of Pliny. Instead, we should examine this lay in light of the common knowledge of the time.⁶⁹⁴

Heurodis not only sleeps under the tree, which can be lethal to her, she naps at "undrentide"⁶⁹⁵ (65). John Block Friedman states that "vndrentide" or "undrentide" is linked to the morning by the Oxford English Dictionary. However, he also points out that in Middle English it is understood to be between nine in the morning to three in the afternoon. Furthermore, Psalm 90:3-6 speaks of a noonday demon.⁶⁹⁶ This leads us to believe that "undrentide" is most likely noon, and the fairy king could possibly be associated with the demon referenced in the Psalm.

Within this framework of the time and location of Heurodis' disappearance, the threats made by the fairy king are better understood. When the queen has her first vision of the fairy king, he warns her that he will take her to the fairy world no matter what. "Look, dame, tomorrow you will be/right here under the ympe-tre,/and then you shall go with us/and live with us evermore./And

⁶⁸⁸ Curtis R.H. Jirsa, "In the Shadow of the Ympe-Tre: Arboreal Folklore in *Sir Orfeo*," *English Studies* 89, n.2 (2008): 142.

⁶⁸⁹ K.M. Briggs, "The Fairies and the Realm of the Dead." *Folklore* 81, n.2 (1970): 81.

⁶⁹⁰ Briggs, "The Fairies and the Realm of the Dead.," 82.

⁶⁹¹ Jirsa, "In the Shadow of the Ympe-Tre," 144.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 145. Chestnut trees are also listed amongst the dangerous trees which could cause harm to those who remain in their shadows.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁹⁵ Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, 188.

⁶⁹⁶ For a detailed examination of the Noonday demon, see Roger Caillois, *Les Démons de Midi* (Fata Morgana, 1991), Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression* (New York: Scribner, 2001), Kathleen Norris, *Acedia and Me: A Marriage, Monks and Writer's Life* (London: Riverhead Books, 2008).

if you hinder us,/where you will be, we will get you/and your limbs will be all torn/that nothing shall help you;/And though you will be so torn,/you still will be born away with us.”⁶⁹⁷ These threats prove to be true, for even with Orfeo and his guards around, Heurodis is still abducted by the fairy king on the following day. The queen was taken into the fairy world because she slept under the *ympe-tre* at noon.

The text presents us, however, with a perplexing situation. What is the fairy world? Is this similar to the underworld? Is it hell or purgatory? John Block Friedman argues that the fairy world in *Sir Orfeo* is similar to the Celtic otherworld, a realm we can gain access to from mist, a river or a “fairy barrow mound.”⁶⁹⁸ This is evident by the way Orfeo enters into the fairy world, through the face of a rock. The fairy world is not purgatory as those inhabiting this realm do not seem to be working towards their salvation. Instead, they exist as they did at the moment of their death. “Some strode without their heads, /And some had no arms, /And some had wounds throughout their bodies, /And some lay mad and bound/And some armed on horses sat, /And some strangled as they ate, /And some were drowned in the water / And some were shrivelled with fire, / Wives there lay in the childbed, / Some dead and others driven mad.”⁶⁹⁹ Jirsa finds evidence of the identity of these suffering individuals in Jacob Grimm’s *Deutsche Mythologie*.⁷⁰⁰ There we find the notion of the “Taken.” Humans “who suffer a violent death before their fated time [and] join the “furious host”: a company of fairies or spirits doomed to ride through mortal realms, much like the two fairy hunts that Orfeo himself witnesses.”⁷⁰¹

While the inhabitants of the fairy realm all seem to be suffering from serious injuries, why is it that Orfeo sees Heurodis sleeping under a tree in the otherworld? “There he saw his own wife, / Dame Heurodis, his dear life / Sleeping under an ympe-tre / – by her clothes he knew that it was she.”⁷⁰² The answer comes from Jirsa’s interpretation of the arboreal folklore. Heurodis died young

⁶⁹⁷“Loke, dame, tomorwe thatow be/Right here under this ympe-tre,/And than thou schalt with ous go/And live with ous evermo./And yif thou makest ous y-let,/Whar thou be, thou worst y-fet,/And totore thine limes al/That nothing help the no schal;/And thei thou best so totorn,/Yete thou worst with ous y-born.” (165-174)

⁶⁹⁸ Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, 191.

⁶⁹⁹ “Sum stode withouten hade,/And sum non armes nade,/And sum thurth the bodi hadde wounde,/And sum lay wode, y-bounde,/And sum armed on hors sete,/And sum astrangled as thai etc;/And sum were in water adreynt,/And sum with fire al forschreynt./Wives ther lay on childe bedde,/Sum ded and sum awedde.” (392-400)

⁷⁰⁰ As cited by Curtis R.H. Jirsa, “In the Shadow of the Ympe-Tre: Arboreal Folklore in *Sir Orfeo*.” *English Studies* 89, n.2 (2008): Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, trans. James Steven Stallybrass (New York: Dover Publications, 1966): 918-920.

⁷⁰¹ Jirsa, “In the Shadow of the Ympe-Tre,” 148.

⁷⁰² “Ther he seighe his owen wiif, / Dame Heurodis, his lef liif, / Slepe under an ympe-tre - / Bi her clothes he knewe that it was he.” (405-408)

and before her fated time. She had fallen asleep, at undrentide, in the shadow of a noxious *ympe-tre*. It is only fitting that Orfeo finds her, as he did all the other deceased, in the position she held in her final moments of life.

Sir Orfeo not only changes the underworld of the “canonical” Orpheus tale to the fairy world; it also rewrites the ending. Orfeo manages to find and return to his kingdom with his wife. His journey to the realm of fairies is anything but downward. In fact, Orfeo moves into a new realm to find his queen, a horizontal movement. This does not, however, mean that no descent occurs. For Orfeo does indeed descend from his throne into the wilderness. While we expect Orfeo to search for his wife, eventually leading him to the underworld, as recounted by Virgil and Ovid, he does not actively search her out. Instead, the king gives up his crown and goes into the wild.⁷⁰³ Orfeo’s self-imposed exile may be his way of being with Heurodis. He gives up the life they shared the moment she is taken from him.⁷⁰⁴ “By humbly abandoning his material pleasures and donning the mantle of a pilgrim, Orfeo indicates his acceptance of the loss of Heurodis and his recognition of the proper role of man on earth.”⁷⁰⁵ His rejection of the world “asserts to the universe the dignity of man and the strength of man’s love – love based not on passion, but on charity.”⁷⁰⁶ We should take note of the end of the lay as well; Orfeo is not triumphant when he regains Heurodis; he is grateful, bending his knee to the fairy king and leaving with his wife. “He kneeled down and thanked him swiftly. / His wife he took by the hand / and he was swift out of that land, / and he went out of that country – / right as he came, was the way he went.”⁷⁰⁷ Orfeo’s humility and willingness to sacrifice all for his lost love, once again shows the *Orfeo* poet may have had access to King Alfred’s translation of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*.

Let us turn then, to Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*. Boethius’ *Consolation* is a series of conversations between the narrator and Lady Philosophy. It was written around 524 CE while Boethius was imprisoned. Seeking to understand his current predicament, and his fall from a place

⁷⁰³ While Orfeo only appoints a steward in his place, and does not have a new king selected, he still leaves with the intention of never returning. The status of a monarch, appointed by God, at this time would mean he held the position for life and could not truly abdicate. This is amplified because Orfeo has no successor in line to take the throne. More importantly, the *Orfeo* Poet was illustrating a moral lesson and not attempting to discuss royal succession a fraught topic in England at this time.

⁷⁰⁴ Kenneth K.R. Gros Louis, “The Significance of *Sir Orfeo*’s Self-Exile,” *The Review of English Studies* 18, n.71 (1967): 249.

⁷⁰⁵ Gros Louis, “The Significance of *Sir Orfeo*’s Self-Exile,” 249.

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁷⁰⁷ “He kneeled adoun and thonked him swithe. / His wiif he tok bi the hond, / And dede him swithe out of that lond, / And went him out of that thede - / Right as he come, the way he yede.” (472-476)

of prominence within the court of Theodoric (475-526 CE), Boethius is led by Lady Philosophy to realize his focus on earthly and fleeting things was misplaced. Instead, his gaze should have been directed upwards, towards the Greater Good. Much like Virgil, Boethius found within the Orpheus story a perfect exemplum. In the center of the *Consolation* then, in book three, meter 12, Boethius gives us the classic story of Orpheus. Much like Ovid and Virgil, Boethius has Orpheus turn back only to lose Eurydice as he approached the exit of Hades. Boethius tells us “Orpheus Eurydicen suam / vidit, perdidit, occidit.”⁷⁰⁸ “Orpheus his Eurydice / he saw, he lost, he killed.”⁷⁰⁹ Just as he is nearing the exit of the underworld, Orpheus fails. He turns back towards Eurydice. Boethius is quick to emphasise the importance of this moment. “This tale is meet for you / Who purpose to direct your minds / Up to the day about. / For he who, conquered, turns his eye / Into hell’s cave below, / Forfeits such merits as he won, / By gazing on the dead.”⁷¹⁰

Boethius falls in line with many of the commentators of Orpheus. Like other thinkers, he seeks to find moral allegory in story, but as Friedman notes, Boethius is the most influential. He uses the story to illustrate spiritual regression. Orpheus is a man seeking knowledge, on the verge of gaining spiritual enlightenment, who turns back to the mortal world. Boethius is the first Latin writer to develop an ethical allegory around Orpheus and Eurydice.⁷¹¹ “Boethius sees in the story of Orpheus and Eurydice a human soul, freed from the bonds of earth and *temporalia* by a special dispensation and at last moving towards union with the one, suddenly yielding to the power of an earthly concern, in this case love, and so failing of its goal.”⁷¹²

The King Alfred translator of Boethius,⁷¹³ which the Orfeo Poet may have had access to, ensures his readers understand the moral of the story as well: “Whoever with full desire turns his mind to the evils that he abandoned before and commits them then and takes full pleasure in them, never intends to leave them, he then loses all his earlier good, unless he makes amends for it

⁷⁰⁸ Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae. Opuscula Theologica*. Ed. Claudio Moreschini (Munich: Die Deutsche Bibliothek, 2005), III:xii: 50-51.

⁷⁰⁹ This translation is based on the various translations provided by scholars. For a more detailed examination of this line, see fn. 740.

⁷¹⁰ Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), III:xii:56-62. For the original Latin, see Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae. Opuscula Theologica*. Ed. Claudio Moreschini (Munich: Die Deutsche Bibliothek, 2005), III:xii:52-58. “Vos haec fabula respicit / quicumque in superum diem / mentem ducere quaeritis; / nam qui Tartareum in specus / victus lumina flexerit, / quicquid praecipuum trahit / perdit dum videt inferos.”

⁷¹¹ Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, 90.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, 95.

⁷¹³ Under the rule of King Alfred (r.886-899), many texts were translated from Latin to Anglo-Saxon. This also occurred for the works of Boethius.

again.”⁷¹⁴ Orpheus’ failure is turning back to earthly things, his worldly sins. Orpheus fails because he does not look to the Heavens, the light at the end of the tunnel, but turns his gaze away from enlightenment back to fleeting things.

In the *Consolation of Philosophy* Orpheus can be interpreted as representing the *nous*, mind, while Eurydice stands for *epithumia*, desire – the best and worst aspects of Orpheus’ desires. Eurydice represents both his natural desire and his yearning for the valuable and rare.⁷¹⁵ By turning back on his climb out of the underworld, Orpheus failed to recognise that salvation and human longing should be directed heavenwards. Orpheus turned his mind away from heaven.⁷¹⁶ Orfeo does not repeat the mistake of his namesake. Upon the loss of his wife, he turns away from the worldly goods and looks to the wilderness. He gives up the pleasures of kingship, a potential source of solace after the death of Heurodis. Through his willingness to sacrifice all for his lost love, by rejecting gems and silk for tattered clothes, Orfeo learns Boethius’ lesson and wins his wife back.⁷¹⁷ Orfeo’s journey is one which takes him from the height of society to the very bottom of Fortuna’s wheel.

While the *katábasis* is generally controlled by Orfeo, the Fairy King, who plays the role of Hades, and possibly Satan, holds the keys to the *anabasis*, the ascent. Two important elements should be discussed here. Firstly, while Hades places a condition on Orpheus’ ascent, do not look back to your wife, the Fairy King does not impose any conditions on Orfeo’s emergence from the fairy realm. This is significant, for while the Fairy King does at first refuse Orfeo’s wish of taking

⁷¹⁴ Susan Irvine and Malcolm R. Godden, trans., *The Old English Boethius: with Verse Prologues and Epilogues Associated with King Alfred*. Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), III:xxii: 5

⁷¹⁵ This is a simplified explanation of the allegorical representations of Orpheus and Eurydice. For a more detailed account see Jean-Michel Roessli, “Nature et signification du mythe d’Orphée dans le *De Consolatione Philosophiae* de Boèce,” *Archivum Bobiense* 21 (1999): 27-72.

⁷¹⁶ Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, 180.

⁷¹⁷ See *Sir Orfeo* lines 241-248. While Orfeo regained Heurodis, it is important to note that many scholars recognize her demeanor after her “rescue” is far from perfect. She is silent and does not speak a word. In fact, the joyful reunion we expected between Orfeo and his wife is never experienced. Tara Williams points out that the happy reunification occurs instead at the meeting between king and steward and this satisfies our expectations. See Tara Williams, “Fairy Magic, Wonder and Morality in *Sir Orfeo*,” *Philological Quarterly* 91, n.2 (1970): 554-558. Heurodis’ lack of voice, especially since she was the central figure of the lay, can be alarming when considering the possible implications. For example, Orfeo and Heurodis never have children. The *Orfeo* poet tells us: “And sethen was king the steward.” [And afterward the king was the steward.] (596). Could this imply Heurodis’ silence is a larger indicator that her death and resuscitation was not fully successful? After all the line of “King Pluto” and “King Juno” would be broken if the monarchs did not produce an heir. For a study on succession in *Sir Orfeo* see Oran Falk, “The Son of Orfeo: Kingship and Compromise in Middle English Romance,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Moderns Studies* 30, n.2 (2000): 247-274. Reflection of the Virgilian and Ovidian endings is also present here. Whether taking a vow of chastity or only loving young men, Orpheus would not have procreated, so neither does Orfeo.

Heurodis back, he relents to ensure his word is kept. “The [fairy] king said, “See then it is so, / take her by the hand and go:/ “With her I wish that you have bliss.””⁷¹⁸ The Fairy King keeps his word and allows Orfeo to freely leave his kingdom with Heurodis. In fact, he goes beyond this wishing them bliss and happiness.

The second element is the often-cited connection between the Fairy King and Satan, or the noonday demon mentioned in the Psalms. John Block Friedman notes that while we may be tempted to link the Fairy King with Satan, not much in the poem indicates that we should read it as a Christian allegory.⁷¹⁹ More central, however, is the way in which this Fairy King acts.⁷²⁰ He is not duplicitous, nor is he a breaker of oaths. He promised Orfeo anything he asked for because of the beauty of his music, and though he does at first refuse the request, giving the reader pause, he relents when his honor and word are put into question. Would the devil, as depicted in Christianity, have given in for fear of a broken promise? Most likely not. This makes it clear that the *Orfeo* poet is placing more emphasis on chivalry and honor than anything else. Orfeo gives up all for his lost wife, a truly chivalrous act, while the Fairy King maintains his honor by keeping his word and wishing bliss.

Morality is one of the central elements of this lay. The presence of magic highlights to the reader that moral questions are present, since morality and magic are often linked in medieval literature.⁷²¹ The text does two things: it highlights the moral code of the fairies, as seen in the fairy king’s interactions with Orfeo,⁷²² and it encourages moral reactions from the readers.⁷²³ Just as Boethius’ tale of Orpheus taught us to look away from earthly goods to the Ultimate Good, so too does the *Orfeo* poet give his readers moral direction. “The gallery functions like a mirror, reflecting aspects of chivalric ethics that have not been distorted so much as pressed to the extreme. The scene does not signal that the audience should reject chivalry but encourages them to ponder its limits and pitfalls; in short, the gallery may induce readers to wonder whether the ethics of

⁷¹⁸ “The king seyde, “Sethen it is so,/Take hir bi the hond and go;/“Of hir ichil thatow be blithe.” (469-471)

⁷¹⁹ Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, 190.

⁷²⁰ John Warden notes that the Fairy King behaves more like he comes from a Celtic tale. See John Warden, *Orpheus, the Metamorphoses of a Myth* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 75. See also, as an example of Celtic Fairy Kings, the definition provided by Patricia Monaghan of Donn Fírinne “One of the best-known fairy kings of the land. Sometimes kidnapped mortal women to join him in his fairy dances.” The women were never seen again, therefore, Donn Fírinne is often connect to the king of the dead. Patricia Monaghan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 136.

⁷²¹ Tara Williams, “Fairy Magic, Wonder and Morality in *Sir Orfeo*,” *Philological Quarterly* 91, n.2 (1970): 540.

⁷²² Williams, “Fairy Magic,” 548.

⁷²³ *Ibid.*, 541.

chivalry are also moral.”⁷²⁴ Chivalry and morality are the main elements of the relationship between Orfeo, Heurodis and the cryptic fairy king.

Sir Orfeo should not be seen as a deviation from the Greco-Roman original Orpheus myth, but instead as a variation of the tale. It is a story for the fourteenth century medieval reader, one which amalgamated everyday life with legends of the past. It taught moral lessons, chivalry, and a lesson of humility. Orfeo humbles himself, descending from the heights of kingship, in grief for his lost love. This very act of humility allows the king to eventually find and regain his queen. An arrogant monarch may have attempted to seize his consort from the hands of the Fairy King, possibly even going to war for her return, yet Orfeo’s humble nature enabled him to succeed in his quest. It was not through wealth, arms, or strength that Heurodis was saved – it was through music and gratitude.

Sir Orfeo also illustrates the central elements of Lewis and Tolkien’s thoughts on love. Orfeo is a true lover of Heurodis. He does not forget her, nor does he find another queen. Instead, he is willing to give up all he has, including his kingdom, when he loses her. He sacrifices himself, despite any assurance that he will ever find her again. He lowers himself and becomes a hermit. Orfeo represents Gift-love in the most perfect human form. While we can never achieve the true image of Gift-love, Christ crucified, Orfeo illustrates what true sacrifice for another looks like, in human terms. It is an image which is relatable. Both Tolkien and Lewis recognize the importance of this point, and both utilize the Orpheus story to illustrate similar concepts. Let us turn, then, to explore the theological and literary conclusions both thinkers come to with regards to this tale.

J.R.R. Tolkien and Orpheus

Tolkien was heavily indebted to the myths of Orpheus and Orfeo. The most important story within Tolkien’s canon, is that of Beren and Lúthien. The tombstones he shares with his wife, where he is Beren and she Lúthien, illustrate this significance. He began the composition of the tale in 1925,

⁷²⁴ Ibid., 552.; Williams also makes the case that upon seeing this morality in the fairy realm, Orfeo utilizes his knowledge of chivalry to gain the upper hand in negotiating with the fairy king. “*Sir Orfeo* seems to encourage...the cross-cultural encounter between Orfeo and the fairies, which challenges the “norms” of chivalric ethics. Here again, the diction is key: when Orfeo “biholds” the gallery (387), that verb may call up for the medieval audience what Sarah McNamer describes as “a distinct way of seeing and feeling that is coded simultaneously as an ethical imperative” toward compassion and empathy. I have already suggested that the gallery reveals aspects of the fairies’ moral code to Orfeo, who then exploits that knowledge in his negotiations with the king.” See Tara Williams, “Fairy Magic, Wonder and Morality in *Sir Orfeo*,” *Philological Quarterly* 91, n.2 (1970): 552.

with the *Lay of Leithian* (Release from Bondage). Though the lay was abandoned in 1931, it continued to evolve as he reflected on the larger story.⁷²⁵ This lay was also read by C.S. Lewis, who provided a commentary.⁷²⁶ While Tolkien did not apply many of the suggestions, Lewis treated the text as a discovered manuscript, and annotated it with possible “variants” in order to keep up that playful illusion.

The *Lay* was not the only form of the story. As we have seen in chapter three of this thesis, versions of the narrative can be found in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*. While we gave preferential treatment in chapter three to those versions, as they are the most accessible and widely held as canonical, a more recent publication, before the death of Christopher Tolkien, is a reconstruction of the Beren and Lúthien story. This version is incomplete and seeks to place in order variants of the same story as Tolkien developed it. Christopher notes his intentions in the introduction to the book: “But it was certainly my hope, in composing this book, that it would show how the creation of an ancient legend of Middle-earth, changing and growing over many years, reflected the search of the author for a presentation of the myth never to his desire.”⁷²⁷ Two insights can be drawn from this introduction. First, as a perfectionist who drastically and meticulously rewrote *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* before their publication, it is debatable whether rough drafts should be referenced, especially those re-written on numerous occasions. Second, Christopher is correct in noting the many changes over the years of this story. There are differences between the earlier drafts of the tale and the version published in the *Silmarillion*: Beren originally being an elf, the presence of Telvido, Prince of Cats, and the malevolent Thû, Lord of Werewolves, a possible precursor to Sauron. While these differences and changes are of interest, for the purposes of this thesis, emphasis will be placed on the Halls of Mandos and the Orphic similarities within the narrative.

The story of Beren and Lúthien is that of star-crossed lovers. Beren, a man, stumbles into the woods of Doriath where Lúthien lives and finds her singing and dancing. After falling in love with each other, they seek the blessing of her father Thingol. Thingol is a great Elf king whose wife is a Maia, named Melian. This prevents Thingol from giving his daughter’s hand to a mere mortal. Thingol, therefore, appoints a task for Beren: to seek out Melkor and steal a silmaril from

⁷²⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lays of Beleriand*, History of Middle-Earth vol. III ed. Christopher Tolkien (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), 183.

⁷²⁶ Tolkien, *The Lays of Beleriand*, 184.

⁷²⁷ J.R.R. Tolkien, *Beren and Lúthien*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2017), 14.

his crown. The quest is a trap, near unachievable. Beren agrees, Lúthien is locked in a tower, and Thingol believes the matter is settled. Lúthien, however, out of love for Beren, escapes her tower by her long hair, rescues Beren from the prisons of Sauron and aids him to steal the silmaril from Melkor's crown by singing him to sleep. While Beren captures the silmaril, it is bitten from his hand by a wolf who guards Melkor's stronghold. Thingol accepts that the quest was accomplished, Beren then heads back out to stop the wolf who is now on a rampage from the pain he is experiencing from the silmaril he consumed. In the melee, Beren is killed. Lúthien, bereaved by his loss, leaves her body and travels to the Halls of Mandos, where the souls of elves go when they can no longer remain in their bodies, due to weariness or physical destruction. Lúthien sings a song of sorrow and grief and pleads to Mandos. Mandos, in turn, offers Lúthien two choices – to go to the land of Valinor where the angels and other elves live, or to give up her immortality and live out the last of her days with a mortal Beren. Lúthien accepts mortality.⁷²⁸

Many analogous stories can be connected to this tale, not only that of Orpheus.⁷²⁹ Just to highlight a few, there is fairy tale “The Devil with the Three Gold Hairs”⁷³⁰ found in the Brothers Grimm. A king has a daughter who is to marry a boy of lower status. The king tries to rid himself of the boy in a number of ways, including throwing him in a box in the water. All fails, and the king sends him on a quest to collect the hair from the Devil's head. This story is very similar to Tolkien's Beren quest, where Beren needs to take a silmaril from Melkor, the devil's, crown. As with Thingol, who comes to a bad end, so too does the king from the fairy story becoming stuck in hell as the ferryman.

Two other stories of importance are those of Philomela, who is raped by her brother-in-law and gains revenge, eventually becoming a nightingale – a title often used in relation to Lúthien, and the story of Alcestis, daughter of King Pelias, who sets a price for his daughter's hand. Any suitor must place a harness on a wild beast (lion, bear, or boar). Another king, Admetus, manages to succeed with the help of Apollo. Alcestis and Admetus marry, but Admetus soon finds out he is going to imminently die. Apollo again tries to help Admetus managing to convince the Furies

⁷²⁸ For a more detailed look at this tale derived from the *Silmarillion* and *Lord of the Rings*, see chapter three of this thesis. The story of Beren and Lúthien also finds itself repeated throughout Tolkien's works. More on that can also be found in chapter three of this thesis.

⁷²⁹ For a study on the influence of Orpheus and other tales on Beren and Lúthien, see Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth*, 257-261. See also Jane Beal, “Orphic Powers in J.R.R. Tolkien's Legend of Beren and Lúthien” *Journal of Tolkien Research* 1 (2014): 1-26.

⁷³⁰ Beal, “Orphic Powers in J.R.R. Tolkien's Legend of Beren and Lúthien,” 2.

to spare him from death if another would step forward to die in his place. None, however, step forward to replace him, not even his elderly parents.⁷³¹ Finally, Alcestis, loving her husband offers up her life in his stead. She dies but is later saved from Hades by Heracles. Ovid included this tale in his *Ars Amatoria* III:19-20.

Jane Beal notes: “If Tolkien takes the name Nightingale from the Philomela myth, and the willingness of a woman to sacrifice herself for her beloved from Alcestis’s story, he draws even more so on the classical myth – and medieval interpretations – of Orpheus and Eurydice when crafting his own legend of Beren and Lúthien.”⁷³² And draw from the Orpheus story Tolkien does, for Beren and Lúthien both share in attributes of Orpheus. Beren can tame animals, and Lúthien has power of music and song,⁷³³ having birds flock to her – music which is linked to magic like her growing her hair or having Melkor fall asleep. It is also her music, inherited from her mother Melian, which moves Mandos.

While Aragorn notes, in the *LotR*, that Lúthien died, he does not say how. However, a few interesting variants on the Halls of Mandos exist in Christopher Tolkien’s edited 2017 *Beren and Lúthien*. In one version, it is not her song, but “her beauty and tender loveliness [which] touched even the cold heart of Mandos, so that he suffered her to lead Beren forth once more into the world, nor has this ever been done since to Man or Elf...”⁷³⁴ A partial Orphic story is achieved here. It is Lúthien herself, often identified as the most beautiful of all Eru’s (God’s) children, who moves Mandos to pity her sorrows. Yet, even in this case, neither remains immortal. Beren, still conceived by Tolkien at this point as an elf, and Lúthien are sent back only for a time, to die a mortal’s death.

We should explore the text once again at this point. In the version we know, found in *The Silmarillion*, we get the song of Lúthien, already quoted in chapter three:

The song of Lúthien before Mandos was the song most fair that ever in words was woven, and the song most sorrowful that ever the world shall hear. Unchanged, imperishable, it is sung still in Valinor beyond the hearing of the world, and listening the Valar are grieved. For Lúthien wove two themes of words, of the sorrow of the [elves] and the grief of Men...And as she knelt before him her tears fell upon his feet like rain upon stones; and Mandos was moved to pity who never before was so moved, nor has been since.⁷³⁵

⁷³¹ Plato’s rejection of Admetus comes from this aspect of the story. His unwillingness to sacrifice himself for the wife makes him suspect. See Plato, *Symposium*, 179d.

⁷³² Beal, “Orphic Powers in J.R.R. Tolkien’s Legend of Beren and Lúthien,” 14.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁷³⁴ Tolkien, *Beren and Lúthien*, 227

⁷³⁵ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 220.

Much like Hades and Proserpina, Mandos is moved. He offers Lúthien two choices: 1) Go to Valinor to recover. As a daughter of Melian, she had this right. Beren, a mortal human, could not go with her, as death is a Gift of Eru to humans and cannot be removed by the angelic Mandos. 2) Lúthien can become mortal, return with Beren to Middle-Earth where they can live out the rest of their natural lifespans before dying.⁷³⁶ Lúthien selects the second option. She gives up her life for her husband's, she gives up immortality for the unknown and uncertainty of death.

In both the commonly known version, found in the *Silmarillion*, and that of *Beren and Lúthien*, Lúthien enacts a great sacrifice in exchanging her immortality for her husband's life. But the success of her mission is of even greater importance; not only does she succeed where Orpheus failed, Lúthien is also more triumphant than King Orfeo was. As has been highlighted, both classical Orpheus and Orfeo agree that once returned from Hades or Fairy Land, Orpheus does not reproduce. Either celibate in Virgil, homosexual in Ovid, or possibly barren in *Sir Orfeo*, there are no biological descendant produced. Beren and Lúthien on the other hand, have a son, Dior. Dior, has a daughter, Elwing who marries Eärendil and they have Elrond and Elros. Through their line they have Aragorn and Arwen. The heroes of Middle-Earth, therefore, come from Beren and Lúthien's bloodline. Lúthien manages to become part of the soteriology of Middle-Earth. Her granddaughter and her husband, Eärendil, play a key role in defeating Melkor. Lúthien's great-grandson, Elrond, and her descendent Aragorn help defeat Sauron. Much like Orfeo's, Lúthien's success depends on her sacrificing her kingdom. She gives up her inheritance from Thingol, her status, and even more her never-ending life, in order to save someone she loves. Through this personal and individual sacrifice, Lúthien ultimately creates the opportunity to save the entire world Eru manages to work through her choices.

Finally, a question is raised concerning why Lúthien needed to become mortal to live out her life with Beren. Considering Tolkien's understanding of death as a gift, as seen in chapter three, there is also, once again, the Orphic influence on this story. Orfeo and Heurodis do not live forever. They die, and the good Steward becomes king after Orfeo. Orpheus, when he fails, also dies, being torn to pieces by Maenads or Bacchae. In Ovid, he is reunited with Eurydice in the Elysian Fields. But Ovid may hold a key to an important part of Mandos' second offer. While pleading with Hades, Ovid tells us, Orpheus acknowledged all humans die. No matter what, Hades would get Orpheus and Eurydice's souls. However, since she died before her time, Ovid sought to

⁷³⁶ Tolkien, *Beren and Lúthien*, 230.

make a deal. If Hades released Eurydice to live out her natural life, both he, Orpheus, and Eurydice would return to Hades' dominion upon their death.⁷³⁷ Neither would go to Elysium, where Hades held no power. Even in Ovid, there was no promise of immortality, simply a living-out of a natural life, to die of natural causes. Mandos offers what Ovid's Orpheus so elegantly pleads for. Lúthien accepts it.

There is also an undertone to Tolkien, which is both Christian and Ovidian. Orpheus is finally reunited with Eurydice in Elysium and can spend all his time there with her, something which could not have occurred if he in fact won her back. There was no telling the length of their natural lives. It would have been fleeting, limited. It would have ended under the dominion of Hades, rather than in the field of heroes and gods. So too was Lúthien's choice, to live forever alone without Beren, filled with sorrow and grief, most likely remaining in the Halls of Mandos, *or* to live a life with Beren and hope for what was to come. While elves have no knowledge of where humans go in Tolkien's canon, it is accepted amongst their lore that humans will return at the end of time, during the Last Battle, and have a special place alongside God and the angels, Eru and the Ainur. It is, in fact, the elves who are bound to the physical world, and who may perish when the earth ceases to exist. So Lúthien puts her faith in the life to come, as her descendent Aragorn did on his death bed.⁷³⁸ Her sacrifice is based on the hope of the unknown, a leap in the dark – a leap which saves Middle-Earth.

We see then a connection to the greater themes presented by Tolkien and Lewis in their works – sacrifice is needed, true love gives to the other. Lúthien loves Beren so purely and completely that she is willing to give up all she has, all the certainty, for him. We must remember, Lúthien could have gone on to live her life with her family and friends indefinitely. Her sacrifice of certainty is all the more moving. Just as King Orfeo could have found a new queen and lived out his life as a monarch, Lúthien too had such an option. She was the most beautiful, after all. Instead, both chose to give up what was safe. Lúthien gave up certainty because she cared so deeply for her beloved Beren. We must also not gloss over Beren's actions – for he too took on an impossible task to gain Lúthien's hand in marriage. No clearer example on Gift-Love could exist, as this tale reflects Divine Gift-Love; Gift-love in a perfect form, offered willingly, unconditionally, with no true knowledge of what is being sacrificed and what is being saved. For

⁷³⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X:31-38.

⁷³⁸ For an exploration of death, and Aragorn's last days, see chapter three of this thesis.

C.S. Lewis, this same perfect image of Gift-love is also derived from Orpheus' tale. Let us turn then, to Lewis and *The Silver Chair*.

C.S. Lewis and Orpheus

Within his academic works, Lewis provides a study of Boethius. Of particular interest is *The Discarded Image*, a text which explores the medieval world view through the lens of literary and philosophical works. Lewis highlights a few important aspects of the *Consolation*. Firstly, he identifies the need to understand the structure of the entire text. It is a story of a man who focuses on the wrong sorts of good for happiness. By the time we reach the Orpheus poem, Boethius has shown us the errors of this worldview. "The argument now climbs to the position that the whole and perfect good, of which we usually choose only fragments or shadows, is God."⁷³⁹ From book one, where Boethius himself is sick and needing the guidance of Philosophia, to book three the narrator experiences a growth, which should be mirrored in his readers. In fact, Lewis argues that Boethius is at his highest point as a poet in the famous lines: "Orpheus Eurydicen suam / vidit, perdidit, occidit." Lewis translates this beautifully: "One backward glance sufficed to see, to lose, to kill, Eurydice."⁷⁴⁰

Lewis emphasises for his readers the central reason why Boethius uses the Orpheus story by Boethius. It is a perfect example of the dangers of looking backward, of losing progress made. "Those who have once risen to contemplate 'the admirable circle of the divine simplicity' must be careful not to look back again to worldly objects. The moral is enforced by the story of Orpheus and his fatal backward glance at Eurydice, and this telling of that story was widely influential as Virgil's. It is also of great structural importance in the *De Consolatione*, for Boethius himself,

⁷³⁹ Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 85.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., 86. Lewis' translation of "occidit" as "to kill" is debatable. The verb "occidere" has a double meaning depending on the length of the vowel "i" (long or short). In the meter used by Boethius, which is known as a glyconic meter, the "i" is short and the verb "occidere" means rather "to faint" or "to fail" than "to kill." It is not impossible, though, that Boethius did intend to play on this double meaning when he wrote the poem. Based on his translation, Lewis does not seem to have been aware of this subtlety. Some modern scholars even avoid the difficulty. Colette Lazam, for example, does not translate "occidit", possibly due to this difficulty. See, for example, her French translation of these lines: "Orphée son Eurydice / Vit et perdit à jamais" in John Block Friedman, *Orphée au Moyen Âge*, trans. Jean-Michel Roessli (Paris, Cerf; Vestigia: Pensée antique et médiévale 25, 1999), 107. Some other scholars try to make sense of this subtlety. See, for instance, Gerard O'Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 190, who translates the lines as follows: "Orpheus saw his Eurydice, lost her and was lost".

when Philosophia visited him in Book I, was indulging in just such a retrospection. Here, too, he reaches his highest point as a poet...”⁷⁴¹ The Orpheus story, then is one which aids authors in putting forward their central ideas, and Lewis does not ignore this fact. In 1953, Lewis publishes his fourth novel in the *Chronicles of Narnia* series, titled *The Silver Chair*. This story borrows from a number of tales, like the journey of Odysseus, or John O’Neill’s *Land Under England* (1935), but it also contains elements of the Orphic myth. Lewis draws not only on Virgil, Ovid, Boethius, but also, like Tolkien, the *Orfeo* poet to provide his readers with a Christianized take on elements of the classic myth.

The Silver Chair centers on two children, a boy and a girl: Eustace and Jill. Both children attend a school full of bullies. Eustace, having been to Narnia, tells Jill about it and together they express a wish to travel there to escape the imminent approach of a group of bullies. They manage to journey to Narnia, not because they desire to go, but because Aslan was calling them. The two get lost, as Eustace falls off a cliff, and Jill meets Aslan. The Lion gives her four signs that she must look out for, but she continuously forgets or misses them as they appear throughout the story.

The plot is a simple one, and familiar to us at this point, as it mirrors the Orpheus and Orfeo stories in a few places. While out riding one day in May, as in *Sir Orfeo*, Prince Rilian, son of King Caspian, and his mother the Queen, Daughter of Ramadu, stop to enjoy the beautiful day. Lewis is clear, they are Maying and not hunting, so much like Heurodis, the Queen and Prince are surrounded by squires and maidens. They all eat and drink by a beautiful glade: “where a fountain flowed freshly out of the earth”⁷⁴² The Queen tires, so while the Prince and their attendants tell stories and sing songs, she, like Heurodis once again, goes to sleep, not under a tree, but near a riverbank. The classic snake enters the scene, bites the Queen and she dies. Rilian attempts to kill the snake, but it escapes. His mother dies unable to say her last words to her son. Rilian and his father, King Caspian mourn the loss of their mother and wife.⁷⁴³

The Prince seems changed and goes out daily. No one is sure where he goes, but he returns tired while his horse is barely worked. This leads a Captain in the King’s army, who is also a close friend to the monarch, to join Rilian on one of his journeys. The captain finds out that Rilian returns daily to the area where his mother was killed. To him, daily, appears a beautiful woman, clothed

⁷⁴¹ Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 85-86.

⁷⁴² C.S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 575.

⁷⁴³ Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, 575.

in green. Lewis hints here at her true nature, as she is described as being “wrapped in a thin garment as green as poison.”⁷⁴⁴ The woman appears and disappears, and her look raises a warning for the Captain. He does not, however, inform the King, and the following day Rilian disappears. King Caspian is bereaved but fearing the loss of his last friend the Captain, he does not risk anyone else to find his son.

Thanks to her conversation with Aslan, Jill identifies this woman as the snake. She also knows that Rilian is still, in fact, alive.⁷⁴⁵ The identity of the witch in this story is debated. She can be a specter of the original White Witch, or a new witch from the same line as the White Witch. Lewis may be drawing a parallel between the snake that bites Eurydice, and the tempter snake from Eden. The witches in Narnia are always portrayed as tempters – they repeatedly offer temptation to the children visiting Narnia. In the case of *The Silver Chair*, the Queen is bitten by a snake as God predicts in Genesis 3:15: “you will bite his heel.” This is also the same fate shared by Eurydice in Virgil’s description of the story; as Eurydice flees from Aristaeus, she is bitten by a snake and dies.

Jill and Eustace head out to find the Prince but along the way they gain the help of Puddleglum, a marsh-wiggle. The three journey not knowing exactly where to go, but eventually end up falling, accidentally, into the Marches of Underland. “Across the mild, soft, sleepy place they were now made to march. It was very sad, but with a quiet sort of sadness like soft music. Here they passed dozens of strange animals lying on the turf, either dead or asleep, Jill could not tell which.”⁷⁴⁶ Underland clearly parallels the Underworld of the Virgilian and Ovidian accounts of the Orpheus tale,⁷⁴⁷ but Lewis’s vagueness is of interest. Are these truly dead creatures? If so, is this hell? In fact, his vague description and the uncertainty felt by Jill is an echo of *Sir Orfeo*. When Orfeo enters Fairy Land, the description of who is there is hard to interpret. Some people are clearly dead, while others, like Heurodis herself, show no true signs of cause of death. This is also not a haphazard connection, for Lewis himself draws our attention to this in his commentary on *Sir Orfeo*. He notes, once again in *The Discarded Image*, that the Orfeo Poet is not clear about the dead and non-dead in Fairy Land. At times, as in lines 389-390, Lewis notes that the people

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid., 576.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid., 577.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid., 616.

⁷⁴⁷ Similarities also exist between Lewis’ *Silver Chair* and Joseph O’Neill’s *Land Under England*. See Marijane Osborn, “Deeper Realms: C.S. Lewis’ Re-Vision of Joseph O’Neill’s *Land Under England*,” *Journal of Modern Literature*, 25, n.1 (2001): 115-120.

listed are “supposed to be dead and weren’t.” Then we get a list of those who are clearly dead, individuals who are beheaded or died in childbirth (lines 391-340). The author switches again to those stolen or kidnapped through dreams (lines 401-404).⁷⁴⁸ So Lewis’ vagueness here echoes the Orfeo Poet.

The status of those in Underland is theorized by the Warden who tells the children that the animals there were originally from Overland and will never see the sun again. “It is said they will all wake at the end of the world.”⁷⁴⁹ The often-repeated lines of this story are: “Many sink down to the Underland” “And few return to the sunlit lands.”⁷⁵⁰ This is no different from Orfeo’s Fairy Land, where escape is near impossible.

The group, Jill, Eustace and Puddleglum, meet a Black Knight, who in fact turns out to be Rilian. They do not recognize him right away and he does not know about Narnia. The children realize he is under the Witch’s spell and every night he remembers who he is. The Witch ties Rilian to a silver chair to prevent his escape and the recovery of his memories.⁷⁵¹ She is also the only person to ever attend him during this time, for while he comes to his senses and remembers his old life, she warns everyone in Underland that he in fact would turn into the snake if freed.⁷⁵² The group realize the error and hesitantly release him. The Green Witch is not present in Underland at this time, so Jill and Eustace’s arrival is perfectly timed, thanks to Aslan’s summoning them of course.

When the Green Witch returns, she attempts to convince the group and Rilian that there was no Narnia, that only Underland exists. She also tries to convince them that Aslan, the sun, and Overland are all dreams. She uses rhetoric to keep them trapped, telling them these illusions are but dreams.⁷⁵³ Puddleglum breaks the spell by burning his feet while attempting to put out a fire, and by stating that he is on Aslan’s side, even if Aslan is not real. This enrages the Green Witch, and she finally shows herself to be the green snake who killed the Queen. Rilian manages to finally slay her and the group escapes Underland. Those creatures who were asleep also manage to escape once her spell is broken. With the help of Aslan, the group manages to save not only Rilian, but

⁷⁴⁸ Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 137.

⁷⁴⁹ Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, 616.

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 618.

⁷⁵¹ Like with many stories by Lewis and Tolkien, multiple classical stories are used. Here we find connections with the myth of Theseus and Pirithous.

⁷⁵² Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, 625.

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*, 628-634.

also everyone within Underland. They are more successful than Orfeo was. But what about the resurrection? Was it not the most important aspect of the Orpheus myth? While the status of those in Underland is unclear, we can assume from the spell produced by the Green Witch that they were more likely kidnapped than truly dead. We also know Rilian is alive, as he remembers his old life, and has the strength to kill the Green Witch as she transforms into the snake. Rilian also rules as King after his father Caspian dies. So where is the resurrection so famous in the Orpheus story? To find it, we must not look to Underland and the false stories of the Green Witch. Instead, we must look to Caspian.

Included at the end of the story is an interesting account of Caspian's reaction to the finding of his son. While sailing, Aslan tells him Rilian is found. Caspian returns and dies of old age with his son by his side. Aslan appears to Jill and Eustace, with Jill being sorry she missed all the signs given to her by Aslan. Once again, Lewis tries to preserve the loving nature of God and Aslan does not scold Jill. Instead, he tells her: "Think of that no more. I will not always be scolding. You have done the work for which I sent you into Narnia."⁷⁵⁴ Aslan brings Jill and Eustace home, but first they go to the Mountain of Aslan. There, in a beautiful stream, a stark contrast with the ugly darkness of Underland, the children see the body of Caspian. All three – Jill, Eustace and even Aslan! – cry over the dead Caspian. "All three stood and wept. Even the Lion wept: great lion-tears, each tear more precious than the Earth would be if it was a single solid diamond"⁷⁵⁵

We cannot, once again, help but hear the rebuke of Augustine's rejection of tears for his dead friend and mother. Here even God cries. The weeping of Jill and Eustace is pure. It is not "embarrassing or generated by self-pity, but a pure kind of weeping that is steeped in love."⁷⁵⁶ The tears have an even greater value because of what occurs next. Aslan asks Eustace to get a thorn from a shrub nearby. Taking the thorn, Eustace pricks Aslan's paw drawing blood. The Lion becomes the Good Pelican. "And there came out a great drop of blood, redder than all redness that you have ever seen or imagined. And it splashed into the stream over the dead body of the King."

⁷⁵⁴ Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, 660. Note how this can be contrasted by Moses' experience with God in Exodus, particularly after not following instructions. See Exodus 17 and Numbers 20.

⁷⁵⁵ Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, 661.

⁷⁵⁶ Amanda M. Niedbala, "From Hades to Heaven: Greek Mythological Influences in C.S. Lewis' *The Silver Chair*," *Mythlore*, 93/94 (2006): 90. The purity of these tears is even greater when one considers the growth of Jill and Eustace. As Niedbala notes, they are the only children brought into Narnia who do not necessarily have faith. They represent a pagan conversion to Christianity. Niedbala states: Jill and Eustace are "the only explicitly non-Christian humans to visit Narnia." They do not answer to the titles of Son of Adam or Daughter of Eve, because they are not certain of their roles. Their story is part Odyssean journey and part Christian conversion. Niedbala, 73.

Caspian is resurrected. “And he rushed to Aslan and flung his arms as far as they would go around the huge neck; and he gave Aslan the strong kiss of a king, and Aslan gave him the wild kisses of a Lion.”⁷⁵⁷

Before Jill and Eustace return to their world, Caspian wishes to visit it with them. Caspian asks Aslan if he is wrong to want to see their world and the Lion replies: “You cannot want wrong things any more, now that you have died, my son.”⁷⁵⁸ Caspian is granted his wish, and Jill and Eustace are returned to the moment when the bullies were approaching them. Unfortunately for the bullies, they are frightened by seeing Jill, Eustace, Caspian and Aslan’s back.⁷⁵⁹ Caspian, after about five minutes, leaves their world to go with Aslan. Jill and Eustace are told they will return to Narnia one last time in the future, but that they will remain in Narnia once they return. Rilian is a successful king after his father’s death.

Here we find the missing resurrection of the Orpheus tale. Caspian dies but is resurrected. It was not a failure, like Orpheus’ attempt at regaining Eurydice. Nor was it a mute existence, like that of the resurrected Heurodis. Lewis has taken all the tropes of the Orpheus story and made them even more Christian than the Orfeo Poet. The resurrection promised here is not one of limited earthly time, like that of Beren and Lúthien, but of eternity. Caspian is a symbol of the Christian hope for Lewis. A perfect resurrection, where none of his wishes or desires is corrupt or evil. Aslan is clear, after Caspian’s death he cannot want wrong things anymore. Caspian’s love, hope and faith in Aslan – his Need-love, is rewarded by the ultimate gift, eternal life in the presence of God. Aslan’s Gift-love, his sacrifice in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and now the offering of his blood for Caspian, provide the reader with an image of fulfilment. For Lewis the dying gods who come back, the myths that lead to the Great Myth of Christ on the cross, point us to the true hope of Christianity – the promise of human resurrection. Humans may become like the dying gods, the worms become butterflies as Dante tells us in *Purgatorio* canto x; resurrection and everlasting life is possible.

Lessons of Orpheus

⁷⁵⁷ Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, 661.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 662.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 662. Note how, again like in the Hebrew Bible, humans in our world do not see God face-to-face, but instead only see his back.

At the base of Mount Purgatory, Dante and Virgil meet Casella, a musician. He begins to sing, and the souls stop their ascent up the mountain to listen. A furious Cato scolds them for tarrying and being negligent.⁷⁶⁰ Right after this, as the souls scatter like pigeons chased away from their food, the Pilgrim finally looks up and sees the Mountain of Purgatory clearly. Just when the souls should be looking up, moving upwards on their journey of purgation, they enjoyed old songs from a past life. Fittingly, *Purgatorio* begins with an invocation to the muse, Calliope, mother of Orpheus. Much like Dante, Lewis and Tolkien take the same tact. We must look up, move beyond, seek to copy the Gift-love, self-sacrifice, of Christ. This is a difficult process, to copy the Love that moves the sun and other stars, but for Tolkien, and especially Lewis, Love does not only pull and move things towards itself, it also gives the “others” a volition to move on their own towards the source. Humans, like the Seraphim who contemplate the Godhead, are moved by Primal Love, drawn by the First Mover. Orpheus illustrates this, a failed quest in Virgil, Ovid, and Boethius, but a successful one for the Christian Orfeo Poet. Why did Orfeo succeed where Orpheus failed? Orfeo had the image of Christ, a humble king to copy – Gift-love illustrated. Lúthien also succeeds, Beren is resurrected, Rilian is found, Caspian has true life after death – he is even more complete as he is not the spectre of Eurydice, or the mute Heurodis. Caspian is resurrected as Christ was at the tomb.

However, this is not a rejection of earthly goods. Beren and Lúthien are not celibate or homosexual, like classical Virgil and Ovid. They have a child, Dior. They live in the world after their return, they are the progenitors of the heroes of Middle-Earth. Lucy, in *The Last Battle*, cries for Narnia at the eschatological moment. Jill and Eustace, along with the Christ-like Aslan, cry over Caspian, even when Aslan knows he will be resurrected. The children and Aslan recognize the value and importance of the human, earthly life. The world is something crafted by God, therefore, it should be loved and enjoyed. Humans should live in the world and love it to a proper degree. Love the cherry blossoms for their intrinsic beauty, but always remember to look beyond, “further up, and further in” as the characters of Narnia and the title of chapter fifteen of *The Last Battle* so greatly puts it. Appreciate loved ones and time spent together. Cry for their loss, it is the human thing to do, but hope for, like Aragorn on his deathbed, and Lúthien in her sacrificed immortality, the next step – the Great Gift, the gift achieved through the shedding of blood, the

⁷⁶⁰ Dante, *Purgatorio*, II:121-123.

Gift-love of the Cross. Both Tolkien and Lewis place emphasis on the resurrection promised, and hoped for, in the Great Myth.

Conclusion: “You Shall Love the Lord Your God with All Your Heart”

“A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies...The man who never reads lives only one”

-George R.R. Martin

Stories are central to the human experience. They connect us to our history. Many can remember stories told by their grandparents, or the elders of their family. Each story shines a light on the past. Tales play a part of most childhoods. The stories of Alice travelling to Wonderland, Goldilocks looking for porridge that is just right, Dorothy squashing the Wicked Witch of the East as she lands in Oz, or Peter Rabbit running from Mr. McGregor leave an impression on us. The fear, joy and wonder of hearing the stories mark our lives; one which we carry throughout our lives. It is no surprise then, that as we age, we continue to return to the story. Novels of fiction or non-fiction, tales of love and loss, enable us to experience the awe and adventure of another life.

Given the influence stories play in our lives, it is easy to understand why stories were of paramount importance to both Lewis and Tolkien. It is through the tales heard in our youth that we build up our understanding of the world around us. We can learn from them and extract important lessons from the pages. For Lewis and Tolkien all stories serve the central purpose of acting as guides in our day-to-day lives. They can help us identify right from wrong. They can even, in Lewis’ case, help in the conversion process. For both Lewis and Tolkien another truth lies behind all stories – they reflect and amplify the Great Myth, Christianity.

How is this relevant to this thesis? It helps illuminate the reasoning behind the writings of Lewis and Tolkien. While Lewis is more direct, Tolkien desires to inspire readers with impactful stories. Both authors strive to provide stories to help guide us in the right direction, on the path of hope, away from despair. This becomes apparent when we begin exploring the images of love scattered throughout the fantastical fictional works of these two authors. They do not force us to be self-giving, but they tell us those who give freely of themselves, those who change their greedy and selfish ways, come out happier – loved by those around them. We may think hoarding the dragon’s gold for ourselves will make us happy but sharing with those we love to ensure their success and prosperity will bring even greater happiness.

C.S. Lewis' Selfish Humans

We come face-to-face with many of these selfish characters in Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*. The author does a very good job at illustrating the school bully in a number of cases. As we have already gone into quite some detail in chapter 2, it would be important to bring to mind the story of Eustace. As a child who begins his journey into Narnia as a greedy character, he and the reader soon come to realize he would be much happier being kind to others. Eustace is the prime example of a character who shifts his focus from loving only himself to loving others. Finding dragon gold, he begins by wanting it all. His exterior is changed into the monstrous character he is inside. However, realizing the errors of his ways he turns back into the human child, not the same self-interested one we first meet, but a new, loving character and one who illustrates Gift and Need-love. A similar arc is experienced by Edmund. He too begins his time in Narnia with a selfish love: a gluttonous love of Turkish Delight and a hunger for power. He is even willing to lie and hurt his sister Lucy for dominion and candy. In the end he realizes he needs his family and friends. His conversion is central to the defeat of the White Witch. Both boys begin focused on worldly good as their source of happiness, only to find happiness lies with those who love them.

We see this conversion occur throughout Lewis' *Space Trilogy* as well. Ransom, meeting the Hrossa on Mars, in *Out of the Silent Planet*, is baffled that they do not fight with other species over resources, or that they do not reproduce repeatedly. This unfallen world does not practice the greed we have on earth. Instead, they willingly share and give to one another. Together they succeed for each is willing to only take what is needed and leave the rest for the other living creatures. Each considers the needs and wants of others, and they are successful, avoiding wars where humans would have hoarded and fought for supremacy.

Here we come to an important lesson Lewis teaches us concerning love. Love ultimately extends beyond sexuality to the welfare of others. It is normal to want to keep all the food locked away for yourself in a time of uncertainty but recognizing the needs of others is a central part of the human condition. We must freely choose not to hoard. We must recognize the value in the others around us and share. The beings of Mars do not fight over resources because they each acknowledge the need for all to survive. Edmund did not at first realize this. He was fixated on eating all the Turkish Delight himself. Only when it was almost too late did he acknowledge that without his siblings, the Turkish Delight would be empty. This is exemplified by Gift-love. Freely

caring about the other, giving to the other, with no expectations in return. On Mars, each group shares with the other because it is the right thing to do. They expect nothing in return, it is a gift and acknowledgement of their existence and needs.

While the examples of Mars or Narnia are non-sexual expressions of Gift-love, Lewis does present us with couples as well. *That Hideous Strength* illustrates the importance of recognizing the needs of those we love perfectly. Jane and Mark are both self-interested humans. Neither takes into account the other throughout the entire story. While Mark seeks to impose himself on Jane, Jane too spends all her time trying to avoid becoming subjugated to Mark. As the story progresses it becomes apparent that neither truly understands what the other wants. It is only at the end of the tale, when both experience revelations, that they come to recognize they had not been concerned with the needs of the other. Both Jane and Mark realize the other has Need-love, desires, and aspirations they wish receive. The presence of Need-love means the other must be willing to freely give, Gift-love. We never know if Jane has a child, as Mark wanted, but we are left with the understanding that both characters recognized they could not only look inwards. They both needed to freely give to the other to ensure a successful relationship for the future.

J.R.R. Tolkien and Gift-Love

The recognition that lovers both need to give and receive is a theme often presented in the works of Tolkien as well. As examined in this thesis, this thematic is frequently interspersed in two of Tolkien's tales. For example, the love story of Éowyn and Faramir begins with Faramir's recognition of Éowyn's needs. He is willing to give himself freely to her. She too, over time, comes to recognise the importance of giving herself to others. Éowyn begins her narrative as a Shieldmaiden seeking glory through combat, wanting to be loved by Aragorn. As her character progresses, she comes to recognize that it is not only about her own glory. She experiences a change – she shifts her focus from personal glory to the healing of others. To an even greater extent her needs are met by the love of Faramir, who loves her for herself and does not require any change or subjugation. In a way, Éowyn fought for the same freedoms Jane wanted in Lewis' work. Just like Jane, Éowyn's development includes her recognizing the needs of others. She casts aside her quest for glory, she becomes a healer and wife to Faramir. Her freedom to both give and receive love is what eventually gives her the fame she so desires. Her name is recorded in the history of

Middle-Earth – she is part of the fictional history written by the Hobbits, what we read as the *Lord of the Rings*. She is not caged and forgotten, she is remembered as a warrior, healer, and lover.

While Jane and Mark, Éowyn and Faramir, each need to learn how to love their beloved, Beren and Lúthien represents a story of lovers willing from the start to sacrifice themselves for the other. Beren takes on a dangerously impossible quest to win the right to be with Lúthien and Lúthien seeks out and sacrifices herself for her mortal lover, Beren. The end of the tale, while sad, since both die as mortal, illustrates the perfect example of self-sacrificial Gift-love. Both were willing to die and give up their lives for their beloved. Neither Beren, nor Lúthien, put their own interests or needs first. The two characters were willing to use their freedom to lay down their lives in a Christ-like sacrifice for the other. The same can be said for Frodo and Sam's friendship. Both are willing to help the other succeed. Sam especially, was willing and able to sacrifice himself for the success of Frodo, to aid in the destruction of the Ring. Sam above all is the hero of the *LotR*. He represents Hobbitness and is one of only two, maybe three, characters to hold and be unaffected by the Ring.⁷⁶¹ Edmund, Eustace, Jane and Mark, Éowyn and Faramir, all lead up to Beren and Lúthien or Sam and Frodo, in a way. They each come to realize the importance of being willing and able to freely offer oneself for another.

Orpheus and Eurydice, Cupid and Psyche – Love and Loss

We come then to the two stories which motivated Lewis and Tolkien. These are two of many myths which the authors drew on, but they are important enough that both centred main parts of their mythos on them. Why these two stories in particular? As we have already seen in chapters 2 and 4, both narratives show the loss of love. In the case of Orpheus, the poet-musician fails to heed the prohibition of Persephone and Hades. Orpheus turns back just as he is about to leave the Underworld with his dead wife. Psyche too fails in a way. Instead of following Cupid's counsel, and not gazing upon the god, she is tempted to look upon him. She also fails again in the Underworld when she opens the box of beauty she was told to keep closed. Though Psyche's story

⁷⁶¹ Sam's vision of "dominion" sparked by the Ring of Power was making the Shire a huge garden. Only one, maybe two other characters, showed such little interested in the Ring. Tom, who plays tricks with it and his wife Goldberry. In the case of Tom, he has nothing more to gain. He has all he deems valuable. While Goldberry is never tested, she remains in the house with the Ring and never seems troubled by it.

ends well, Orpheus in the Virgilian and Ovidian narratives ends up dead, torn to pieces and scattered.

The importance of the stories, however, comes in their reinterpretations. For Orpheus, over time he becomes the successful Sir Orfeo – an exemplum of the Boethian warning against worldly goods. A good king is one who sacrifices all he has for his lost love, for his queen. Where Orpheus turns his gaze, right before transcending death, backwards towards earthly things, Sir Orfeo rejects all that is worldly, living a pauper's life. This inspires the success of Lúthien when retrieving the soul of the dead Beren. It is also echoed in Edmund and Eustace's final rejection of worldly goods in Narnia.

Lewis' *Till We Have Faces* corrects some issues with the Cupid and Psyche story. Psyche is self-sacrificing for her sister, even offering the less attractive Orual part of the beauty of Persephone. It is Orual's jealousy of Psyche which causes her to fail. Orual is the burden on her sister, dragging her down. Only looking back at the events of Psyche's life does Orual see the damage done to her caring sister.

Orpheus and Psyche, then, represent humans using free will to fail. Both are offered the chance of transcendence, but both fail when tested. They have the choice to succeed. They are capable of following the directions of the gods, but both freely ignore them. Not so for the reinterpreted stories. There we see the self-sacrifice of Gift-love at its height. Lewis' Psyche and Tolkien's Lúthien are willing to give all of themselves, reject all they have in the world, for those they love. They are the examples of Need and Gift-love. They are the influences readers should follow. They are also the echoes of Aristaeus – the bridegroom who regains his bride in the Virgilian account – the beekeeper who regains his bees. Often a footnote to the Orpheus story but an important part of Virgil's message: sacrifice is needed at times. To gain or maintain love, something must be given. Jane and Mark could not only demand of the other, they also needed to learn how to freely give.

Free We Were Made and Free We Remain

Here we come back to the importance of stories. What is the central point of Lewis and Tolkien's depictions of love? All the stories we have covered have one thing in common – the people in the stories had to make their own choices. Each was free to love, each was free to accept love from

the other. We are not bound by fate. Yes, humanity is fallen. We have a tendency to behave like Edmund and Eustace, to be selfish and think of our own interests above those we know. Yet we can change. We can be better, use examples of the past, examples from the stories we read, and do better. We can sacrifice ourselves for those we love. We can leave money behind for our children so they prosper even once we are gone. We can turn away from worldly goods if it means saving those we love. We can return God's love and recognize him as the source of creation. For Lewis and Tolkien, we are sinners, bent, or marred, but we still have agency – made in the Image of a Loving God. Their stories highlight this and attempt to give hope to post-lapsarian humanity. We can come to love selflessly. It is within our ability to participate in Gift-love. This is reflected in numerous Biblical entreaties to love: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”⁷⁶² “He [Jesus] answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.””⁷⁶³ We are given the commandment to love, not be passive participants, but actual lovers. We have agency, it is within our ability to love our neighbour. Those who build theologies rejecting human agency, or the human ability to love others, reject the validity of Christ's command.

However, we cannot forget that we also need. Need-love is required if Gift-love exists. This is also part of our human condition, something which does not require rejection. While Edmund and Eustace needed to become less selfish, they also needed to feel the love and appreciation from their siblings and friends. It is normal to want your child to love you. It is normal to wish for a lover to return affection. It should not become consuming, but beings of love require love in return – that is at the heart of being a relational creature. Free will allows us to give, but it also allows us to need. We must love our neighbours as we love *ourselves*. It is normal to wish for happiness, it is within our capacity to love ourselves. We can fill our void, at first with fleeting worldly things, but eventually, as hoped by Tolkien and Lewis, we will turn to God. We are like beggars before him and these stories are a spark to motivate us to recognize not all is sorrow and despair. Humanity is not hopeless and bound to damnation, mere love and free will can allow us to transcend and achieve a higher state of being.

⁷⁶² Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

⁷⁶³ Luke 10:27.; For similar passages see also, Matthew 22:37-40 and Mark 12:30-31. For a reiteration of the Commandment to love God and neighbour see 1 John 3:23.

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