Chronicles of Heaven Unshackled - Part 8 - Appendix - The Monsters and the Christians

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Chronicles of Heaven Unshackled *is a lightly edited version of Pete Lowman's doctoral thesis. Links to each part will be enabled as they are published*.

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APPENDIX: THE MONSTERS AND THE CHRISTIANS: HOW CAN A 'FANTASY' HAVE A WORLDVIEW?

To many readers the whole idea of describing a writer like Tolkien as a 'Christian fantasist' may seem highly peculiar. Fantasies are fantasies; what relation can possibly exist between such a deliberately non-realistic fictional strategy, and a worldview such as Christianity, concerned (as a *world*view must be) with reality?

To answer that question we need to understand what fantasy is.

The problem is that definitions of fantasy often lose their way in the very area with which this study is concerned: that is, the supernatural in fantasy functioning as an expression or reflection of belief in supernatural agency in the real world. This is true of Irwin's stimulating volume *The Game of the Impossible*, where fantasy is described as a play of intellect that 'projects the persuasive establishment and development of an impossibility, an arbitrary construct of the mind with all under the control of logic and rhetoric'[1]; and of Manlove's definition in *Modern Fantasy*, which includes a reference to 'supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects',[2] the two adjectives being intended to be synonymous. Neither definition is at all adequate to, say, C.S. Lewis' *Voyage to Venus*, the hero of which is transported by angels to a paradise made up of floating islands where he has to combat a demon-possessed foe. The Venus of Lewis' fantasy is not the planet known to astronomers, and the angelic transportation and the paradise are obviously intended as constructs of the imagination. Yet we must also recognize that the angels and the demon are reflections of reality as Lewis perceived it; such forces – albeit without the physical details and astrological allusions with which *Voyage to Venus* enriches their portrayal – formed part of Lewis' Christian orthodoxy. Thus the supernatural in *Voyage to Venus* can only be classed as uniformly 'impossible' if one assumes, as Irwin blithely does, the 'long-foregone loss of any power of a particular supernatural to command belief' [3] – something Lewis would have hotly contested. This sort of definition says more about the narrowness of Irwin's view of the world than it does about the books he is describing.

So let's attempt a different way of developing the distinction between fantasy and realism. It's possible to arrange literary works on a scale according to the extent to which their created worlds are intended to correspond to reality. At one extreme might stand historical writing and fiction-reportage. Then there's the deliberately 'realistic' novel, the novel which presents a world that, though fictional, still claims to correspond more or less to reality – as the author sees it, of course. In such a novel, what Dorothy Van Ghent has called the novel's 'fictional hypothesis' – 'Given such and such conditions, then such and such would take place' – is more or less equivalent to the author's worldview[4]: not 'Let us imagine the world is like this: then this sort of thing would happen', but 'The world is like this: and this is the sort of thing that does happen'.

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Then as we move down the spectrum there are the writers who are more consciously interested in 'telling a tale'; among the classical novelists we might think for example of Scott, Dickens, Emily Bronte, or Hardy. Here there is less of a concern to mirror reality. And then further along the scale come works where the correspondence to reality is intended to reside only in certain elements (being displaced from others by the author's concerns), or is simply regarded as unimportant; works stressing the creative imagination, or the power of the artist as maker. And then there is a wide variety of explicitly non-realistic forms: what Robert Scholes calls the 'fabulations' of writers like Durrell, Vonnegut, Murdoch and Barth (or, in a somewhat different category, Beckett); science fiction; allegory; utopian fiction; beast-fable. Here too we find fantasy of the kind practised by Tolkien and Lewis. Finally at the far end of the scale might be the hypothetical work of art that exists solely as a work of art, where the correspondence to reality is not merely limited or disregarded but non-existent; the theoretical extreme defined by Flaubert:

What seems to be ideal, what I should like to do,is to write a book about nothing, a book with no reference to anything outside itself, which would stand on its own by the inner strength of its style, just as the earth holds itself without support in space...[5]

Of course *all* works of art are *works*, things that are made, artifacts of language: and again, all works contain some correspondence to reality, if only because the 'signifiers' of which they are composed have in most cases 'signifieds' within the real world. But, as our scale illustrates, these 'imitative' and 'expressive' impulses are in tension, and will vary in proportion according to the work.

But this scale isn't entirely satisfactory; to represent it as a single linear spectrum involves a big over-simplification. There is more than one factor that can displace the realistic impulse as the driving force of the book – the impulse of the creative imagination, for example, or the sheer delight in making with language, where the words themselves, pre-eminently, are the thing. So *Tristram Shandy* is non-realistic for different reasons from *Gulliver's Travels* or *The Lord of the Rings;* and the relations to reality of fabulation, allegory, utopian fiction and satire vary greatly from one another. The various forms of fiction at the non-realistic end of the spectrum displace reality for different purposes, and to different extents. Much early science fiction, for example, was 'fantastic', yet it had a simple exploratory impulse, displacing local reality for what might be the case in more distant areas of the same universe. As these were 'beyond our ken', they were clearly 'hypotheses' with a strong element of theory or imagination (hence of course the bipartite name 'science fiction'): 'Maybe the Andromeda Galaxy is like this: in that case these things could occur there'; 'Maybe before the human race existed there was this: then this could have happened next'; 'Maybe ten thousand years in the future the world will be like this; then these events could take place'. But the approach of this kind of 'fantasy' is still, up to a point, one of intentional realism.

More surprisingly, the fictions of the 'fabulators' could also be said to be concerned with reality in their own fashion. Olderman argued that they were motivated by:

the strangely paradoxical possibility that fable, in a fabulous world, may be 'realism', for only through fable can we be faithful to the strange details of contemporary life.[6]

Here the 'fable' has been chosen as a form of fiction that goes at one remove to present aspects of reality which cannot be presented directly. And so in a sense does Lewis' *Voyage to Venus*, insofar as it embodies a conscious apologetic strategy whereby the real cosmic struggle of evil and good can be represented more easily on Venus than on Earth. Again, indifferent ways an allegory such as *Pilgrim's Progress* and a satire such as *Gulliver's Travels* are approaching particular aspects of reality dialectically, as it were, through a non-realistic fictional hypothesis. Robert Scholes refers to such strategies as those of 'romance', which:

can be used to get a more vigorous purchase on certain aspects of that very reality which has been set aside in order to generate a romantic cosmos. When romance returns deliberately to confront reality it produces the various forms of didactic romance or fabulation that we usually call allegory, satire, fable, parable, and so on – to indicate our recognition that reality is being addressed indirectly through a patently fictional

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device… Traditionally, it has been a favourite vehicle for religious thinkers, precisely because religions have insisted that there is more to the world than meets the eye, that the common-sense view of reality – "realism" – is incomplete and therefore false. Science, of course, has been telling us much the same thing for several hundred years.[7]

Lewis himself suggests yet another way in which stories may be presented as fantasies in order to grasp aspects of reality:

The real theme may be, and perhaps usually is, something that has no sequence in it, something other than a process and much more like a state or quality. Giantship, otherness, the desolation of space, are examples....[8]

Here it is still an aspect of reality that is the theme, but the 'state or quality' has been detached from reality so as to grasp it more firmly.

It is in utopian fiction that we take one step further from realism: here the desirable 'state or quality' is one which does not exist in the real world. And here the non-real elements displace the realistic for a didactic purpose; the world that is becomes replaced by the world that ought to be, or 'would be nice if it was'. Yet it is still with reference to *this* reality: we are seeing the world that 'ought to be' or 'would be good to have' *here*. A step further still, with a greater value for the fantasy world 'for its own sake', brings us to pastoral romances and mediaevalising fantasy. (Much of *The Lord of the Rings* could be said to function in this way, alongside the providentialism it also contains).

As we move still further along the spectrum we find fictions that attempt a deliberate, experimental departure of the fictional hypothesis from reality. Darko Suvin summarises the science fiction genre in this way: 'SF takes off from a fictional ("literary") hypothesis and develops it with extrapolating and totalizing ("scientific") rigor'.[9] Now the purpose is no longer an exploration of the distant reaches of our reality; the fictional hypothesis has become dominant, and its correlation with reality has become less important than the extrapolation of the central idea. Indeed, the idea may now be considered as the 'hero' of the story, as Aldiss suggests[10], and a major aesthetic criterion will be a consistent working-out of the initial hypothesis, whatever that is.[11] The hypothesis can take bizarre, complex and entirely 'unrealistic' forms, depending on how far-reaching and radical the author's ideas are.[12] So here the author is no longer departing from realism in order to achieve a better purchase on it by an indirect strategy; the story, or the idea, is pre-eminently the thing. Something of this kind is embodied in Tolkien's notion of 'sub-creation': the artist is a world-maker in his own right, and so Middle-earth is a world made for its own sake; it may not be 'science fiction', but the extended working-out (over a lifetime) of the 'hypothesis', the 'totalizing rigor', are clear for all to see.

And yet in Tolkien there are still very important correlations with 'reality', as we have seen in his fiction and are about to see in his criticism. A final, more thoroughgoing example might be offered by nineteenth-century Romantic novelists like R.L. Stevenson, who makes a very conscious and clear separation between Art and Life:

Life is monstrous, infinite, illogical, abrupt, and poignant; a work of art, in comparison, is neat, finite, self-contained, rational, flowing, and emasculate.... The novel which is a work of art exists, not by its resemblances to life, which are forced and material, as a shoe must still consist of leather, but by its immeasurable difference from life, which is designed and significant, and is both the method and the meaning of the work.[13]

In such cases, as Lewis says,

Surely the author is not saying, 'This is the sort of thing that happens'? Or surely, if he is, he lies? But he is not. He is saying, 'Suppose this happened, how interesting, how moving, the consequences would be! Listen. It would be like this.[14]

Here the world the author reveals is obviously not the world he sees as reality; the fictional hypothesis ('Let's imagine a world like this') is certainly not the same as the author's view of reality.

But yet, once again, in Stevenson and those like him the divorce between fiction and reality was never desired to be total. The dominant 'idealistic' thinking provided a foothold for them in reality: in the passage just quoted, Stevenson stresses 'the

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essence' of man as his concern. His contemporary Hall Caine likewise proclaimed 'the superiority of ideal existence over the facts of life', and fiction as 'not imagined history' (a description Tolkien would have accepted for his work), but rather 'fallacy, poetic fallacy...a lie if you like, a beautiful lie'; and yet he also described it as 'a lie that is at once false and true – false to fact, true to faith'[15]. Elsewhere he goes so far as to suggest that 'an idea is only valuable to man in the degree to which it helps him to see that come what will the world is founded on justice.... Justice – poetic justice, as we call it – is the essence of Romanticism'[16]. This statement actually brings us within hailing distance of providential patterns that we have seen to be foundational to Tolkien's 'fantasy' world.

So there is nearly always a correlation with reality in these various forms of non-realistic fiction. And it is simply insufficient to summarize the fantasies among them simply as the 'persuasive establishment and development of an impossibility', to repeat Irwin's definition with which we began. There is a great deal more going on; and to grasp and enjoy the richness of what a writer like Tolkien is creating, we need to grasp the specific way in which his fictional world correlates with reality – or rather with his understanding of it, that is, with his worldview. So to this we now turn.

(ii) An Inevitable Correlation

Although the dominant impulse in the creation of these fictional worlds is frequently the creative imagination; although the fictional worlds are created primarily for their own sake; there is, as we have seen, still some definite correlation with reality in most of these forms. It is because of this that the fictional hypothesis, the newly-created fictional universe of fantasy, can be compared with our perceptions of the real world we live in. And that is why it is meaningful to describe the work of Lewis and Tolkien as 'Christian fantasies', and to convey something by that description which would be grossly inappropriate if applied to the fables of Kafka or Vonnegut. So how does this correlation operate?

The lack of correlation between a non-realistic fiction and reality can only ever be partial, because it is impossible for a fantasist to create a true 'heterocosm', a totally 'other' universe. A great fantasist may produce a world that seems very different from our own, but the presuppositions that the two worlds will have in common will almost inevitably be greater than what divides them. A science fiction novel may make some alterations in the laws of nature in the world it portrays, but the greater part of those laws will continue to be those of the world we know. Such things as colours tend not to be changed too often: nor do many of the most basic moral assumptions regarding loyalty, truthfulness, cruelty, etc. (Nor, indeed, the more minor attitudes. In *Star Trek*, or *Farscape*, it is astonishing to find how xenophobic cultures that have shut themselves off for generations from all other races turn out, on contact, to be twentieth century Californians, with twentieth century Californian morals. Many of us watch television SF to experience the truly 'alien', but genuinely alien cultures are exceedingly rare.) In short, the 'maker of new worlds' seldom makes a world with very many major variations from the real one.

Nor is this necessarily a bad thing. C.S. Lewis draws a distinction between 'realism of content', that is, being probable or 'true to life' in the theme, and 'realism of presentation', that is, 'the art of bringing something close to us, making it palpable and vivid, by sharply observed and sharply imagined detail'; and he takes his examples of the latter from apparently non-realistic contexts – 'the dragon "sniffing along the stone" in *Beowulf*' or 'the fairy bakers in *Huon* rubbing the paste off their fingers'.[17] Such 'realism of presentation' is a tremendous asset in the creation of a world whose basis is thoroughly fantastic; to recast Marianne Moore's phrase, it is a great deal easier to conceive of an imaginary garden if there turn out to be real toads in it. The addiction of Tolkien's hobbits to smoking tobacco is of some importance in helping them become more vivid to the reader. But this does mean that there is inevitably a considerable degree of correlation, even in the greatest examples of these genres, between the world of fantasy and the world of reality. Much of fantasy and science fiction strives to reduce the correlation; nevertheless, as Stanislaw Lem, one of the most prominent modern science fiction authors, has remarked, 'The invention of new worlds in SF is as rare as a pearl the size of a bread loaf'.[18]

And it is hard to see how it could be otherwise. For books are made of language, and the greater part of language signifies things or concepts that we consider as part of our own reality. Where a word is created to describe something entirely new, it is difficult for that word to be given content except by reference to our present reality. The centaur is a fabulous beast: but the word 'centaur' could have no meaning unless it began by conveying to us a creature with a body like a horse and a head and shoulders like a man. 'Dragon', likewise, communicates to us only if it has already been given a meaning reflective of aspects of our reality: a dragon has a body like a reptile, flies, perhaps, like a bird, sings, perhaps, like a miser, has scales, breathes fire – but 'reptile', 'bird', 'sings', 'miser', 'scales', 'fire', are all building-blocks taken from the conceptual framework through which we perceive our own reality. The 'floating islands' of Lewis' Venus are 'islands'; and they 'float'. Imaginative newness is attained in good measure by rearranging and reassembling the components of the reality we perceive around us.

A method that escapes from this impasse is that of negation: imaginative newness is to be attained by the denial of the world to which our words refer. C.S. Lewis employs it in *Voyage to Venus*:

But it had two other characteristics which are less easy to grasp. One was its colour. Since I saw the thing I must obviously have seen it either white or coloured; but no efforts of my memory can conjure up the faintest image of what that colour was. I try blue, and gold, and violet, and red, but none of them will fit.[19]

And in small quantities this refusal to name can be very effective, as our own imaginations are called upon to do the work. But it can only be used to a limited extent: otherwise the piling of negative on negative produces imaginative colourlessness, and finally fails to communicate at all. And that may be all very well in the ineffable experiences of mysticism, but it cannot feature too largely in imaginative literature. For literature must communicate, albeit ambiguous, multiply significant, or even self-contradictory meanings; even if what it communicates is merely itself as a witness to the incommunicable. Kafka's *The Castle* is literature: five thousand words strung together that possessed no 'signifieds' whatsoever could have a value only as a series of sounds, could not create a fictional world, which is the purpose of the forms we have been considering. The negative method, then, can only be used to a limited extent, in combination with that of reassembling the components of the reality the writer sees around him.

It seems, then, that the fictional hypothesis of a fantasy must be conveyed in terms of the material and conceptual elements we see as comprising reality. Our imaginative possibilities – or rather their communication in literary form – seem to be limited by the conceptual framework of our worldviews. Hence the fictional hypothesis of a fantasy can be considered as a theoretical construct in relation to those worldviews: it is formed by the rearrangement and occasional negation of the elements of which those worldviews themselves are comprised. Or, to put the matter in a more structuralistic fashion, a fictional hypothesis of a work of fantasy and a worldview of reality are not entirely alien to one another because both find expression by means of a common stock of words.[20]

(iii) Fantasy and Attitudes to God

The fictional hypothesis we conceived of earlier in Dorothy Van Ghent's terms: 'Given such and such conditions, then such and such would take place'.[21] Of course all that the hypothesis can communicate about the 'conditions', about the fictional world of the novel, is what is actually stated or implied in the book: we define as the postulated conditions for the narrative those conditions that the book itself postulates! Having said that, some conclusions may be drawn from the absence of a particular element from the fictional world of a novel, particularly if the novel apparently claims to give a fairly full and complete account of its world. If, for example, a full-length fantasy contains no reference to the sciences, it is correct to describe the world the author has chosen to create as one in which science is of no great significance.[22] And in this sense it is also correct to speak of a fantasy text as being theistic or a-theistic, according to whether God is present or absent.

These categories have little meaning in the lighter works of art, the *divertissements* (Tolkien's *Farmer Giles of Ham*, for example): they are

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really only of significance where we are faced with a more 'serious' work or one that portrays its fictional world with a fair degree of completeness. But in fact the cosmological aspect is often highlighted – as against being left unstated – in works of fantasy and science fiction[23]; because on the one hand there are few other genres so suited to handle the cosmological, the apocalyptic and the other-worldly; and, on the other hand, the act of 'reshuffling the universe' involved in the making of fantasy is itself ontologically interesting. And that fact will tend to come into prominence, because as a genre develops it tends to grow more self-conscious, more aware of its own procedures. For example, the ontological issue – what is it to remake the world? – comes out amusingly in Howard Schoenfeld's story 'Build Up Logically' in *The Penguin Science Fiction Omnibus*. Here the hero is a novelist who inserts himself into his own world, then unwisely creates a character who can himself create things *ex nihilo*, and who proceeds to 'create the universe' and take over the story, remaking his own creator in the process.

That story is interesting to set beside John Barth's remark that 'If you are a novelist of a certain type of temperament, then what you really want to do is re-invent the world. God wasn't too bad a novelist, except he was a Realist'.[24] Robert Scholes comments,

For the post-World War II fabulators, any order they impose on the world amounts not to a symbol of the divine order, but to an allegory of the mind of man with its rage for an order superior to that of nature. It amounts to thumbing their nose at You Know Who.[25]

Another significant parallel is Brian Aldiss' argument in his history of science fiction, *Billion Year Spree*, that the archetype and progenitor of science fiction is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*:

If God did not have personal charge of creation, then might not man control it? In Shelley's wife's hands, the scientist takes on the role of creator. The concept of Frankenstein rests on the quasi-evolutionary idea that God is remote or absent from creation; man is therefore free to create his own sub-life… God – however often called upon – is an absentee landlord, and his tenants scheme to take over the premises.[26]

From this tale of man taking over the role of creator, argues Aldiss, sprang the whole science fiction genre – a genre which seeks to do precisely that. In these last two examples the cosmological and ontological reference is plain. We may make a further observation: in these particular examples the reference involves and is rooted in a particular stance towards the idea of a sovereign creator God, considered as part of any conceivable reality whatsoever.[27]

Such non-realistic writing, then, is capable of implying a definite ontological stance. It is the privilege – the Christian would say the gift – of the artist to create a new world that either does or does not include God. So Vonnegut, an absurdist, creates an absurd universe where God is unhelpful or absent; so Robbe-Grillet's *Last Year in Marienbad*, if it can be seen as presenting a fictional universe at all, presents one without a sovereign God guaranteeing its coherence, its categories and the possibility of absolute truth; and Sartre illustrates his conception of the fantastic by improvising an example of this kind:

I sit down in a cafe. I order a light coffee, the waiter makes me repeat my order three times, and repeats it himself in order to avoid any chance of a mistake. He rushes off, transmits my order to a second waiter, who scribbles it in a notebook and transmits it to a third. Finally a fourth waiter appears and says: 'Here you are', setting an inkwell down on my table. 'But', I say, 'I ordered a light coffee'. 'And here you are', he says as he walks away… If we have been able to give the reader the impression that we are speaking to him of a world in which these preposterous manifestations figure as normal behaviour, then he will find himself plunged at one fell swoop into the heart of the fantastic.[28]

'Preposterous'; and yet Sartre as an existentialist declares the absence of absolute laws that could guarantee reality. In each of these cases the fictional universe created is not of a particularly realistic mode, and yet the author's worldview tends to be reflected in the kind of story he chooses to tell. The same reflection is also evident in the two great comic fantasists of recent years, Douglas Adams and Terry Pratchett; both have expressed a dislike of Christian faith, and both have created fantasy worlds in which God, or

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the gods, though they exist, are manifest absurdities.

It need not be so: Lewis might, perhaps, have written the above example from Sartre – and yet the kind of fantasy he actually did write leaves room for the bizarre and miraculous but is clearly within the providence of God; the bizarre is the miraculous rather than the arbitrary. This reflection seems to be a common phenomenon, and the Christian writer will be no exception. Indeed, because he loves the presence of God, he may feel uneasy at the use of the God-given imagination to create a surrealistic universe that neither contains nor reflects Him, since He is the determinant of all possible realities. And since to be a Christian is not merely to hold a belief but also to engage in a love-relationship with God, the notion of a universe from which God has been removed is not merely the fanciful reversal of a proposition, it is the notion of bereavement. Therefore, a Christian devoted to the sovereign God of Love revealed in the Bible is unlikely to choose to create a fantasy-world ruled by the distant dreamer-God of Lord Dunsany, the whimsical deity, slightly taken aback, who visits the world of T.F. Powys' *Mr Weston's Good Wine*, or the schizoid and sometimes sadistic 'divine-diabolic' First Cause of J.C. Powys' *A Glastonbury Romance*. These are poor substitutes, false Gods. The God he will wish to portray, even in a fantasy, will probably be the God he worships in reality.[29]

So it is that when Tolkien, a committed Christian, elaborates a theory of fantasy, his concept of 'sub-creation' is determined by the notion of a Creator:

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.[30]

The same idea emerges in the semi-autobiographical piece *Leaf by Niggle*, where the artist Niggle discovers, growing, the imaginary tree he has planted:

'It's a gift!' he said. He was referring to his art, and also to the result; but he was using the word quite literally.[31]

These remarks stand in sharp contrast to Barth's remarks, quoted above, where the story-teller uses his art to 're-invent' the world, almost in competition with God. For Tolkien, the dominant idea is one of stewardship of the gift God has given: a gift to be used, not for oneself, but for God. Christ is Lord of all; and therefore, to the Christian, aesthetics too is not autonomous but under His sway, and glorifies Him by the very act of fulfilling its created function. And one aspect of its position under the Lordship of Christ is acknowledging His presence.

In Lewis' *Voyage to Venus*, indeed, the Lady makes it clear that there are certain fantasies she finds inappropriate, that are incompatible with such stewardship:

'It is not from the making a story that I shrink back, O Stranger', she answered, 'but from this one story that you have put into my head. I can make myself stories about my children or the King. I can make it that the fish fly and the land beasts swim. But if I try to make the story about living on the Fixed Land [the one prohibition on Venus] I do not know how to make it about Maleldil [Christ]. For if I make it that He has changed His command, that will not go… But also, I do not see what is the pleasure of trying to make these things.'[32]

The worshipper is unlikely to desire an altered God; so God does not change in the fantasy world. Nor, says Tolkien's Aragorn, do the deepest principles of good and evil:

'I had forgotten that', said Eomer. 'It is hard to be sure of anything among so many marvels. The world is all grown strange. Elf and Dwarf in company walk in our daily fields; and folk speak with the Lady of the Wood and yet live… How shall a man judge what to do in such times?'

'As he has ever judged', said Aragorn. 'Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among Men. It is a man's part to discern them, as much in the Golden Wood as in his own house.'[33]

Because, of course, the deepest principles are bound up with the very nature of God; God actually is Love and Truth.

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It seems, then, that an author's worldview will tend substantially to affect the type of fantasy they choose to tell, in Tolkien and Lewis as much as in Sartre and Vonnegut; and if they believe in God, then God will not be absent from their fantasy merely because it is a fantasy. In practice, as we've seen, Lewis' fantasies declare themselves throughout to be explicitly within the Christian framework, and display different aspects of a cosmic struggle between the Christ of the Bible and the Satan of the Bible; and the paean of worship at the end of *Voyage to Venus* is certainly to no imaginary deity, but to the Christ whom Lewis worshipped in reality. If the author is a committed Christian, then their fantasy will in some measure be 'Christian' too.[34]

(iv) The Christianized Imagination

Some of Tolkien's theoretical statements might seem at variance with these conclusions; and indeed *The Lord of the Rings* was not begun with any apologetic *purpose* in view. It seems from Humphrey Carpenter's biography of Tolkien that the story has its roots in Tolkien's linguistic interests, not theology. Tolkien himself says in the Foreword that his prime motive was the desire of a tale-teller to try his hand at a really long story that would hold the attention of readers, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them or deeply move them.

He proceeds to deny any 'inner meaning' in the book:

As for any inner meaning or 'message', it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical… 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. I think that many confuse 'applicability' with 'allegory'; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author.[35]

But these remarks should not be understood as denying a correlation between the story and the Christian worldview. To begin with, our understanding of this wholesale condemnation of allegory must be qualified by Tolkien's fictional practice in *Leaf by Niggle*. That story concerns a man bundled off, rather unprepared, on a journey through a 'dark tunnel', firstly to a corrective 'Workhouse Infirmary' where he works hard and 'during the first century or so' sorts out his conscience and learns discipline. His moral past is reviewed, and eventually he is sent on to a kind of Paradise, where the imaginary Tree that was his work of art now stands as a real thing. After working creatively there for a while, he is led on by a shepherd into the Mountains – 'What they are really like, and what lies beyond them, only those can say who have climbed them'.[36] It is difficult to see this short story as anything but an allegory of the Catholic view of the afterlife, with purgatory paving the way for heaven.

Be that as it may, it seems that in the Foreword to *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien is using the terms 'inner meaning' and 'allegory' in a very narrow sense; one in which Sauron would actually signify Satan (if the allegory were religious), or the Ring the atomic bomb (if it were political). 'Applicability' in contrast would seem to suggest a more general pattern that occurs in the fictional universe and which may match (can be read as) the shape of the reader's experience in the real world; that is, a correlation of a general kind, owing its shape to Tolkien's worldview and leaving its mark on his imaginative work. Lewis imagines Tolkien being asked why he uses a fantasy setting if he has 'a serious comment to make on the real life of men', and replies for Tolkien: 'Because, I take it, one of the main things that the author wants to say is that the real life of men is of that mythical and heroic quality'.[37] 'Mythical', meaning, presumably, amongst other things, that human life is part of the cosmic struggle between good and evil, in which powers on both sides that we might call 'mythical' are in very truth actively involved. In such a view there is a definite correlation between the fantasy and the author's view of reality. But such a vision, Lewis implies, can be better glimpsed when it is projected onto a fantasy context.

This understanding of *The Lord of the Rings* receives confirmation from Tolkien's essay *On Fairy Stories*. Here Tolkien uses the term Fantasy:

in a sense ... which combines with its older and higher use as an equivalent of Imagination the derived notions of 'unreality' (that is, of unlikeness to the Primary World), of freedom from the

domination of observed 'fact', in short of the fantastic.[38]

This essay is in part written to defend the legitimacy of fantasy against the suggestion that all literature must be in a more realistic mode; hence its primary emphasis is on the value of sub-creation:

That the images are of things not in the Primary World (if that indeed is possible) is a virtue, not a vice. Fantasy (in this sense) is, I think, not a lower but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent.[39]

The goal of such a fantasy is to achieve 'the inner consistency of reality', that is, that 'which commands or induces Secondary Belief'.[40]

But, as Tolkien goes on to say, there is more to it than that. The four major qualities of fairy-stories, he says (using this term, not for children's stories, but for fantasy in general), are 'Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, Consolation'.[41] Two of these are explicitly oriented towards the real world. 'Recovery' is the 'regaining of a clear view ... seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them'.[42]. 'Consolation' is concerned precisely with the patterning of events:

I will call it Eucatastrophe*. The* eucatastrophic *tale is the true form of fairy-tale, and its highest function. The consolation of fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous 'turn' (for there is no true end to any fairy-tale): this joy, which is one of the things which fairy-stories can produce supremely well, is not essentially 'escapist', nor 'fugitive'. In its fairy-tale – or otherworld – setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of* dyscatastrophe*, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is* evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the world, poignant as grief… In such stories when the sudden 'turn' comes we get a piercing glimpse of joy, and heart's desire, that for a moment passes outside the frame, rends indeed the very web of story, and lets a gleam come through.*

In passing beyond the 'very web of story', the impulse of the creative imagination coalesces with the realistic impulse:

Probably every writer making a secondary world, a fantasy, every sub-creator, wishes in some measure to be a real maker, or hopes that he is drawing on reality: hopes that the peculiar quality of this secondary world (if not all the details) are derived from Reality, or are flowing into it. If he indeed achieves a quality that can fairly be described by the dictionary definition: 'inner consistency of reality', it is difficult to conceive how this can be, if the work does not in some way partake of reality.

In other words, the 'consolation' is not just an anodyne, an encouraging opiate. To Tolkien as a Christian, the *eucatastrophe* mirrors, or partakes of, a pattern of true 'consolation' in reality:

*The peculiar quality of the 'joy' in successful Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth. It is not only a 'consolation' for the sorrow of this world, but a satisfaction, and an answer to that question: 'Is it true?' The answer to this question that I gave at first was (quite rightly): 'If you have built your little world well, yes: it is true in that world'. That is enough for the artist (or the artist part of the artist). But in the '*eucatastrophe*' we see in a brief vision that the answer may be greater – it may be a far-off gleam or echo of* evangelium *in the real world.*

As we saw earlier, *eucatastrophe* is a dominant motif in *The Lord of the Rings*: not only for purely formal reasons, but because Tolkien believes in the same pattern within reality. This happy ending is embodied supremely in the *evangelia*, the four Gospels:

But this story has entered History and the primary world; the desire and aspiration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfilment of Creation. The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation.... This story is supreme; and it is true. Art has been verified… Legend and History have met and fused.[43]

Tolkien's position may be summarised in these

terms: because Man is made in the image of his Creator, his own creation of autonomous, non-realistic worlds is entirely valid, and is assisting 'in the effoliation and multiple enrichment of creation'.[44] But if they contain imaginative 'truth', this is at root because they partake of the basic pattern of reality, in which God's purposive 'making' is joyously at work to an ever more glorious end. Tolkien's stories are in the first place *stories*, and not fictionalised apologetics; but the story that takes shape in his Christianized imagination is, he knows, one bearing the Christian pattern. At the end of *Leaf by Niggle*, the Second Voice says of Niggle's 'art' that it is 'very useful indeed… As a holiday, and a refreshment'; but he adds, 'not only for that, for many it is the best introduction to the Mountains', that is, heaven.[45] Tolkien believed that art, just by being itself rather than through overt didacticism, could serve as an 'introduction to the Mountains'.

Accordingly, the practical end result is not far from the position of Lewis. For although Lewis, unlike Tolkien, acknowledged an apologetic purpose, he nevertheless says firmly, 'I've never started from a message or a moral'; his brilliant myth of the Fall, *Voyage to Venus*, began with the mental picture of floating islands. But then again, as he adds, 'It wouldn't have been that particular story if I wasn't interested in those particular ideas on other grounds'.[46] Similarly, he records that the Narnian stories began their creative life as a series of images – 'a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion. At first there wasn't even anything Christian about them; that element pushed itself in of its own accord. It was part of the bubbling.' But slowly the 'author as man, citizen, or Christian' came to shape the initial impulse of the 'author as author'.[47] The story's shape was determined, we may say, by the fact that it arose in a mind with a distinctively Christian cast, rather than an agnostic one. This is similar to Tolkien's account, although Lewis' apologetic tendency was deliberate:

I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood… The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them appear for the first time in their real potency?[48]

(v) Advantages of the Fantasy Mode

Fantasy, then, offers to the Christian novelist a useful form for providentialist fiction. Such an extended departure from realism has at times seemed critically disreputable. And yet the use of a certain stylization, a certain selectivity and re-creation to emphasise and underline aspects of reality that might otherwise be lost in a welter of realistic detail, is part of theoretical approaches as diverse as those of Brecht and Racine. It is possible to say, indeed, that Lewis' and Tolkien's fantasy writings are only extending the basic premise of fiction, that truth or beauty or both may be served by a certain departure from historicity, from mimesis of the real world. In the world they sub-create, the pattern of the *eucatastrophe* (among other things) can be portrayed with clarity.

In this they have some highly respectable precedents. Northrop Frye has described a similar procedure as taking place in some of Shakespeare's comedies. Plays like *As You Like It* and *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, he suggests, present a 'green world' to which the characters withdraw, where the confusion of events is resolved into a pattern of order; matters are clarified when the action is moved into something resembling a fantasy context. The parallel with the function and content of Lewis' Perelandra and Tolkien's Middle-earth becomes clearer still when Frye continues:

The natural society is associated with the things which in the context of the ordinary world seem unnatural, but which are in fact attributes of nature as a miraculous and irresistible reviving power. These associations include dream, magic and chastity or spiritual energy as well as fertility and renewed natural energies.[49]

And although, as Frye remarks elsewhere, 'it is clear that the world of Puck is no world of eternal forms or divine revelation'[50], yet underlying Shakespearean comedy it is possible to see the pattern of events of the Christian mediaeval comic vision. The pattern of resolution is parallel to Tolkien's notion of *eucatastrophe*. That shape of events is amenable to the imagination in both cases because of the influence of the shared faith

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in overruling providence. Within the fantasy or romance context such a shape can be strikingly formulated.

For the contemporary supernaturalistic novelist, such a context offers three important attractions. To start with, it removes one of the major problems of such fiction: and that is that there is a great difference between asserting that God acts in history, and claiming to discern definitely (outside the divinely-interpreted biblical narratives) the precise direction and shape of His acting. Pontification about the exact details in the complex world of reality can be avoided in the fantasy mode; for, while that mode may still provide a kind of model of the providential pattern in the real world, it can embody 'the opposition' in an unquestionable, absolutised evil. This has the added advantage of highlighting the cosmic dimensions of the clash of good and evil, and avoiding the implication that the Lord of the universe is like some tribal deity, useful for paying off scores against one's neighbours or neighbouring states. Such an absolutised evil is embodied in Sauron, the 'dark lord', who reigns over the barren land of Mordor in *The Lord of the Rings*; in the demon-possessed Weston of *Voyage to Venus*; and in the 'macrobes' that 'breathed death on the human race and on all joy' in *That Hideous Strength*.[51] Where such evils are manifested, the pattern of providence, and the relationship of small events to great, becomes clear.

Secondly, by depicting the apocalyptic termination of an age of doubt and uncertainty, fantasy can present a situation where the hidden forces behind events are revealed. This is true both of *That Hideous Strength*, where the link between university politics and spiritual warfare is made manifest, and of *The Lord of the Rings*, where Aragorn remarks,

'Strider' I am to one fat man who lives within a day's march of foes that would freeze his heart, or lay his little town in ruin, if he were not guarded ceaselessly. Yet we would not have it otherwise. If simple folk are free from care and fear, simple they will be, and we must be secret to keep them so… But now the world is changing once again. A new hour comes.[52]

The creation of a time of revelation is a tactic that gives the fantasist an opportunity to present paradigmatic events through which the secret determinants of apparently 'normal' history are set forth.

A further advantage is apparent in fantasy on the grand scale, such as *The Lord of the Rings*, dealing with events over several centuries: 'pseudo history', as Lewis calls it.[53] A problem with fictional presentation of the doctrine of providence is that the patterns may be too large or complex for human vision; Milton, for example, needs to take his readers beyond the world and beyond the dawn of history to make the pattern clear when he attempts to justify the ways of God to men. But patterns that may be hard to perceive within a small focus may be clarified as the scope becomes broader, as a larger structure of events is revealed – or created. This is a technique employed by anti-Christian writers as well: Stapledon's *Last and First Men* implies that God is not involved in human suffering as it invents fiction after fiction of civilisations crumbling into agony and cruelty after being, perhaps, within striking distance of stepping forward instead. The suggestion is thereby made that if there is a deity in the universe He regards all events with an unemotional aesthetic detachment: He is Joyce's God, outside His handiwork, paring His fingernails. Whether in Stapledon or in Tolkien, the non-realistic mode of pseudo-history enables the author to enforce his pattern by the construction of a large number of instances. If not an accumulation of 'evidence', it is at least an accumulation of experiences containing a similar shape.

Within the bounds of the text itself, nothing is 'proven'. A hypothesis is offered, a shape in the flux of events: the reader mayor may not make the correlation with the real world and begin to think. 'Yes, maybe things are like that in reality'. In this sense, as Lewis says, fantasy offers a 'baptism of the imagination'; of the imagination, not the reason, in the first place. Lewis writes of his first encounter with George Macdonald's *Phantastes*,

I did not yet know (and I was long in learning) the name of the new quality, the bright shadow, that rested on the travels of Anodos. I do now. It was Holiness… That night my imagination was, in a certain sense, baptised; the rest of me, not

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unnaturally, took longer. I had not the faintest notion of what I had let myself in for by buying Phantastes.[54]

What it actually did to me was to convert, even to baptise ... my imagination. It did nothing to my intellect nor (at that time) to my conscience. Their turn came far later with the help of many other books and men.[55]

Elsewhere he gives the example of stories that 'turn' on fulfilled prophecies, such as that of Oedipus, or Tolkien's *The Hobbit*:

In most of them the very steps taken to prevent the fulfilment of the prophecy actually bring it about… Such stories produce (at least in me) a feeling of awe, coupled with a certain sort of bewilderment… We have just had set before our imagination something that has always baffled the intellect: we have seen *how destiny and free will can be combined, even how free will is the* modus operandi *of destiny. The story does what no theorem can quite do. It may not be 'like real life' in the superficial sense: but it sets before us an image of what reality may well be like at some more central region.*[56]

The weapons of such writing are not those of neatly-marshalled polemical arguments. A 'baptism of the imagination' is achieved by imaginative and verbal power. And then, if in his imaginary world the novelist can 'make you see', as Conrad says, he will give his reader the option of seeing the real world too in a providential shape.

(vi) The Return Towards Reality

It should perhaps be made plain, as a final comment on the Christian fantasy mode, that this is not a matter of siding with what 'ought to be' rather than what 'is' – a subject of some concern to writers in the novel tradition. Defoe makes Moll Flanders declare, 'I am giving an account of what was, not of what ought or ought not to be'[57]; Hardy in the Preface to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* declares his intention to write what is rather than what should be. And in the general flight from didacticism that has taken place in criticism over the last century or so, the point has been accepted.

Actually, one would have thought there was scope for a Christian challenge to this particular dogma. The preference for what is over what ought to be is not exactly self-evident as an aesthetic principle, and could conveniently be labelled reactionary by a Christian, whose loyalty, as a 'cosmic radical'(!), is to the order of the new heavens and new earth. (Or, for similar reasons, by a Marxist.) The Christian is *engagé*, radically dissatisfied with the alienated world as it is. Tolkien states that the Escape of Fantasy is the Escape of the Prisoner, not the Flight of the Deserter.[58] The idea behind this statement is not entirely foreign to Camus' notion of the novelist as rebel, where art is

a demand for unity and a rejection of the world. But it rejects the world on account of what it lacks and in the name of what it sometimes can be… In every rebellion is to be found the metaphysical demand for unity, the impossibility of capturing it and the construction of a substitute universe. Rebellion from this point of view is a fabricator of universes. This also defines art.[59]

In one sense the Christian is a rebel of this kind. But the difference is that he is not faced with the 'impossibility of capturing' the vision; he does not merely rebel against brokenness and evil in the name of what ought to be or even 'sometimes can be'. Rather, the Christian's loyalty is to a *reality* that existed before the Fall, that is still partially visible as the hallmark of the Creator, that will finally triumph at the Second Coming, and that now erupts into history (albeit incompletely) as the kingdom of God. When Lewis or Tolkien set about being (in Camus' terms) 'fabricators of universes', their work bears a clear relationship to this reality: in the Malacandra of *Out of the Silent Planet* or the Perelandra of *Voyage to Venus*, where the loss of paradise through a Fall is stated explicitly as a possibility; in *The Silmarillion*, which clearly relates the brokenness of the world to the Fall(s) it describes; in the close of *That Hideous Strength*, when the powers of heaven come down into this world and so the 'ancient unities' are partially restored.[60] These Christian 'sub-creations' serve not only as Escape, as rebellion, but as Consolation and Recovery; evoking a homesickness and desire [61] for the lost (but partially recoverable, and one day returning) order, and revealing a world that includes providence and *eucatastrophe*, as a challenge to

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faith. Such a dialectic is not merely idealistic but fundamentally concerned with reality:

'Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth'
(desirable, incompletely manifested)
'as it is in heaven'
(an order already in existence; that which is, not 'ought to be')

Nor is this 'Recovery' restricted to the area of providential causality in events; rather, says Tolkien, it involves in general 'seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them.'[62] It is interesting that where the arch-realist Flaubert writes: 'Don't you think that this unworthy reality ... doesn't turn my stomach also? If you knew me better, you would know that I execrate ordinary life'[63], the Christian fantasist Tolkien desires that

We should meet the centaur and the dragon, and then perhaps suddenly behold, like the ancient shepherds, sheep and dogs and horses – and wolves.[64]

He and Lewis write fictions marked by a delight in created reality rather than a hatred of it. Lewis argues that only the person who can see nature from outside can see her as she is:

You must go a little away from her, and then turn round. And look back. Then at last the true landscape will become visible… Come out, look back, and then you will see ... this astonishing cataract of bears, babies, and bananas: this immoderate deluge of atoms, orchids, oranges, cancers, canaries, fleas, gases, tornadoes and toads [65]

That hungry delight in created reality, that love of the particular, reappears continuously in Lewis' work:

...a serious, yet gleeful, determination to rub one's nose in the very quiddity of each thing, to rejoice in its being (so magnificently) what it was.[66]

I felt as if I had suddenly been banished from the real, bright, concrete, and prodigally complex universe into some sort of second-rate universe that had all been put together on the cheap; by an imitator.[67]

Indeed, in a way I was drunk; drunk with the sheer delight of being back in the real world.... There was real sunlight falling on a panel. That panel needed repainting; but I could have gone down on my knees and kissed its very shabbiness – the precious real, solid thing it was.[68]

For such a fantasist, the goal of fantasy is that the 'excursion into the preposterous sends us back with renewed pleasure to the actual'[69]:

Fantasy is made out of the Primary World, but a good craftsman loves his material, and has a knowledge and feeling for clay, stone and wood which only the art of making can give. By the forging of Gram cold iron was revealed; by the making of Pegasus horses were ennobled; in the Trees of the Sun and Moon root and stock, flower and fruit are manifested in glory… It was in fairy-stories that I first divined the potency of the words, and the wonder of the things, such as stone, and wood, and iron; tree and grass; house and fire; bread and wine.[70]

And for some readers at least, Tolkien has passed on the vision: Clyde Kilby writes of *The Lord of the Rings*,

Again, the Rings *joins the high art of the world in revealing the significance, even the glory, of the ordinary.... No book published in recent times creates a more poignant feeling for the essential quality of many outdoor and indoor experiences – of flowing streams and the feel and taste of water, of food when one is desperately hungry, of a pipe and complete relaxation, of being safely shut-in from hurtful forces at the door, of light in dark places, of the coming of dawn, or of the quiet strength of song and legend. After reading the* Rings *one sees and feels more deeply.*[71]

This aspect of the work of Lewis and Tolkien has not been discussed in detail in the preceding chapters, which were explicitly concerned with the issue of providentialism. But this discussion of the relation between their fantasy worlds and the Christian perception of reality would not be complete without a recognition of this paradoxical but entirely logical connection between providentialism and the delight in particular reality. For it is precisely because God is the Creator of every individual item in the universe, and because He is intimately *involved* in His universe, that every particular is of infinite significance, the

masterpiece of the master craftsman.

Lewis and Tolkien seek – among other things – to give us back the real world we have lost by taking us briefly outside it; by showing us a paradigm of an imaginary, sub-created world that is upheld and irradiated by the providential workings of God; as ours too could turn out to be, if we wish to see it. This is not their fantasies' sole *raison d'être*: both authors are in the first place simply telling a tale. But it remains a key part of what they are doing, a part that marks them out as distinctively Christian fantasies.

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[1] W.R. Irwin. *The Game of the Impossible* (Illinois,1976), p.9.
[2] C.N. Manlove, *Modern Fantasy* (1975), p.3.
[3] Irwin, *op.cit.*, p.160.
[4] Within certain significant limits, of course: particularly, what the author feels their audience will be able to accept; what they conceive of as the formal possibilities of their chosen genre; and the extent to which they choose to reveal and express their own attitudes and beliefs.
[5] Quoted Damian Grant, *Realism* (1970), p.17.
[6] Raymond M. Olderman, *Beyond the Waste Land* (New Haven,1972), p.24.
[7] Robert Scholes, 'The Roots of Science Fiction'. in *Science Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Mark Rose (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey,1976). It is worth noting that Brecht's dramatic practice represented a similar approach, with its concept of 'estrangement': 'A representation which estranges is one which allows us to recognise its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar.' *Short Organum for the Theatre*, quoted by Darko Suvin, 'On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre', in Rose, *ibid.*, p.60.
[8] C.S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds* (New York, 1966), p.18.
[9] Darko Suvin, in Rose, *op.cit.*, p.60.
[10] Brian Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree* (1973), p.137.
[11] Cf. C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961), p.65.
[12] Mark Rose compares the space warp in science fiction to the magic of mediaeval romance, but then argues that the distinctiveness of science fiction is its insistence on scientific laws, placing Lewis Carroll's use of the marvellous as fictional hypothesis in passing: 'Let us note now, however, that in the old romances, as in modern fantasy, no explanations are required for the introduction of marvels: knights simply encounter magicians as little girls fall down rabbit holes without authorial apologies. In such worlds the marvellous is normal' (Rose, *op.cit.*, p.5).
[13] Quoted Kenneth Graham, *English Criticism of the Novel 1865-1900* (1965), p.66.
[14] Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, p.66. Lewis continues, significantly, 'To question the postulate itself would show a misunderstanding; like asking why trumps should be trumps.' This is true. But it should be noted that Lewis was writing polemically against the notion that 'truth to life' had 'a claim on literature that overrides all other considerations', because he felt that the 'dominant taste at present demands realism of content' (p.60). As a fantasist, taking a 'postulate' that was non-realistic, Lewis felt excluded by this 'dominant taste'. That has now changed completely, and the point now needs to be made that it is valid to ask, 'Is this a kind of literature that claims no correlation between itself and reality? Or does it (even as fantasy) imply a claim to verisimilitude, to be, in some sense, "true to life" (for example in its implied ethics or its cynicism)? And if such claims are implied are they justified?' And if we are concerned with the relations of literature and culture we may ask, 'Is this literature *read* as being in some sense "true to life", and is such a reading justified?' The question of truth to reality still arises, although it is not strictly an aesthetic criterion.
[15] Quoted in Graham, p.68.
[16] *Ibid*, p.85.
[17] Lewis, *ibid*, pp.57-59.
[18] Stanislaw Lem, 'The Time-Travel Story and Related Matters of SF Structuring', in Rose, *op.cit.*, p.85.
[19] C.S. Lewis, *Voyage to Venus* (1943; Pan edition of 1953), p.13.
[20] It is interesting that Tolkien, hardly a structuralist, should at one point choose to describe the writing of fantasy in terms of linguistic rearrangement: '...Fantasy, this sub-creative art which plays strange tricks with the world and all that is in it, combining nouns and

redistributing adjectives...' (*On Fairy-Stories*, reprinted in *The Tolkien Reader* (New York,1966), p.53.)

[21] Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form and Function* (New York,1953; Harper edition of 1961), p.3.

[22] When this occurs in a work of realism, the implication is that the absent elements are of no great significance in reality itself. So wide-ranging an implication does not exist where a work ignores a particular aspect of the world for its own special purposes: it is not in the least surprising that there are hardly any women in Conrad's *Typhoon*. The implication there is that women might well be absent from, and, if so, might be of no great significance to a ship in a typhoon. The absence of God from the narrative suggests a comparable implication: but thereby a worldview is directly expressed.

[23] For example, many science fiction writers have tried their hand at rewriting the early chapters of Genesis: eg Isaac Asimov's 'The Last Question', in his anthology *Nine Tomorrows*, and Eric Frank Russell's 'Sole Solution' in *The Penguin Science Fiction Omnibus* (which also contains Arthur C.Clarke's creation apocalypse story, 'Before Eden', and John Brunner's rewriting of the Flood, 'The Windows of Heaven'). Vonnegut gives an absurdist parody of Genesis 1 in *Cat's Cradle*. Of the Christian fantasists, Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* and *Voyage to Venus* deal with the Fall; and their friend Charles Williams handles the naming of the beasts (Genesis 2) in *The Place of the Lion*.

[24] Quoted Robert Scholes, *The Fabulators* (New York,1967), p.106.

[25] Scholes, *ibid*., pp.106-107. The last phrase is from the end of Vonnegut's *Cat’s Cradle*. Vonnegut may be considered both as an absurdist fabulator and as a writer of science fiction.

[26] Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree*, p.26.

[27] Another interesting example is the hatred towards God that seems evident in Harlan Ellison’s fiction; made explicit in the Nebula-winning ‘The Deathbird’, for example, and implicit, one suspects, in the Hugo-winning ‘I Have No Mouth But I Must Scream.’

[28] Quoted Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic*, trans. Richard Howard (Cleveland,1973), p.174.

[29] However, it is worth pointing out that Lewis makes use of the classical mythology, reworked slightly to fit in with the Christian cosmos, as a strategy to circumvent scepticism in the reader: he also writes, 'Paganism is the religion of poetry, through which the author can express, at any moment, just so much or so little of his real religion as his art requires' (quoted Gunnar Urang, 'Tolkien's Fantasy: the Phenomenology of Hope', in *Shadows of Imagination*, ed. Mark R.Hillegas (Southern Illinois,1969), p.106.) (We noted above that the reflection of the worldview in the fictional hypothesis may be limited by factors such as audience expectations, and this may serve as an example.) It might be said, however, that the move into ‘paganism’ involved in the ’distancing’ of Tolkien’s God from the lives of His creatures, in *The Lord of the Rings* and still more in *The Silmarillion*, tends to result in a sense of hopelessness and abandonment, and hence in *The Silmarillion* at least of pervasive sorrow.

[30] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, p.55.

[31] Tolkien, *Leaf by Niggle*, in *The Tolkien Reader*, p.104.

[32] Lewis, *Voyage to Venus*, p.102.

[33] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55), pp.427-28. Unless otherwise indicated all references are to the one-volume Harper Collins paperback edition of 1995, henceforth referred to as *TLOTR*.

[34] Cf. Humphrey Carpenter in the ‘standard’ biography of Tolkien: ‘Tolkien cast his mythology in this form because he wanted it to be remote and strange, and yet at the same time *not to be a lie*. He wanted the mythological and legendary stories to express his own moral view of the universe; and as a Christian he could not place this view in a cosmos without the God that he worshipped.’ (*J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography* (1977), p.91.)

[35] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, pp.xvi-xvii.

[36] *Leaf by Niggle*, p.110.

[37] Quoted Gunnar Urang, *Shadows of Heaven* (1971), p.134.

[38] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, p.47.

[39] *Ibid*.

[40] *Ibid*.

[41] *Ibid*, p.46.

[42] *Ibid*, p.57.

[43] These quotations are from *ibid*, pp.68-72.

[44] *Ibid*, p.73.

[45] Tolkien, *Leaf by Niggle*, p.112.

[46] Lewis, *Of Other Worlds*, pp.87-88.

[47] *Ibid*, pp.35-36. Cf. Tolkien's reference, cited above, to 'the artist part of the artist'.

[48] *Ibid*, p.37.

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[49] Northrop Frye. *A Natural Perspective* (New York.1963), pp.142-143.
[50] Northrop Frye. 'The Argument of Comedy', in *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Leonard F. Dean (New York.1967), p.87.
[51] Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (1945; revised edition of 1955, published by Pan), p.163.
[52] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, p.242.
[53] Lewis, *Of Other Worlds*, pp.65-66.
[54] C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (1955; Fontana edition of 1959), pp.145-146.
[55] C.S. Lewis, Introduction to *George Macdonald: an Anthology* (New York,1947), p.21.
[56] Lewis, *Of Other Worlds*, p.15.
[57] The example is Dorothy Van Ghent's, *op.cit.*, p.171.
[58] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, p.60.
[59] Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (1951), trans. Anthony Bower (1953; Peregrine edition of 1962), pp.219, 221.
[60] C.S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, pp.158-159, 248.
[61] 'Desire' is a crucial concept to C.S. Lewis. On various occasions, and especially in *Surprised by Joy* and *The Pilgrim's Regress*, he suggests that all desire honestly pursued finally points towards God; nothing less will finally prove satisfying. To describe this desire, he invokes the images of fantasy: 'Do you think I am trying to weave a spell? Perhaps I am; but remember your fairy tales. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us for nearly a hundred years.' *(Screwtape Proposes a Toast* (1965), p.98.) The demon Screwtape complains that 'the incalculable winds of fantasy and music and poetry' are continually undoing his work of 'unravelling their souls from Heaven and building up a firm attachment to the earth' (*The Screwtape Letters* (1942; Fount edition of 1977), p.144.) Stories, Lewis suggests, can come as close to capturing the object of desire as is possible in this life (*Of Other Worlds*, pp.20-21.) 'The poets and the mythologies' suggest the impossible, 'to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it… That is why the poets tell us such lovely falsehoods. They talk as if the west wind could really sweep into a human soul; but it can't… Or not yet. For if we take the imagery of Scripture seriously, if we believe that God will one day *give* us the Morning Star and cause us to *put on* the splendour of the sun, then we may surmise that both the ancient myths and the modern poetry, so false as history, may be very near the truth as prophecy.' *(Screwtape Proposes a Toast*, pp.106-107.) What the myths express will finally be manifested in reality. It is noticeable that Lewis' own fantasies make use of precisely the images he invokes here: in *Voyage to Venus*, Ransom actually 'passes into' Venus, the 'Morning Star'; in *Till We Have Faces*, a human being is united with the god of the west wind. Lewis' fantasies are in part evoking that saving 'desire' for what will finally be manifested in the 'kingdom of heaven'.
[62] Tolkien. *On Fairy-Stories*, p.57.
[63] Quoted Grant, *op.cit*., p.59.
[64] Tolkien, *ibid*.
[65] Lewis, *Miracles* (1947; Fontana edition of 1960), p.70. The immediate context of the remark is setting the naturalistic vision against that of a supernaturalistic universe, rather than discussing fantasy.
[66] Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, p.160. It is not at all coincidental that Lewis' words here resemble the delight in the unique 'inscapes' of Creation that delighted his fellow-Christian Hopkins.
[67] Lewis, *Of Other Worlds*, pp.100-101.
[68] *Ibid*, p.105.
[69] *Ibid*, p.15.
[70] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, p.59.
[71] Clyde Kilby. 'Meaning in *The Lord of the Rings*', in Hillegas, *op.cit*., pp.73-74.

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