



THE USE OF THE VERTICAL PLANE TO INDICATE HOLINESS IN C.S. LEWIS'S SPACE TRILOGY

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IN C.S. LEWIS'S SPACE TRILOGY, Cambridge philologist Elwin Ransom travels to Malacandra (Mars) in *Out of the Silent Planet*, Perelandra (Venus) in *Perelandra*, and serves as an agent of heaven on Thulcandra (Earth) in *That Hideous Strength*. Each planet's geographical features—the striking “perpendicularity” of Malacandra and the waves of the water world Perelandra—are at first glance very different. Michael Ward explains Malacandra's “perpendicularity” as “phallic imagery,” emphasizing the archetypal masculinity of Mars, the Roman god of war (80-81). The waves of Perelandra are described in the book as a metaphor for relinquishing one's control and submitting to the will of Maleldil (God), and Sanford Schwartz explains this as an inversion of Platonic Being vs. Becoming (15). Useful as these insights are for the individual novels, they are presented as applicable only in the context of the novel in which they are found. I would like to suggest that all three books in the trilogy share *Out of the Silent Planet's* emphasis on verticality and *Perelandra's* use of the wave to indicate holy space. In each book, Lewis uses a number of vertical images, both spatial and social, to depict the vertical plane as well as one common image, the wave, to illustrate the spiritual state of each planet. First, I will demonstrate how positive (upward pointing) verticality and defiance of gravity indicates the acceptance of Maleldil and negative (downward pointing) verticality or submission to gravity indicates refusal of him throughout the trilogy. Then I will show how Lewis uses wave and water as a common example of verticality throughout the trilogy to indicate holiness and willing submission to Maleldil.

In order to demonstrate the spiritual significance of weightlessness and the inclination to rise or reach toward the heavens, resisting gravity, I must start with Ransom's initial experience with space in the trilogy's first volume. In *Out of the Silent Planet*, Lewis corrects the notion of space as a “barren” void, “an abyss of death” ([OSP] 34, 145), with images of the ocean and fertility explicitly linked to a “spiritual cause for [Ransom's] progressive lightening and exultation of heart” (OSP 34). The protagonist, Ransom, is kidnapped by physicist Edward Weston and opportunist Dick Devine and

taken to Malacandra as a sacrifice. When Ransom learns he is in space, he initially panics, but soon he is comforted by the feeling that “the very name ‘Space’ seemed a blasphemous libel for this empyrean ocean of radiance in which they swam” (OSP 34). He spends his time “basking,” “totally immersed in a bath of pure ethereal colour” (OSP 34). What once seemed to him a “black, cold vacuity, the utter deadness [that] separated the worlds” he begins to think of as an “ocean” or “womb” from which “the worlds and all life had come” (OSP 34). Ransom, apparently unafraid of the ocean, finds comfort in this metaphor. He decides the “[o]lder thinkers had been wiser when they named it simply the heavens” (OSP 34). Adrift in the heavens, Ransom is anchored only by the slight gravitational pull of the spacecraft. In his return trip to Earth, Ransom would do away with the ship itself, for “[t]o be let out, to be free, to dissolve into the ocean of eternal noon, seemed to him at certain moments a consummation even more desirable than their return to Earth” (OSP 145). Before Ransom’s adventures on Malacandra, in which he experiences a great spiritual growth, and after them, Ransom feels more alive and spiritual than ever in this “ocean” that is the heavens, buoyed up away from gravity as if on a wave.

“Falling out of the heaven, into a world” marks the change in imagery from oceanic and drifting, in which Ransom felt spiritual peace, to vertical and anchored, in which creation seems to long and reach for heaven where gravity is not a factor and spiritual consummation is achieved (OSP 41). As the spaceship approaches Malacandra, Ransom experiences “disturbing sensations” which turn out to be the “weight[ing] of his limbs” (OSP 39). The planet’s gravitational pull draws them out of heaven down, in a vertical line, to its surface. Once he gets his bearings, Ransom observes “the same theme of perpendicularity—the same rush to the sky” in hills, waves, trees, and the first natives he encounters, the *sorns* (OSP 49). He concludes correctly that “he must be on a world lighter than the Earth, where less strength was needed and nature was set free to follow her skyward impulse on a superterrestrial scale” (OSP 49). Ransom’s personification of nature suggests that all of creation, sentient and non-sentient, organic and inorganic alike, is willfully and actively reaching for the heavens, “the womb of the worlds,” from which it was born (OSP 34). Kath Filmer points out that Ransom’s first sight of Malacandrian trees suggests “a clump of organ-pipes,” and he describes the flowers on Meldilorn, the seat of Oyarsa, Malacandra’s tutelary spirit, as “taller than a cathedral spire on earth” (188). Filmer concludes that this imagery contributes to Ransom’s “encounter [with] the numinous, a sense [also] conveyed to the reader,” an effect carefully created by Lewis (188). This awareness of the supernatural suggested by the various features of Malacandra is confirmed by the inhabitants’ clear spiritual belief in a creator called Maleldil the Young who

appointed the Oyarsa to rule the *hnuu*, the sentient beings of Malacandra, and who can be found at Meldilorn, the spiritual center of the planet where grow the flowers “taller than a cathedral spire” (OSP 105) that reach for heaven.

Despite the seemingly universal impulse of all things Malacandrian to ascend, to soar upward and away from the planet’s surface, Ransom learns during his stay on the planet that in Malacandra’s past lie unfortunate experiences with forces which compelled descent. A curiosity of the Malacandrian vocabulary is the term “bent” in place of bad (OSP 68). As Bettie Jo Knight explains in her dissertation “*bent* as the term for evil suggests Augustine’s (and Luther’s) use of the word *curvatus* with reference to the sin that moves man to turn from God [...] toward the world” (141). One can imagine something on Malacandra that initially points upward bending to become something that points downward, a clear revocation of heaven. Hyoi, Ransom’s guide to Malacandrian society, has only heard stories of a few “bent” *hrossa* (one of three sentient species on the planet), and he has difficulty comprehending the existence of a sinful creature. But when Ransom finally becomes acquainted with a *sorn*, Augray, he learns that “the real surface of the planet” is far above the current surface and has become uninhabitable. Malacandrians of the past were less subject to gravity, flying above rather than walking upon the *handra* (OSP 100). Malacandra’s Oyarsa eventually explains that Earth’s past Oyarsa, who is now known as the Bent One, “brought the cold death to [Malacandra] before its time” (OSP 120), causing the Malacandrians to retreat to the planet’s lower climes. The features and inhabitants of the planet who naturally reach toward the heavens were driven, down the vertical plane, away from them. No longer do Malacandrians soar on high, defying gravity as one does in the heavens. Instead—and though in their great height they strain away from it—they are bound to the *handra*, or earth, as the Bent One was “[driven] back out of the heavens and bound [...] in the air of [Thulcandra]” (OSP 120). Malacandra may not have fallen itself, but it has been affected by the fall of the Bent Oyarsa of Thulcandra, the Silent Planet.

Perelandra, where Ransom travels in the trilogy’s second novel of the same name, also exhibits a geographic perpendicularity like Malacandra’s that points upward along the vertical plane toward the divine. It is a world of ocean and floating islands, signifying the higher spiritual state of the planet’s inhabitants which I will discuss later in more detail. There is, however, a little “fixed land” on Perelandra, and on these lands are cliffs or mountains which point to the heavens. When Ransom arrives on Perelandra “there was no land in sight,” and he is surrounded by sweet, golden water (Lewis, *Perelandra* 32). After several minutes lightning flashes, and “he saw the waste of waves spread illimitably” but for “a single smooth column of ghastly green standing up, the one thing fixed and vertical in this universe of shifting slopes” (*Perelandra* 33-

4). Near the story's end, Ransom discovers more fixed land. He has chased the Un-Man, the possessed body of the physicist Weston from *Out of the Silent Planet*, across the seas of Perelandra. Ransom defeats the possessed scientist in a cave entered underwater, then climbs up through caverns to the surface, a sort of emergence from the underworld. There he finds himself in a valley where, "on the opposite side [...] the earth leaped up in great sweeps and folds of almost Himalayan height" (*Perelandra* 160). From the brightness of their color and the "needle-like sharpness of their spires," Ransom concludes these Perelandran mountains, as high as the largest of Earth's mountains, "might, geologically speaking, be in their infancy" (*Perelandra* 160). After he has recovered from his battle with the Un-Man, Ransom climbs "the great mountain" where he meets the Oyéresu of Malacandra and Perelandra for the crowning of the King and Queen of Perelandra (*Perelandra* 164). Like Malacandra, Perelandra has geographic features which draw one's eyes toward Deep Heaven, the realm of weightlessness and spiritual fulfillment. However, these efforts of creation to indicate its Creator in *Perelandra* are complicated by Maleldil's law against its inhabitants sleeping on the Fixed Land.

Although the Fixed Land on Perelandra is forbidden, it is not inherently bad. Soon after Ransom has discovered the bounty of the floating islands, he meets the Green Lady, Perelandra's queen. The Green Lady is a second Eve on unfallen Perelandra, one of only two inhabitants on the whole planet. He quickly learns that Maleldil has forbidden the Green Lady (and her absent husband) from staying the night on it, just as Eve was forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Green Lady goes to the Fixed Land and climbs atop the cliff to search for her husband, but she is clearly uneasy at even being on it. Just after this episode, Weston arrives as the Un-Man, and promptly devotes all his time to persuading the Green Lady to sleep on the Fixed Land. The Un-Man's initial effort is to convince her that the prohibition against the Fixed Land is not one that is good like "other commands of His—to love, to sleep, to fill this world with your children" and that other worlds are not prevented in sleeping on their Fixed Lands (*Perelandra* 100). To combat this train of thought, Ransom suggests that this law has nothing to do with universal applicability, nor with our inability to "see the goodness in it," but is made "in order that there might be obedience[, for] where can you taste the joy of obeying unless He bids you do something for which His bidding is the only reason?" (*Perelandra* 101). The quality of the Fixed Land is irrelevant, as is confirmed on the mountain at the end of *Perelandra* when the King reveals it is no longer forbidden (*Perelandra* 181). Until Ransom comes upon this mountainous island, the reader is led to believe the forbidden Fixed Land was the only fixed land on Perelandra. As if to

confirm that fixed land is not bad and no longer prohibited, the Oyéresu and accompanying *eldila* (angels) sanctify the mountaintop with “the Great Dance,” a “literary pageant” reminiscent of those found in Spenser (Downing, *Planets in Peril* 131). The Great Dance sequence “summarizes a great deal of theology in poetic form” which offers a “cosmic picture” of interconnectedness between living things and reconciles free will and obedience (*Planets in Peril* 73-4). As in Malacandra, the vertical images which point skyward, despite being associated with the Fixed Land and with self-reliance (as opposed to obedience and trust), are used for the glory of Maleldil.

Also like *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra* features imagery on the vertical plane which suggests a downward or *bent* direction. Before the Green Lady concludes that Ransom, in whose world all live on fixed land masses, Maleldil must not have prohibited sleeping on the fixed land, she is horrified that he regularly does so. After she understands that there can be and are “different laws in different worlds,” she is no longer horrified but curious (*Perelandra* 64). She asks Ransom first about population figures, then how so many people can fit on the fixed land, and he does his best to satisfy her curiosity. When he tells her of the masses of inhabited land on Thulcandra, she is again horrified: “‘How do you endure it?’ she burst out. ‘Almost half of your world empty and dead. Loads and loads of land, all tied down. Does not the very thought of it crush you?’” (*Perelandra* 64). More than twenty-five percent of the words in this short selection carry connotations of weight, trial, constriction, and pain. In the water, gravity is offset somewhat, simulating the drift of bodies in gravity-free heaven where freedom of body corresponds to freedom of spirit. On every planet, but especially Earth, which is outside of heaven and is bound to the Bent Oyarsa, all is held down, weighted by gravity. The implication is that the worlds most subject to gravity, first Thulcandra, then Malacandra, and followed by *Perelandra*, are also most subject to sin and pride. The Fixed Land on sinless *Perelandra*, though it does point to and reach for the heavens, still feels enormously weighted to the Green Lady who has no desire to assert her independence from her Creator. Once evil, in the form of the Un-Man, has come and gone from *Perelandra*, the Fixed Land apparently loses its potential to put the Lady at risk. While the Un-Man is present, however, even the goodness of the gravity-alleviating waves can be perverted so that it takes on qualities of evil, those of downward movement. The Un-Man pulls Ransom from the back of a fish and “pulled him down into the warm depth, and down farther yet to where it was no longer warm” (*Perelandra* 146). Ransom ends up in an underwater cave, a sort of underworld from which he must climb back up into the light. Innocence is fragile, “breakable,” as Ransom learns in his talks with the Green Lady (*Perelandra* 59). Even in the sinless

world of Perelandra, the possibility of evil, *bent*-ness, a downward-acting force, exists.

Though to a lesser extent than in the preceding installments, *That Hideous Strength* also contains elements of spatial verticality. Unlike in the previous two books, Ransom is not the protagonist, but his home is the center of holy space in the novel. Jane Studdock, the heroine, allies herself with Ransom and spends half the novel in his home on the hill. Having fallen out of love with her husband and being unable to confide in him, Jane takes the advice of her former tutor and initially goes to St. Anne's to tell a Miss Ironwood about her portentous dreams. Once she has stepped off the train, "there was still a climb to be done on foot, for St. Anne's is one of those villages perched on a hilltop" (Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* [THS] 49). She makes her way through the town until she comes to the manor, which is "on the highest ground in all that region" (THS 49). Later in the novel, the house becomes a refuge for Jane, as well as for all the members of the company. Ransom explains they are "all that is left of Logres" (THS 225), the spiritual element of the land that "haunt[s]" "something we may call Britain" (THS 367). Because of its purpose in guiding England away from the corrupting influence of "Britain," the position of the manor at St. Anne's on top of the hill, closer to the heavens than all the surrounding area, is significant. The manor at St. Anne's is the image of goodness manifested on the vertical plane.

Whereas St. Anne's is positioned on a hilltop, the city of Edgestow lies in the valley below. In the course of the novel, this valley becomes blanketed in a fog that creates a dividing line between Ransom's headquarters and the initial target of the National Institute of Coordinated Experiments (N.I.C.E.). Though N.I.C.E.'s headquarters is located at Belbury, Edgestow and its university was its point of origin. Arthur Denniston reminds us that there was not "a single doctrine practiced at Belbury which hadn't been preached by some lecturer at Edgestow" (369). The novel's violent climax ends with an earthquake in Edgestow where the earth opens in a chasm that makes the valley temporarily reach deeper into the earth than it had before. Edgestow's position in relation to St. Anne's reinforces the implication that negative verticality indicates evil forces at work against Maleldil.

Another vertical image in *That Hideous Strength*, the Tower of Babel, is one that at first appears to point upward but truly indicates the earth rather than the heavens. The beginning of this final scene at Belbury is almost immediately recognizable as a sort of "new Babel" (Downing, "Spiritual Wickedness" 61). The members "who habitually abuse language have their powers of speech taken from them," and the banquet descends into chaos ("Spiritual Wickedness" 61). As soon as the curse of Babel takes hold of the N.I.C.E., it becomes clear that the organization was a "new Babel, another

attempt to marshal human resources to clamber up to heaven, or to bring heaven to earth by main force" all along ("Spiritual Wickedness" 61). Rather than a tower that reaches toward Maleldil in acknowledgement and worship like the mountains and trees on Malacandra, Thulcandra's new tower seeks to pull Maleldil down to Earth. In part because its goal is aimed downward toward the Earth, and in part because with the help of the gods through Merlin it crumbles and disperses, the image of the Tower of Babel in *That Hideous Strength* is one that points vertically downward. The N.I.C.E.'s resemblance to the downward-facing inferno and Tower of Babel clearly indicate Belbury's opposition to and rejection of Maleldil.

Other demonstrations of verticality in the trilogy are more social than spatial. Each book shows the social organization of beings extending from earth through heaven demonstrating the hierarchy between Maleldil and his creation. Lewis's is a "Medieval-inspired hierarchical vision" (Hilder 19) where "everyone and everything ha[s] a natural station, ruling over those below, obeying those above" (Downing, *Planets in Peril* 68). Zachary Rhone explains that hierarchy in Lewis has nothing to do with one being of more or less value to Maleldil, but simply gives one a place from which to value their existence (64). Monika B. Hilder also clarifies that the medieval conception of hierarchy Lewis ascribed to is not the dictatorial, "enslav[ing]" hierarchy modern readers imagine (3). While these notions may apply quite well to the *hnau* of Malacandra, the life forms on Perelandra, and the members of Ransom's company, the hierarchy at work in the N.I.C.E. is a bent version in which there is dictatorship and enslavement.

Ransom spends much of his time on Malacandra trying to determine the societal hierarchy of a planet populated with three sentient species before he realizes the hierarchy is not restricted to the planet's surface inhabitants but includes members of the heavens. Ransom queries the *hrossa* at length regarding the *sorns* and *pfifltriggi*, for "it concerned him intensely to find out which was the real master" (OSP 70). He imagines the *hrossa* disguise the truth and that the *sorns*, "the intelligentsia," rule the other species. But when Ransom asks the *sorn* Augray if they rule the *hrossa*, he explains as the *hrossa* did that the Oyarsa rules all the *hnau* (OSP 93-4). Even in Ransom's conversation with a *pfifltrigg* near a depiction of Malacandra's inhabitants "side by side" he learns that the *pfifltriggi* rule themselves, and for their shared work each takes exactly what treasure he would have (OSP 112-4). This is in contrast to miners in Ransom's world who work "because they are given no food if they stop" (OSP 114). When Ransom finally meets Malacandra's Oyarsa and finds he is an *eldil* (but with servant *eldila*), he stops insisting that one of the *hnau* must rule the others. In their conversation, which is an expansion on what he was told by Augray and the *hrossa*, Ransom learns of a more accurate

hierarchy at work on Malacandra—that of Maleldil over Oyarsa over *eldila* over *hnau*. When Weston and Devine reappear and argue senselessly with the Oyarsa, they serve to further flesh out the hierarchy of beings more fully by becoming lower members than even *hnau*. Oyarsa concludes that Thulcandra's bent Oyarsa has bent Weston so that he may continue to do damage. Devine, however, is no more than a dead *hnau* and is broken so that he is more like an animal (*OSP* 137-8). Ransom's initial instinct, that there must be rule and order on Malacandra, is correct, but the hierarchy that establishes this order is one that, guided by Maleldil, reaches up to the heavens rather than one that is restricted to and focused on the *handra*.

The social hierarchy on Perelandra is more limited in scope than on Malacandra because the planet supports only two *hnau*, the Green Lady and her husband the King. While they are the only sentient beings, the water world is also host to a number of beasts, such as the fish upon whose backs Ransom and the Lady ride, the small dragon Ransom initially encounters, and the frogs the Un-Man mutilates. The Green Lady makes the hierarchy of beings on Perelandra absolutely clear when she and Ransom discuss whether or not the forbidden nature of the Fixed Land is a hardship. The Lady explains that, just as the beasts would be happy to do whatever impossible thing she asked of them, so would she joyfully obey Maleldil's command because "[she is] His beast, and all His biddings are joys" (*Perelandra* 65). If Ransom had not assumed this order on Perelandra based on the knowledge of divine hierarchy he gained on Malacandra, he can be sure of it now, for as in the old world, so does the social hierarchy of this young world indicate the heavens.

Both the company at St. Anne's and the N.I.C.E. seem to exhibit upward pointing social hierarchies in *That Hideous Strength*. However, that of St. Anne's is genuine while that of Belbury is inverted. As indicated by the simultaneity of these opposing structures, Thulcandra is at the center of a spiritual war. In the context of Ransom's company, Lewis offers an extension of the discussion of divinely ordained hierarchy found in the descent of the gods. When Ransom calls upon the Oyéresu to enter Merlin's body and make him their instrument against the N.I.C.E., the first gods to descend are those that "were less unlike humanity than the two whom they still awaited," the "mightier energies" (*THS* 322). Mercury, Venus, and Mars, with whom Ransom is most familiar, appear first so that the company may adjust to their presences in order of strength and might. These gods are also "young and ephemeral" when "matched against the lead-like burden of [Saturn's] antiquity" (*THS* 323). Topping even this great presence is Jupiter, "great Glund-Oyarsa [...] known to men in old times as Jove and under that name, by fatal but not inexplicable mistake, confused with his Maker—so little did they dream by how many degrees the stair even of created being rises above him"

(*THS* 323). This description makes it even clearer to the reader that Lewis is establishing a hierarchy of beings, each step of “the stair of created being[s]” revealing greater divinity until ending (or rather beginning) with Maleldil. This model of hierarchy indicated by the company at St. Anne’s enhances the trilogy’s theme of vertical imagery pointing skyward as a way for virtuous forces to recognize and glorify Maleldil.

At N.I.C.E., negative verticality and bent-ness of social hierarchies appears as “the organizational ladder” up which Mark Studdock attempts to ascend (“Spiritual Wickedness” 57). This upward pointing image is inverted so that Mark accomplishes the opposite of what he intends and his efforts are directed toward the earth and away from Maleldil (“Spiritual Wickedness” 62).¹ David C. Downing argues that “Mark’s attempted ascent up the organizational ladder is actually a descent into hell” and “closely parallel[s] Dante’s trek through the *Inferno*” (“Spiritual Wickedness” 57). According to Downing’s argument, Mark’s quest for admittance into the inner ring, first at Bracton College, then at Belbury, leads him to encounters with the members of N.I.C.E. in an order that mirrors the circles of Dante’s hell (“Spiritual Wickedness” 58-60). Mark meets increasingly villainous characters and journeys deeper into hell as the novel develops, but significantly “he stops at the most serious of crimes” and “is spared from the carnage at the end” (“Spiritual Wickedness” 60-1). Trapped in the banquet hall where the members of the N.I.C.E. are being slaughtered, Mark is near the bottom of the inferno and quite far from Maleldil. However, God’s agent, Merlin, tells him “to ‘get up,’” a translation of Virgil’s words to Dante when they escape the inferno (“Spiritual Wickedness” 61). As soon as Mark rises, he begins his route back to Jane and through her to Maleldil and salvation. Mark leaves the bent ladder of Belbury, which actually leads into the inferno, behind and climbs up to St.-Anne’s-on-the-Hill.

In all three volumes of the Ransom Trilogy, C.S. Lewis utilizes images of verticality to reinforce the reader’s impression of which characters, forces, or worlds honor Maleldil and indicate him in their actions and which do not. The ways in which the vertical spatial and social structures indicate either the heavens or the earth vary, but there is one image each book has in common that also indicates holy space and shows how the entire vertical plane can be used to honor Maleldil: the wave.

When critics of C.S. Lewis’s Space Trilogy talk of wave or ocean imagery, they are typically referring to *Perelandra*. Downing explains that “the image of riding with the wave rather than fighting the current” emphasizes

¹ These images in which one approaches power by descending also recall the “Lowerarchy” in Lewis’s *Screwtape Letters*.

“relinquishing control and accepting what is given” (*Planets in Peril* 91). He points out that “the symbolism of the fixed land and the floating islands is the opposite of what [most readers] would have expected” because it runs counter to images in the Bible and Edmund Spenser (*Planets in Peril* 91). Schwartz agrees that “this ‘inversion of Platonism,’” of “present[ing] the prelapsarian order as a state of continuous flux,” is a “dramatic departure from traditional views of earthly paradise” (15). The image of the wave as a symbol of submission to God’s will has been established, but its relationship to the vertical plane as a tool for indicating holiness and its presence throughout the trilogy has not. When one extends one’s view beyond *Perelandra*, one finds that wave and oceanic imagery are found in the other two books, on the other planets, as well.

As already discussed, Lewis’s initial use of oceanic imagery to indicate holy space and willing submission in the trilogy is found in *Out of the Silent Planet*, and not in a world but in Deep Heaven. Soon after he arrives on Malacandra, Ransom finds that the waves in the lakes point skyward, indicating the divine. Not only does Lewis use the wave of the lake to contribute to the feeling of being in the holy space of a cathedral, he uses their destabilizing qualities to chart Ransom’s spiritual growth on the planet. Following his flight from Malacandra’s goblin-like race, the *sorns*, Ransom is taken in by the furry, seal-like *hrossa*. During his initial state of childish fearfulness, Ransom cannot abide the rocking of the boat which ferries him to the *hrossa*’s home. But over time, he learns their way of life and eventually takes part in a ritual hunt on the water which “heightens the joys of life on this side of the grave” (Schwartz 38). Ransom’s success in the ritual, with the help of *hrossa* Hyoi and Whin, allows him at last to feel at “one with them” (*OSP* 81). No longer does he consider them a separate rational species, but that “they [are] all *hnau*” (*OSP* 81). Ransom is finally at ease on the water as well as with fellow souls. It is over the same body of water that Ransom first encounters an *eldil*. The angel instructs him to journey to the Oyarsa at Meldilorn. Ransom does so, and when he arrives there, he finds that Meldilorn is situated in the center of “an almost circular lake—a sapphire twelve miles in diameter” (*OSP* 105). To get to Meldilorn, Ransom finds himself “once more in a boat and with a *hross*” feeling “almost like [he is] coming home” (*OSP* 107). “He [...] leaned back luxuriously in the bows,” finally trusting the water like a Perelandran as he approaches the holiest place on Malacandra, the seat of the planet’s Oyarsa, agent of Maleldil. On Malacandra, the divine is consistently indicated by the presence of water.

Nearly the whole space of Perelandra, a world made almost entirely of water, is a holy one. It is the planetary embodiment of the holiness found in Deep Space. This young world is a new Eden where the King and Queen, the

only inhabitants, walk alongside of and talk with Maleldil. Because this world is unfallen, its holiness remains intact. Though the Fixed Land is neither evil nor inherently bad, its separation from the fluctuating waves of most of the planet's surface puts it at the center of the Queen's spiritual trial. Once Ransom destroys the tempter and reunites with the Queen, her husband, and the Oyéresu of Malacandra and Perelandra on top of a mountain, he learns that the king plans to have his future sons "bend the pillars of the rock [from the Fixed Land] into arches" (*Perelandra* 181) so that they are no longer fixed and rigid, but changed and given the essence of a moving wave. Unlike the bentness of other structures in the trilogy which point toward the ground and away from Maleldil, the stone pillars are made into arches which both support and draw the eye toward heaven. In this instance, the bending of the rock is more comparable to bowing—a willing submission that continues to uplift and acknowledge rather than turn away, corrupt and destroy. Like waves, the rocks both bow toward the earth and point away from it. Through this challenge to the permanence of the stone pillar, the King "will make a great place to the splendour of Maleldil"—in essence, a shrine, a holy place (*Perelandra* 181).

The trilogy's final installment, *That Hideous Strength*, also includes a modest amount of oceanic and wave imagery in conjunction with holy spaces, despite there being no physical ocean in the novel. Jane becomes a part of Ransom's company housed at the manor at St.-Anne's-on-the-Hill. A refuge from the invasion of the city of Edgestow, St. Anne's is situated "on the highest ground in all that region" (*THS* 49). In the course of her second visit to St. Anne's, Jane notices that from her vantage point on top of the hill that the landscape below is obscured by "a sea of white fog" (*THS* 135). This "sea" reflects the holiness of the immediate area where Ransom's company is gathered in anticipation of a spiritual war.

An image of the wave is also shown through Merlin. The newly-risen sorcerer, disinclined to work with the forces of evil brought forth by the N.I.C.E., finds his own way to St. Anne's in search of the Pendragon. He asks Ransom three riddles to ascertain his identity, Ransom responds with three correct answers, and then "[s]lowly, ponderously, yet not awkwardly, as though a mountain sank like a wave, [Merlin] sank on one knee" (*THS* 271), kneeling in the presence of Ransom, who is both Pendragon and Fisher-King, an Arthurian figure whose bodily healing brings healing to the land (Branson 20). The imposing figure he makes on horseback, in a loose way, points toward Maleldil like the crest of a wave, and when he bows as waves sink, he submits to Maleldil's instrument on Earth, Ransom. Merlin's gesture appears as a wave, indicating his acknowledgement of the holy space in which he finds

himself and personifies an image that uses both directions on the vertical plane to honor God.

The final wave in *That Hideous Strength* and the whole trilogy is the “wave of earth [that] rose, arched, trembled, and with all its weight and noise poured down on [Lord Feverstone],” the same Dick Devine who helped kidnap Ransom in *Out of the Silent Planet* (THS 365). This “earth wave” (THS 365) results from an earthquake engendered by the *eldils* who possess Merlin’s body to mete out divine punishment for the N.I.C.E.’s and University’s transgressions (THS 369). The earth first rises toward the heavens and then crashes down, burying Lord Feverstone and forcing him to submit to the will of Maleldil. The earth wave also eliminates the geographic source of the N.I.C.E.’s evil so the space can be remade into a place of holiness in the wake of Logres’s victory. Finally, though Thulcandra has been sanctified only temporarily, Ransom returns to that holiest of worlds, the world most like the “empyrean ocean” (OSP 34) of the heavens, the world of waves—Perelandra.

Though in *Perelandra* Lewis certainly uses the image of the wave to challenge the Christian perception of Being versus Becoming, or fixity versus flux, he also uses it throughout the trilogy as a consistent representation of the vertical plane that indicates holy space and divine presence. While the spire-like mountains of Malacandra, the cliff on the Fixed Land on Perelandra, and the hill upon which sits St. Anne’s Manor indicate the heavens, that holy space to which they point toward is neither straight nor pointed, but flowing and changing like a wave.

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The Mythic Circle is a small literary magazine published annually by the Mythopoeic Society which celebrates the work of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams. These adventuresome writers saw themselves as contributors to a rich imaginative tradition encompassing authors as different as Homer and H.G. Wells. *The Mythic Circle* is on the lookout for original stories and poems. We are also looking for artists interested in illustrating poems and stories.

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