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Some say that great art is simply a reimagining of old art. Many movies put a modern day spin on Shakespeare's tales. Shakespeare retold classical writers like Ovid and Apuleius. Ovid, Apuleius, and other writers of old retold the myths they had heard as children. In *Perelandra*, C.S. Lewis joins this tradition in his reimagining of the Garden of Eden with his references to ancient myth and the Bible.

As an Oxford scholar in the early 20th century, C.S. Lewis was sure to be well versed in the study of Classical literature from the Ancient Romans and Greeks, and this knowledge shows in his writing. As a classicist myself, I really enjoy whenever I read stories that interweave the myths into the narrative. Throughout *Perelandra*, Lewis calls back to one of my favorite myths: the Odyssey. Ransom contemplates the true nature of the Green Lady as "perhaps a more terrible myth, of Circe or Alcina?" (pg 54), conjuring up the story of Odysseus' island enchantress. He also recalls the Sorns of Malacandra as "the original of the Cyclops, a giant in a cave and a shepherd" (pg 45). These small mentions of mythical characters seem to be Lewis' way of pointing us to his inspirations.

Rather than simply mentioning imagery of classic myths, Lewis also uses them to enrich the reader's experience of the story by subverting their traditional understanding. When Ransom wakes after his first night on Perelandra, he sees a tree with yellow fruit and silver leaves and "recognised the garden of the Hesperides at once." (pg 45). Lewis here refers to the mythical garden of the Hesperides, the three nymphs of the evening who guarded a tree of golden apples alongside the dragon Ladon. In fact, Lewis introduces Perelandra's own dragon later in the

chapter, but instead of unattainable apples guarded by a ferocious dragon, Lewis portrays Perelandra's garden as a gentler one for Ransom to explore. Due to the nature of education in the early 20th century, many of Lewis' older readers would probably also be well versed in the Classical myths, meaning these references were not lost on them. In this way, Lewis takes the conventional imagery that many of his readers knew and turns it on its head, adding a layer of novelty to the reader's experience of Perelandra that mirrors Ransom's own. I wonder if the same result could be achieved today in our society's current knowledge of the Classics. While they may not be too relevant to daily life, I personally enjoy the tales of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and sometimes wish others could know these stories as well.

One of my favorite parts of Perelandra was Lewis' explanation of how the gods Malacandra and Perelandra were known, even in part, by the people of Telecandra. After the Oyarsa of Malacandra and Perelandra make themselves visible to Ransom, he asks "how they were known to the old poets of Tellus." (pg 201)

When and from whom had the children of Adam learned that Ares was a man of war and that Aphrodite rose from the sea foam? Earth has been besieged, an enemy-occupied territory, since before history began. The gods have had no commerce there. How then do we know of them? (pg 201)

Ransom here wonders how the images of Malacandra and Perelandra were carried through to the ancient myths, even as hollow reflections of their true nature, if there was no communication between Thulcandra and the rest of the Deep Heaven. The Oyarsas explain that their existence travels through the universe, penetrating the silence of Thulcandra as a mere whisper of the gods Ares and Aphrodite. Over time, these whispers evolved into what we know as the Greek

pantheon. He brings the story of Ransom's journey out of our world back into our world, blurring the line between reality and the novel.

In this way, Lewis explains that our stories are perhaps imperfect glimpses of the true glory that is out there. This reminds me of one of my favorite quotes comes from Albert Camus, who said that "Fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth". I love this quote because I truly believe that there is so much to be learned about life and love and human nature through fiction. Although our stories may be imperfect reflections of truth, they are still valuable in that they are able to show us a part of real truth.

Perelandra is Lewis' alternate telling of the Garden of Eden story, and while he references much of the Bible throughout the work, I wanted to focus in on a specific yet crucial point: Ransom's heel. After his escape from beneath the ground of Perelandra, Ransom spends time exploring his surroundings and himself: "Ransom was nearly well before he detected his most serious injury. It was a wound in his heel. The shape made it quite clear that the wound had been inflicted by human teeth..."(pg. 187). His perpetually bleeding heel seems strange and almost innocuous to an unfamiliar reader, but it is actually a clear reference to the Biblical Eden story and Ransom's role as the Christ figure in Perelandra. Perhaps one of the most famous theologians in history, C.S. Lewis knew his source material extremely well. In Genesis 3, the Fall of Man occurs and God condemns all parties involved:

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15, ESV)

In this verse, Genesis 3:15, God foretells of man's future interaction with the enemy: Man's offspring shall bruise the serpent's head, while the serpent will bruise man's heel. In the Biblical context, the serpent bruising man's heel is the death of Christ on the cross, while the man bruising the serpent's head is the defeat of death by Christ. Lewis is making clear references in Ransom's actions and wounds: Ransom crushes the Un-Man's head with his foot, and the Un-Man leaves a perpetual wound in Ransom's heel. While Ransom and Christ are the clear victors in the battle to save the world, the enemy is able to leave a lasting wound in both. Just as Christ's wounds would never heal to show his sacrifice for all time, thus Ransom's heel would never heal, even after his return to Earth.

Works Cited

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