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## A Cosmic Shift in *The Screwtape Letters*

Brenton D.G. Dickieson  
*University of Prince Edward Island*

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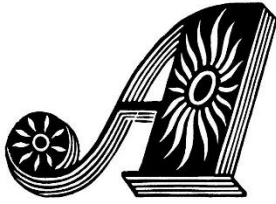
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COSMIC SHIFT IN  
*The SCREWTAPE LETTERS*

BRENTON D.C. DICKIESON

THOUGH IT WAS THE BOOK THAT LAUNCHED LEWIS INTO PUBLIC FAME, and although he returned eighteen years later with a “Toast,” by all accounts, Lewis had no desire to capitalize on *The Screwtape Letters*. Unlike the experimental and expansive speculative universes of *The Space Trilogy* and *Narnia*, *The Screwtape Letters* has been read as a one-off world invention, narrowed to the character of Screwtape and the particular textures of Screwtape’s pedantic, smoking room corner of hell. And although we have a stageplay and a host of *Screwtape* copycats, Lewis himself deprecated adaptation. Instead, he encouraged people to simply use the “general diabolical framework” of *Screwtape* and fill it with their own imaginations (*Collected Letters* [CL] II 925). By all accounts, it looks like Screwtape’s speculative universe was a single experiment of WWII-era (anti)spiritual theology, returned to only once in “Screwtape Proposes a Toast” to offer a critique of education and culture for American readers.

However, archival discoveries now reveal that Lewis made playful imaginative links that expand the scope of *Screwtape’s* speculative universe and connect it to the world of the Ransom Trilogy, *The Field of Arbol*. By using unpublished and newly published manuscript evidence to supplement close readings of published texts, this paper will reconsider the extent of the Ransom fictional universe. Lewis’s imaginative experimentation with a broader speculative framework for the Field of Arbol has significance in several areas, including invented language, angelology, the psychology of temptation, and the possible breadth of his myth-making project. As a way of testing the implications of this Screwtape-Ransom universe—but by no means exhausting the reach of such a probe—I offer a rereading of the *Perelandra* prologue as a sequel to *The Screwtape Letters*. This investigation is a cautious one; its value is borne out by the success of its close reading. However, this small experiment points to significant results, with a great potential for more research. I conclude with the possibility that there are advantages to considering Lewis’s WWII-era speculative fiction as a “Ransom Cycle”—a diverse, tentative, and experimental project of theological exploration and cultural criticism with cohesive themes and a coherent central vision.

### THE FIELD OF ARBOL

Beyond mythic poetry and an allegorical conversion narrative, Lewis's first foray into popular fiction, *Out of the Silent Planet* (*OSP*), was published in 1938 just before the outbreak of WWII. It was one of the more fortuitous failed bets of history, the famous wager between J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis to each write a science fiction tale (Garth). Though Tolkien's time travel piece remained incomplete, the wager propelled Lewis into writing a series of science-fiction romances featuring Dr. Ransom, a Cambridge philologist who rises from a fearful, solitary pedestrian to the Arthurian head of an interstellar counter-conspiracy. At the beginning of *OSP*, two high-class fiends, Weston and Devine, kidnap Ransom and closet him away to Malacandra (Mars). After escaping his captors and learning the Old Solar language among some indigenous Malacandrians, Ransom discovers that because of its Edenic Fall, of all the planets in the Field of Arbol, only Thulcandra (Earth) is isolated—a planet that Monika Hilder says is "out of sync with the universe" (33). As David Downing notes, though Thulcandra, "the Silent Planet," is cut off from the other planets, it "remains a battleground." However, "there are rumors in Deep Heaven of wondrous things performed by Maleldil to reclaim his lost world" (*Planets in Peril* [*Planets*] 40).

In the second book of the so-called Space Trilogy, *Perelandra* (1943), Ransom volunteers to be spirited away to Perelandra (Venus) to play the role of interlocutor in a neo-Miltonian SciFi struggle.<sup>1</sup> The action of *That Hideous Strength* (*THS*), the final book, is highlighted by its near-future perspective at the close of WWII. Focused on Earth (Thulcandra), Ransom is no longer a mere philologist but is a Christ figure, Pendragon, Arthur Redivivus, and Fisher King in league with an awakened Merlin in a motley crew of unlikely warriors (Dickieson, "Mixed Metaphors" 97-109). At the end of *THS*, Ransom is transposed to Avalon without death, returning to breathe the life-giving air of Perelandra. In drawing upon the rich medieval cosmology that had long captured his imagination, Lewis's WWII-era SF re-casts our solar system as the Field of Arbol, a providentially-infused "space" that contrasts with the cold and barren outer space of contemporary scientific mythology (see *Planets* 60-82; Lobdell 49-52; Mattern; Petrucci; Schwartz 16-18; Ward 47-53, 80-87, 106-08, 123-26, 143-49, 169-75, 195-98). Downing is correct that "Lewis devoted a great deal of his energy and expertise as a scholar to the task of rehabilitating the medieval

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<sup>1</sup> The connection with Milton and *Perelandra* is widely recognized, and Lewis was lecturing on *Paradise Lost* as he was writing *Perelandra*; see Hooper, *Companion* 221-25, 459-62. Jared Lobdell is unique in resisting a Miltonic reading of *Perelandra*, though he admits that "the Unman reflects Lewis's reflections on Milton's Satan" (95). Lobdell (94-95) recognizes the Arthurian subtheme in *Perelandra*, and notes Lewis's comment in *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (6-7) that Milton had considered a romantic Arthurian epic for his treatment.

worldview" (*Planets* 63), and Adam Mattern has demonstrated that by going "Medieval on Science Fiction" (2), Lewis recovers the beauty of the medieval model while infusing contemporary scientific frameworks with new meaning within the fiction of his created worlds.

At best, the Ransom books are a very loose trilogy. Downing notes that early in *OSP*, "Lewis serves notice that he does not intend to follow the usual genre conventions" (*Planets* 64), and warns us to consider the texts carefully when considering genre (141). Ostensibly, the books of the Space Trilogy differ in genre from classic science fiction (*OSP*) to literary space fantasy or space opera (*Perelandra*), to dystopic scientific apocalypse (*THS*).<sup>2</sup> There is also a possible fourth Ransom book, a time travel narrative—or, perhaps more accurately, a transdimensional fantasy—that Lewis abandoned. If authentic, "The Dark Tower" may have been written after *OSP* and before *Perelandra* (Lewis, *The Dark Tower* 8; 151-56).<sup>3</sup> Jared Lobdell is correct that Dr. Ransom is a "unifying element" of the series (25), but Ransom is not the only element that ties the books together. In an argument that is relevant to the core discussion in this paper, Gregory Wolfe suggests that the scattered references to language in Lewis's writings are brought together in the Ransom trilogy, "where language itself becomes the predominant metaphor linking all three novels" (58)—an argument that Tami Van Opstal takes further using Owen Barfield's *Poetic Diction*. Downing links *Perelandra* and *THS* with *Screwtape* and *The Great Divorce* as Lewis's "infernal period" where in "four consecutive books Lewis introduces hellish characters and hellish settings (imaginatively recast for modern readers) in order to explore the psychology of faith and doubt, of temptation and spiritual trial" (*Planets* 83). Given that the Oyarsa of Earth, the Bent Eldil, is another hellish figure, *OSP* no doubt also fits within this "infernal period."

Besides these links and an imaginative reconsideration of medieval cosmology in contemporary science fiction and theological experimentation, the Ransom books also feature "Lewis"—not merely as the author but as a character-narrator and the colleague in whom Dr. Ransom first confides about his adventure in Malacandra. The voice of the narrator, a fictional representation of Lewis himself, is a device that Lobdell notes occurs in medieval and Victorian literature (89-90). The character-narrator device is most robust at the end of *OSP* and the beginning of *Perelandra*. At the close of the adventure, our version of *OSP* reveals the fact that Lewis is actually the secretary of Ransom's pilgrimage, tasked with fictionalizing the trip to Malacandra as a sciencifiction tale that will

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<sup>2</sup> While cautioning against being deceived by their surface simplicity, Downing describes "*Out of the Silent Planet* as a cosmic voyage, *Perelandra* as an Edenic fantasy, and *That Hideous Strength* as a satire on modern academia" (*Planets* 5-6).

<sup>3</sup> In "Reconsidering the Lindskoog Affair," I argue that the MS. is authentic.

be used to prepare a tiny resistance force against an impending inter-global conspiracy. This genre complication is intertextually linked with H.G. Wells's *First Men in the Moon*, which uses a similar epistolary conceit. There is no doubt that Dr. Weston and Mr. Devine are villainized versions of Wells's failed playwright and businessman, Mr. Bedford. and his scientist with interplanetary intentions, Mr. Cavor (Haigh 153-4; Schwartz 23-26; see Downing, *Planets* 124-25). As *First Men in the Moon* ends with epistles (logs) and the conceit of a concealed true story in the fantasy, we discover that *OSP* is Ransom's masked memoir, developed further in a closing letter to Lewis. In this sense, the fictional Lewis acts as a Bedford, recording fantastical history as fictionalized fantasy.

As *OSP* closes with Lewis as chronicler, *Perelandra* begins with Lewis's own experience walking from the train station to Ransom's house to help him prepare for a departure to Perelandra. The first two chapters of *Perelandra* form the frame narrative of Ransom's Venusian adventure. Lewis as character-narrator helps set Ransom's affairs in order, receives him after a year on Perelandra, and then records the tale. Though mostly in the background of *THS*, Lewis as character-narrator does not disappear entirely at the close of the Ransom books. The only overt intrusion of "Lewis" the narrator is chapter one, section three, where the narrator takes a stroll through Bragdon Wood and falls asleep near Merlin's tomb (20-22), which is the "heart" of the ancient Arthurian wood as it is "the heart of ancient Logres" (Hannay 7). Though distinctive within the novel, the Lewis section serves to provide an Arthurian atmosphere to the tale, to set the story in conversation with an older image of Britain, and to create a subtle parallel with George MacDonald's Anodos in *Phantastes*. In the remainder of *THS*, the character-narrator records only a few editorial comments, and Lewis never encounters other characters in *THS* as he does in *OSP* and *Perelandra*. The character of Lewis emerges more substantially in the aborted *Dark Tower* manuscript, but the potentials of his role are left in authorial limbo. Of the three and a half Ransom books we have, Lewis as the powerful character-narrator is used selectively but consistently.

The use of the literary "I" is not unusual to Lewis's writing. Walter Hooper has noted that "almost all his books are written in the first person" (*God in the Dock* 10), displaying a unique autographic and reflexive interest in his nonfiction<sup>4</sup> and a psychological intimacy in his fiction that invites spiritual maturity or even "the gods' surgery" (Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* 254; see Cassidy 112). Scholars have noted how Lewis writes himself into his fiction (e.g., Downing, *Most Reluctant Convert*, 19-20, 63-80; Brown 18-19; Sayer 257), and

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<sup>4</sup> On autoethnography in theology and literature and developing emphases on reflectivity, see Walton; Walton, Graham, and Ward. For a deep study about the implicated nature of character voice in Lewis, see Yuasa.

fantasy author Neil Gaiman has reminisced that it was *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* that first made him realize there was an author in and behind books—and that perhaps he could be one too (Gaiman). However, the Ransom books—the Cosmic Trilogy and the *Dark Tower* fragment—are distinct from Lewis’s other popular fiction as Lewis is a character within the action of the speculative world. Beyond allegory and memory, there are two other examples where Lewis plays such a role, both of which are written during WWII and during the writing and publication of the Ransom books: *The Great Divorce*, where Lewis is the Dantean protagonist, and *The Screwtape Letters*, where Lewis is an Oxford don who finds some demonic epistles and publishes them for the world. Granted this “Lewis” character-narrator link between the Ransom books and *The Screwtape Letters* as well as a shared publication context, it is time to turn to archival discoveries that invite further links between *Screwtape* and Lewis’s other WWII-era fiction of the late 30s and early 40s.

## THE SCREWTAPE UNIVERSE AND THE MANUSCRIPT HISTORY

### SCREWTAPE: THE MANUSCRIPT STORY

Unlike the scraps we have of most of Lewis’s published fiction (see Hooper, *Past Watchful Dragons*), the original manuscript of *Screwtape* exists in complete form at the Berg Collection in the New York Public Library. A detailed report of this MS. was made by James T. Como in 1980 and published in *The Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society*. From the perspective of a copy editor, Sandy Feit confirmed Como’s work, offering minor clarifications. Except for a few notable restarts—where Lewis changed his mind about a paragraph, turned the page over, and began again—the letters of the first edition and in their print run in *The Guardian* (2 May 1941 through 28 Nov. 1941) are much the same as they were in the handwritten first draft.

Unlike most of the manuscripts that were in C.S. Lewis’s possession at the end of his life, the *Screwtape* MS landed at the Berg. As a relatively obscure Oxford don with a growing Christian profile, he had no concern for literary posterity; he was only concerned that the German bombing might destroy his work. He sent the MS. with a personal note to his literary friend and spiritual mentor, Sr. Penelope. Here are excerpts from his brief and personal note written on 9 Oct. 1941.

Dear Sister Penelope

[...] immediately after that “the power which erring men call chance” put into my hands Mascall’s two books in the Signpost series which continued the process. [...]

I enclose the MS. of *Screwtape*. If it is not a trouble I shd. like you to keep it safe until the book is printed (in case the one the publisher has got blitzed)—after that it can be made into spills or used to stuff dolls or anything. [...]  
Yours sincerely  
Clive Lewis (CL II.493)

This oft-quoted letter<sup>5</sup> has those classic features of the Lewisian quality: self-deprecation, a quick-moving collection of ideas, intriguing little thoughts on spirituality, and a running list of good books.

For those of us who revel in serendipity and common sense, Sr. Penelope did *not* use the MS to stuff dolls or light fires. When Lewis shared the *Screwtape* MS with his penfriend in 1941, he was an Oxford don with a budding public career. Fifteen years later, Lewis was the famous author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.<sup>6</sup> In 1956, Sr. Penelope asked Lewis if he would like the MS back. Lewis joked in an 18 Jul. 1956 letter that she should try to “persuade any ‘sucker’ (as the Americans say) to buy the MS of *Screwtape*,” so that she might use the money for charity (Hooper, *Companion* 720). The “sucker” turned out to be the highly respected Berg Collection in the New York Public Library.

A typescript of *The Screwtape Letters* is also still in existence, acquired by the Wade Center at Wheaton College with some revisions (CSL MS-107). Besides its historical value, what is essential about this file is the inclusion of two other items: an unpublished C.S. Lewis letter and a handwritten Preface to *The Screwtape Letters* that is substantially different from the first edition Preface. We will look at each of these in turn.

In and of itself, it is not surprising to find a new letter; there are dozens of known unpublished letters and thousands of letters likely lost in history. It is *this* particular letter that is intriguing. Written on a torn scrap of thick paper, the letter is addressed to Lewis’s former pupil, Mary Neylan (née Mary Shelley). The literary relationship between Lewis and Neylan grew over the years, and Neylan converted to Christianity through Lewis’s continued spiritual advice. Here, published for the first time, is a letter C.S. Lewis wrote to Mary Neylan:

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<sup>5</sup> See Green and Hooper 199; Sayer 273-74; Hooper, *Companion* 70; Vaus 176; see also a number of internet references and blogs, including Hamilton.

<sup>6</sup> Biographers cover Lewis’s life well, but see Samuel Joeckel’s conceptualization of Lewis as a public intellectual in *The C.S. Lewis Phenomenon*.



Oct 20<sup>th</sup>, 1941

Dear Mrs. Neylan,

I'm just sending the proofs\* of the enclosed back to the publisher and wondered if you wd. care to amuse yourself with the MS. You might keep it till the book appears, in case of accidents: after that it can be made into spills. I've just read two books in the Signpost series by Mascall—*Man. His Origins and Destiny* and *The God-Man* (Dacre Press 1/6) both of which I thought excellent. I hope Dan and Sarah and yourself are all well. I got your address from Fr. Adams this morning.

Yours sincerely

C.S. Lewis<sup>7</sup>

The similarities with the 9 Oct. 1941 letter to Sr. Penelope are striking. Both letters include a reference to Eric L. Mascall's books and ask his correspondent to safeguard a *Screwtape* manuscript until the publisher prints it. After that, of course, "it can be made into spills." Like Sr. Penelope, Mary Neylan chose not to destroy the manuscript. Some decades later, she placed the letter and the accompanying typescript in the Wade collection.<sup>8</sup> In October 1941, Lewis chose the same approach on two separate paths to keep his forthcoming book safe from the capricious possibilities of war.

In the same file as the letter is a handwritten preface. One can see how a preface emerged as a necessity for the book. In *The Guardian* serial print run, the letters begin simply with the startling statement, "My Dear Wormwood—I note what you say about guiding your patient's reading and taking care that he sees a good deal of his materialist friend. But are you not being a trifle *naïf*?" (*Guardian* 211). Evidently, some were confused by this peculiar use of *in medias res* (*Screwtape Letters and Toast* 5). Thus, when Geoffrey Bles offered to publish *The Screwtape Letters* in book form following its serial publication, Lewis produced a preface to prepare the reader. This preface, in Lewis's tight handwriting of the period, is also included in the same file at the Wade Center.

### **THE SCREWTAPE UNIVERSE**

The preface printed in *The Screwtape Letters* is familiar to readers. Instead of a note clarifying what is a new genre—what I have dubbed Demonic

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<sup>7</sup> Manuscript excerpts: "The Screwtape Letters" by C.S. Lewis, n.d., n.p. CSL/MS-107, The Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL. In transcribing this letter, I have mimicked Walter Hooper's style in the Oct 9, 1941 parallel letter to Sr. Penelope. The only reference to the letter I have found is Starr, *Light* 26. Written in pencil next to "proofs" is an asterisk (\*) that points to a note on the top left corner that says in a different hand, "Screwtape Letters."

<sup>8</sup> There is no acquisition record, but a range of 1975-1985 is probable, see email from Laura Schmidt, 21 Sep. 2012.

Epistolary Fiction, an employment of what David Mark Purdy calls “double inversion” (75-84) or what Hsiu-Chin Chou calls “double irony” in *Screwtape* (93-94)<sup>9</sup>—Lewis’s approach plays on the fictional world of the *Letters* by making himself not the *author* of this demonic correspondence, but its *discoverer and publisher*. In the imaginative landscape of this preface, the letters are not set up as a fictional device to offer spiritual direction but are an artifact of historical interest. As Lewis is the secretary of the Ransom chronicles, so he is the secretary of the Screwtape affair. The character-narrator Lewis begins by saying that he will not divulge how the letters fell into his hands (9)—language reminiscent of the Sr. Penelope letter. As he continues in the preface, Lewis gives the reader some advice about what to do with demons and a warning that the perspective of Screwtape and Wormwood may be warped. The final paragraph concludes with a concern of historicity—the question of aligning terrestrial and demonic timelines—and warning the reader about putting too much stock in WWII events as a literary context.

The preface, then, becomes a fictional frame that expands the speculative universe of *The Screwtape Letters*. There are not many details of Screwtape’s world in the book, most likely because we are meant to bring our Dantean-tinged imaginations of hell and images of Milton’s demonic hordes to *Screwtape*. However, the details resemble 20<sup>th</sup>—century cubicles more than 14<sup>th</sup>—century crypts and medieval frescoes. Screwtape’s hell is bureaucratic, officious, and invested in a complex lowerarchy with expendable junior devils tasked with tempting humans in an historically referential Earth. The kingdom of “Our Father Below” is characterized by noise, “the grand dynamism, the audible expression of all that is exultant, ruthless, and virile” (*Screwtape* 114). The Lowerarchy is about deception and darkness—twin concepts that may be better described as “anti-light”—a darkness that is finally pierced with the exaltation of the Patient in Letter XXXI.

The preface that readers have always known adds the question of time, “the diabolical method of dating,” implying that demonic chronology may follow different rules. Lewis mentions the “sort of script which is used in this book” (9), but it is unclear what that might mean on a literal level. Moreover, Lewis is once again a character in his own fictional world as he is in the Ransom books. He is not the author of *The Screwtape Letters*, but a public benefactor bringing the letters to light. This connection with the Ransom chronicles is intriguing. As it turns out, the handwritten preface in the Neylan file at the Wade adds a new layer to our understanding of Screwtape’s speculative universe as well as to our knowledge of the Field of Arbol.

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<sup>9</sup> *Screwtape* is commonly categorised as satire, Filmer 2, 62, 112, 133; Huttar 91. See Potgieter 1-8, who suggests parody as a possible genre as well.

*THE HANDWRITTEN PREFACE*

I was able to publish the handwritten preface in full in *Notes and Queries* (296-98), to which I will refer when quoting from the handwritten preface and to the first edition when quoting from the published book form. The entirety of the handwritten preface comprises five paragraphs; it shares with the published preface three of its four paragraphs. These three shared paragraphs are alike in all but some minute details. However, the handwritten preface offers a significant change in paragraph one and inserts an entire paragraph before the concluding paragraph of the first edition version. This inserted paragraph is not insignificant. The preface we have in the first edition is 281 words, while the handwritten preface has a total of 485 words. At 201 words, the inserted penultimate paragraph is nearly as long as the entire first edition preface.

The first edition preface begins like this: "I have no intention of explaining how the correspondence which I now offer to the public fell into my hands" (9). Similar in tone, but significantly different in content, the handwritten preface begins like this: "Nothing will induce me to reveal how my friend Dr. Ransom got hold of the script which is translated in the following pages" (297). There are some shifts in working language: "script" and "pages" becomes "correspondence" in the first edition; "script" is a tangible, physical object not a metaphor for language; and "nothing will induce me to reveal" softens to "I have no intention of explaining." The phrase, "got hold of" in the handwritten MS is likewise more aggressive than the passive phrase, "fell into my hands." Beyond these stylistic changes, however, the startling difference is that it is Dr. Ransom and not C.S. Lewis who has found the letters. When the first edition was published, no one asked how an Oxford don could have a series of demonic letters fall into his hands. As we see, Lewis's handwritten preface makes space traveler Dr. Ransom the discoverer, while literary historian Lewis is merely writing an editorial preface.

Beyond a new understanding of who discovered the Letters, we now have information that Screwtape's correspondence has been "translated." The fourth paragraph of the published preface always included a crucial detail about Screwtape's fictional universe: "in general the diabolical method of dating seems to bear no relation to terrestrial time" (10). The single change in that paragraph is that it is now Dr. Ransom who refuses to (or cannot) reproduce it instead of C.S. Lewis (i.e., the C.S. Lewis that exists in the primary world). With the handwritten preface, we now have the idea of translation. As the demons are not simply speaking English, so a specifically demonic language is introduced into our understanding of Screwtape's fictional universe. Moreover, this demonic language has been translated not by C.S. Lewis, the literary historian and critic, but by his friend, Dr. Ransom, the interstellar philologist.

But why would Dr. Ransom know a demonic language? He is a philologist, clever with languages, and disappointed when he discovers he will not need to learn a new language on his trip to Perelandra (*Perelandra* 25). As bright as he is with languages, able to learn the Malacandrian tongue quickly in his voyage in *OSP*, he learned the language in a community of native speakers. As it is unlikely that Ransom had lived in the underlands long enough to learn a demonic dialect—a comment that highlights how intriguingly local Dante’s own infernal travels were—it is also difficult to believe that one could discern the details of 31 letters without some demonic version of the Rosetta Stone. Moreover, the published preface may perhaps refer to a writing system: “the sort of script which is used in this book can be very easily obtained by anyone who has once learned the knack” (*Screwtape Letters* 9)—a phrase that has a new layer of meaning with knowledge of the handwritten preface. Presumably, longtime readers of the published preface have assumed that “sort of script” is referring to the flavor of demonic epistolary fiction—an interpretation that would actually betray Lewis’s fictive framing in the preface. Understanding “script” as language, and specifically a written system, makes the best sense. Still, the language needed to be learned. Without prior knowledge of the language, the unearthed Letters would be unreadable.

The new paragraph in the handwritten preface, inserted between paragraphs two and three of the published preface, gives us some of the solution to this problem. I will quote this remarkable inserted paragraph from the *Notes and Queries* publication of the handwritten preface:

But it is, however, too late to make any mystery of the process whereby Dr. Ransom learned the language. The original of these letters is written in what may be called Old Solar—the primitive speech of all rational creatures inhabiting the solar system. How Ransom came to learn it I have already related in a book called *Out of the Silent Planet*; but when I wrote that book he and I were both mistaken in supposing it to be the local speech of a single world—that world which its inhabitants call Malacandra. We now know better, but there is no time within this preface to discuss the problems of extra-terrestrial philology involved. But it should be added that the translation is necessarily very free. The capital letters used for pronouns when they refer to that Being whom Screwtape describes as the Enemy are, for example, a most ingenious device of Ransom’s for representing a quite different (and involuntary) phenomenon in the original. On the other hand many words mentioned where Screwtape is discussing what he calls “the Philological Arm” were already English, for naturally devils whose terrain is England are well skilled in the language of their proposed victims. (297)

Needless to say, this new paragraph provides an entirely new imaginative dimension to the *Screwtape* universe. It is a necessary detail in light of the introduction of Dr. Ransom as the translator in the first paragraph. In particular, it shows us that *Screwtape*'s language is Old Solar, known in its own tongue as Hlab-Eribol-ef-Cordi, and shared by all non-human "rational" beings. Humans have long since forgotten the language or lost it in the Fall. However, Old Solar is spoken both by the terrestrial species of other worlds—Hnau, or rational, sapient, sentient beings including but not limited to humanoids—as well as the celestial beings, trans- or multi-dimensional angel-like creatures called Eldila (singular "Eldil") in the Trilogy.

Contextually speaking, this published preface is dated as 5 Jul. 1941. On 9 Nov. 1941—one month after Lewis sent the full handwritten MS to Sr. Penelope—he wrote to her again, stating that "I've got Ransom to Venus and through his first conversation with the 'Eve' of that world: a difficult chapter" (CL II.496).<sup>10</sup> The first edition of *The Screwtape Letters* was released on 9 Feb. 1942; within three months, the first draft of *Perelandra* was complete (CL II.520). Lewis's work on *Perelandra*, the second installment in the so-called Ransom Trilogy, began after he wrote the preface to *The Screwtape Letters* and concurrent with the editing and publication of the letters. As such, we see a direct parallel between the handwritten preface's additional paragraph quoted above and a passage in *Perelandra* where Lewis (the fictional character-narrator within both the Cosmic Trilogy and *Screwtape*) is speaking with Dr. Ransom. Lewis is asking Ransom why he should expect to understand the language of Venus. Ransom assures him that he learned the Perelandran language on Malacandra because they are both "Old Solar." Ransom continues:

[T]here was originally a common speech for all rational creatures inhabiting the planets of our system [...]. That original speech was lost on Thulcandra, our own world, when our whole tragedy took place [i.e., the Fall]. No human language now known in the world is descended from it. (*Perelandra* 25)

Verlyn Flieger is correct that a "gap in the coherence of Lewis's invention arises here" (53). In *OSP*, Ransom is told that the Hnau of Malacandra all had different languages, but adopted the Hrossian dialect as a lingua franca. Since returning to Earth, he continued to practice the language with the Eldila, and he speaks it fluently within the other two books of the Trilogy. Ransom discovers that he did not get the entire story on Malacandra and that a much older language must have been preserved in the Hrossan community. Flieger

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<sup>10</sup> In a 23 Dec. 1941 letter to Arthur Greeves, Lewis mentions both *The Screwtape Letters* and the concept of *Perelandra* worked out in principle to the end; see CL II 504-05.

continues: “The language of the hrossa is not just primitive. It is primal. It is the language Adam spoke to God, the original language of participation, of poetry, and of myth. On Thulcandra, the silent planet, the break is complete” (54). If, as this handwritten preface suggests, the *Screwtape* fictional world is part of the Ransom fictional universe, it is intriguing that the demons would speak some form of the primal Old Solar language, even if it evolved or decayed over time and was laced with transliterated human words necessary to the demonic-human interface.

We do not know what the writing system of Old Solar is. In *Perelandra*, Ransom writes an epitaph in Old Solar using Roman letters. The passage perhaps hints at the possibility that a writing system exists, but we cannot be sure (188-9). The possibility is more explicit in *Out of the Silent Planet*, where Dr. Ransom sees “a collection of rolls, seemingly of skin, covered with characters” (101). Explaining why there were few books in Malacandra, one of the planet’s intellectuals explains that it is “better to remember” than to write books (101). Dr. Ransom is concerned that important things might be forgotten, but the Oyarsa (the highest Eldil) of that world will remind Malacandrins if they forget. In this sense, there is a repository of necessary knowledge whose continuity is determined not by paper and pen, but a dialogue that goes beyond writing to oral traditions, folk art, family life, and interstellar communication. In particular, Dr. Ransom had lived with the Hrossa, a kind of Hnau that valued folk poetry. The intellectual Sorn explains that “The hrossa used to have many books of poetry. [...] But now they have fewer. They say that the writing of books destroys poetry” (*OSP* 101). Clearly, there is written language on Malacandra, but it is not a progressive good value. So although there is a writing system of Old Solar, the spoken word is more dynamic than the written word. In this sense, Ransom had gained oral literacy without written literacy according to the values of the local linguistic ecosystem and the anthropological accident of encountering a culture at a certain point of its history.

The local dialect of Old Solar makes for a complexity in the fictive linguistic structure of the Field of Arbol. Sorn philosophers and historians explain to Ransom that each of the three main Hnau species on Malacandra has its own languages, but the *lingua franca* was the Hrossa tongue, for the Hrossa “are our great speakers and singers. They have more words and better” (*OSP* 114). While in the handwritten preface and *Perelandra* there is a single rational language, there is the sense that the Old Solar language on Malacandra is discovered or developed rather than revealed, which would seem to fit Lewis’s pattern of creation in the Ransom Trilogy. In *Perelandra*, the Lewis character asks Ransom about this:

I admit I don't understand about [the languages of other Malacandrian communities]. One thing I do know, and I believe I could prove it on purely philological grounds. They are incomparably less ancient than Hressa-Hlab, specially Surnibur, the speech of the Sorns. I believe it could be shown that Surnibur is, by Malacandrian standards, quite a modern development. I doubt if its birth can be put farther back than a date which would fall within our Cambrian Period. (25)

Whether the author had a grander plan of language development on Malacandra or this was written in response to a perceived "gap" in the fictional universe, I do not know. In any case, in the original preface of *The Screwtape Letters* and in *Perelandra*, the author has connected the local language of Malacandra conceptually with a core or primal or essential language.

However, we are still left with a critical question: How did Ransom learn to read the "script" of Screwtape's correspondence? Nowhere is Ransom explicitly taught the written form of the language. Though he may have opportunities to learn it as he communicates consistently with Eldils throughout *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*, as the bodies of Eldila are not compatible with the bodies of embodied *hnau*, it is unclear what technology could mediate their shared literacy. The question of the literary script remains unanswered. It could be that "this sort of script," as Lewis calls it in the handwritten preface, is relatively easy to transliterate. It could even be that the demonic letters were written in a terrestrial script that Ransom either knew or could learn,<sup>11</sup> meaning that the alphabet or syllabary of Mars and Earth are not as primal as the speech itself. Indeed, in Lewis's conceptual world, by the time Dr. Ransom "got hold of" the Screwtape correspondence, he was equipped with knowledge of the written language or able to interpret it with some work and was nearly fluent in the spoken language.

#### WHEN SCREWTAPE HAUNTS IN EDEN: TESTING THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE SCREWTAPE-RANSOM SPECULATIVE UNIVERSE

What does the handwritten preface add to our knowledge of Lewis's created worlds? Given the overt links that Lewis made between Screwtape's speculative universe and the Field of Arbol, reading the books in order of production—*OSP*, *Screwtape*, *Perelandra*, *THS*—bears significant fruit and represents an organic contextual rereading of the texts within the development of Lewis's *oeuvre*. In particular, a close reading of parts of the second book in the Cosmic Trilogy demonstrates that *Perelandra* presupposes *The Screwtape Letters*, and the Ransom books are best read with Screwtape's (under)world as part of

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<sup>11</sup> In Connolly ch. 11, the Great Malevolence and his demonic horde speak English well enough, but write computer code in ancient Aramaic.

the cosmic framework of *The Field of Arbol*. My larger project stemming from this discovery is a rereading of the Ransom Trilogy and *The Screwtape Letters* with the assumption that they are part of the same speculative universe. For now, by way of close reading I will simply offer two examples of how *Perelandra* presupposes *Screwtape*.

#### THE PERELANDRA PROLOGUE AND SCREWTAPIAN HAUNTING

The first example comes from the opening chapters of *Perelandra*, where Lewis the character-narrator has left the train station at Worcester to walk to Ransom's home. Almost immediately, Lewis feels a creeping worry. In self-reflection, he soon discovers that he is truly afraid of the interstellar Eldila that have drawn Ransom into habitual communication. This fear is twofold—an uneasy feeling about the numinous nature of the ethereal beings, and the fear of being drawn into a conspiracy. What begins as a troubled mental conversation develops into complete disorientation. Darkness and mist are descending upon the street. His mind becomes fixated upon the unseen, non-organic Eldila as he trudges unwillingly forward to Ransom's cottage. His thoughts are bombarded with doubts and dark ideas, and an impulse whispers to him, "Go back, go back," with astonishing force (*Perelandra* 12). Indeed, three times he is on the verge of turning back, even when he is upon Ransom's doorstep.

Though not naturally given to such fears, Lewis becomes afraid of the shapes in the darkness—still thinking about the extraterrestrials Ransom had described in *Out of the Silent Planet*—and he begins to suspect he is having a breakdown. "Absolute terror" nearly overwhelms him (14). As he reaches Ransom's dark home, Lewis describes his mental state: "I staggered on into the cold and the darkness, already half convinced that I must be entering what is called Madness" (14). He falls into intellectual doubt and reflection about the state of madness itself, and, finally, into sheer fear of the dark. At the height of Lewis's terror, he breaks off into the voice of the raconteur:

I have naturally no wish to enlarge on this phase of my story. The state of mind I was in was one which I look back on with humiliation. I would have passed it over if I did not think that some account of it was necessary for a full understanding of what follows—and, perhaps, of some other things as well. At all events, I *can't* really describe how I reached the front door of the cottage. Somehow or other, despite the loathing and dismay that pulled me back and a sort of invisible wall of resistance that met me in the face, fighting for each step, and almost shrieking as a harmless spray of the hedge touched my face, I managed to get through the gate and up the little path. And there I was, drumming on the door and wringing the handle and shouting to him to let me in as if my life depended on it. (15)



There is initially no reply, and the note Ransom leaves for Lewis does not soothe his embattled wits. Again he fights the desire to retreat. It is, ironically, the idea of having to return by the same way that stays Lewis's hand, as well as some dim sense of not wanting to disappoint his friend. He enters the house, in the dark, still terrified and confused—terror and confusion only heightened by the alien speech of an invisible, non-fleshly being in the room.

Ransom arrives home to a petrified Lewis cowering in a corner. It is not long before Ransom puts him at ease, and the exchange that follows is useful to note:

"You got through the barrage without any damage?" [Ransom asked].

"The barrage?—I don't understand."

"I was thinking you would have met some difficulties in getting here."

"Oh, that!" said I. "You mean it wasn't just my nerves? There really was something in the way?"

"Yes: They didn't want you to get here. I was afraid something of the sort might happen but there was no time to do anything about it. I was pretty sure you'd get through somehow."

"By they you mean the others—our own eldila?"

"Of course. They've got wind of what's on hand . . ."

I interrupted him. "To tell you the truth, Ransom," I said, "I'm getting more worried every day about the whole business. It came into my head as I was on my way here—"

"Oh, they'll put all sorts of things into your head if you let them," said Ransom lightly. "The best plan is to take no notice and keep straight on. Don't try to answer them. They like drawing you into an interminable argument." (21)

The Dark Lord/Bent Eldil/Black Archon/Oyarsa of Tellus/Thulcandra/Earth is introduced in *Out of the Silent Planet*. He alone of all the Eldila rejected the authority of Maleldil, the creator and Lord of The Field of Arbol (see *OSP* ch. 18). Earth's Oyarsa is clearly the Christian image of the Devil or Satan, the "suttlest Beast of all the Field" in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (9:86).

The distinction between the primary world we live in and the secondary world of Lewis's texts, though fantastic, is relatively thin. Downing notes how Lewis's connectedness between the real and imagined worlds we share with the author is in contrast to Tolkien's careful distinction in "On Fairy-stories":

Throughout the Ransom trilogy (as well as the Narnia chronicles), Lewis's strategy is to make readers sense that his fantasy world is more real than they might have supposed—and that their "real world" is more filled with the fantastic than they might have supposed. (*Planets* 47)

Lewis as character-narrator bridges the primary and secondary world as a Janus figure who faces both worlds—a fact that Downing notes and that the handwritten preface makes even more explicit. This feature deepens the potential connection between the reader and the secondary world of the text. The fictional universes are speculative, fantastic, and in some cases impossible, blending outdated cosmology, classical and biblical myth, and futuristic and unproven technologies. However, as Lewis lives both in our world and the world of the text, so the reader can identify with everyman Ransom in *OSP* or the patients in *Screwtape* or Mark and Jane in *THS*. The handwritten preface deepens this link between primary and secondary world by overtly equating the Oyarsa of Earth with "Our Father Below" in *The Screwtape Letters*. They are not just the same figures in the Christian element of the fiction or the mythic elements in the secondary world; within the stories themselves, they are the same character that occupies the same speculative universe, the Field of Arbol, which spans the heavens above, the Earth, and all that is below the Earth (Phil. 2:10; Rev. 5:3).

Granted this unifying feature of Lewis's invented world, as the Eldila of Thulcandra are likewise the demonic hordes of Earth, we recognize that Ransom's friend Lewis experiences severe demonic temptation in chapter one of *Perelandra*. This link warrants a more in-depth look at the psychology of temptation that the Lewis character-narrator experiences in the *Perelandra* prologue, noting the differences a Screwtapian rereading make.

Though the text cloaks specifically religious language—"I knew what Ransom supposed Maleldil to be" (*Perelandra* 15)—there is no doubt that the "demoniac violence" (16) of the "barrage" (21) Lewis experiences during walk to Ransom's cottage is a series of demonic temptations. Even if sensitive readers are open to linking the speculative universes of *Screwtape* and Ransom, they might be struck by how un*Screwtape*-like the temptation is on the surface of the narrative. In particular, it is not terribly subtle, not the "soft underfoot" *modus operandi* of the senior tempter.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, as William O'Flaherty has argued, it is "keeping things out" that is "The Devil's Best Tool" and "Screwtape's Preferred Method" (*C.S. Lewis Goes to Hell* 270-72; "Battlefield of the Mind"). O'Flaherty mentions dozens of moments where *Screwtape's* preferred approach

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<sup>12</sup> See Letter XII, "the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts," *Screwtape Letters* 65.

is to “keep out of his [i.e., the Patient’s] mind the question” of the Satanic argument (*Screwtape* 18), simultaneously keeping his mind off demonic tactics and honest self-reflection. In particular, this keeping-things-out method does not seem to be the approach in the Unman’s temptation of the Lady of Perelandra and seems somewhat contrary to the mental attack Lewis experiences on the walk to Ransom’s cottage.

While a critical assessment of the Unman’s approach through Screwtape’s eyes is worthwhile (see Lobdell 49-52; Glover 176), I would argue that it is a categorically different kind of event than the barrage Lewis experiences in Worcester. Moreover, part of the critical energy of *The Screwtape Letters* is that the senior demon’s approach is distinctive to other approaches. As it is a Terran temptation scene, and as the temptation is ultimately unsuccessful, it need not be Screwtape’s singular school of thought that determines the attack Lewis experiences in *Perelandra*. However, a closer look at the nature of Screwtape’s “keeping things out” and a look at the atmosphere of the temptation scene show closer links than one might initially suppose.

First, it is notable that although Screwtape claims to work by keeping things out of the Patient’s mind, he is actually working on a higher-order approach. Letter III shows that Screwtape’s approach is more complex as he advises Wormwood in the delicate task of misdirection: “Keep his mind on the inner life. [...] Keep his mind off the most elementary duties by directing it to the most advanced and spiritual ones” (*Screwtape* 20). The point is not merely keeping the Patient from attending to the right things (i.e., evil things), but a plan of concealment, befuddlement, and a Satanic sleight of hand.

The very first demonic epistle lays out Screwtape’s approach well. Screwtape once had a sound atheist in his care that, while reading in the library, had a train of thought that had a potential for dangerous (i.e., spiritually healthy) consequences. Screwtape steadily moves the Patient’s mind away from philosophical logic to the base question of sustenance: “Much better come back after lunch and go into it with a fresh mind” (13). Screwtape may have considered reasonable argument with his patient, who seemed eager to avoid being drawing into his own mental train of consequential thought. “The trouble about argument,” Screwtape opines, “is that it moves the whole struggle onto the Enemy’s own ground” (12; see Williams 52). In hoping that “*argument* was the way to keep him out of the Enemy’s clutches” (11), Wormwood risks the Patient discovering the essential truth of God’s being in reality. Instead, “practical propaganda” has the result of re-centering the spiritual map away from whether an idea is “true or false” and provides new signposts, such as whether it is credible, useful, durable, progressive, rooted, or admirable. As the goal is to discombobulate the Patient rather than to prove what is, after all,

unprovable, Screwtape has a safer approach: “Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the Church” (11).

The higher order of attack, then, is not merely keeping things out or putting them in, but using either of these approaches with the ultimate purpose of moral or spiritual transvaluation. Thus, in this first letter, Screwtape advises Wormwood to interrupt “the fatal habit of attending to universal issues,” and to “fix his attention” on “the stream of immediate sense experiences” (12). While O’Flaherty’s analysis certainly shows that Screwtape thinks it is easier to remove ideas than to plant them, “keeping things out” is simply one tool in the demonic (anti)spiritual toolbelt. It is metaphysical misdirection, a wag the dog approach to cosmic conversation, moving the Patient from metrics of reason, argument, and truth to contextual and subjective values of demonic utility. Thus perplexity is far more potent than philosophical proof, which may involve inserting ideas in the Patient’s head, keeping other ideas out, or simply befogging the Patient altogether.

With this clarification of Screwtapian transvaluation—changing the rules of the game from truth to utility—the *Perelandra* prologue shows an approach that exemplifies Screwtape’s. Turning briefly to the text, Lewis faces a cacophony of mental noise on his walk from the train station. There are dozens of different “temptations” that he faces, including the twinned fear of the “good” and of being drawn in, a temptation to flee, and a temptation to distrust Ransom. In each case, it is a reasonable argument that stabilizes Lewis, redirects his attention to his task, and urges him forward. For example, Lewis becomes fixated upon the Eldila: “The farther I went the more impossible I found it to think about anything except these eldila” (*Perelandra* 12). In facing the utter fear of the Eldila as something supernatural and alien, Lewis is able to think through the false binary of natural and supernatural. Thus, he can then confront his misleading “comfort in the [...] false security and accepted confusion of thought” that the binary invites (11).

The temptation to flee is real for Lewis in this walk. When Lewis realizes he has forgotten his bag, he resists the “immediate impulse” to go back to the station—a feeling at the moment that made it seem “perfectly obvious that I must retrace my steps” (*Perelandra* 11). Fortunately, “reason or conscience awoke and set me once more plodding forwards” (11). A second time, Lewis had the impulse to retreat: “‘Go back, go back,’ it whispered to me, ‘send him a wire, tell him you were ill, say you’ll come some other time—anything.’ The strength of the feeling astonished me” (12). Astonishment is a noted Screwtapian goal, but Lewis’s counterattack takes the form of rational thought: “I stood still for a few moments telling myself not to be a fool” (12). Wondering that it might be a kind of nervous breakdown, in a scene precisely parallel to Screwtape’s atheist not wanting to deal with urgent matters of truth on an empty stomach,

Lewis found a new excuse to avoid meeting Ransom: “Obviously, I wasn’t fit for any such jumpy ‘business’ as his telegram almost certainly referred to” (13). The text does not say what propelled Lewis forward—perhaps merely his sense of duty to Ransom—but he continues walking while suspecting that it was “sheer madness to go on” (13). Even on the doorstep of Ransom’s cabin, Lewis wants to turn and flee: “the impulse to retreat, which had already assailed me several times, leaped upon me with a sort of demoniac violence. Here was my retreat left open, positively inviting me. Now was my chance” (16). Once again, the reasonable side of Lewis’s thought process wins over his panic. Going back held all the dangers that he had somehow won through. Moreover, in what might be a hint of angelic defense forces at play or simply Lewis’s rational side, “something better came into my mind—some rag of sanity and some reluctance to let Ransom down” (16). Taking a mental breath, relying on rational thought rather than mental noise, Lewis tries the door and finds he is safe inside.

The text includes an important verbal clue. Lewis enters Ransom’s cottage, and the door slams behind him (16). This door-slam returns to the root of one of Lewis’s fears on his walk from the station, the fear of getting “drawn in”—“the sense that a door has just slammed and left him on the inside” (10). This fear, linked with his fear of meeting an Eldil, Lewis faces moments after he is inside Ransom’s cottage. Beyond all doubt, an Eldil speaks to Lewis, and he finds himself unable to respond. Rather than alleviating the fear, Lewis finds that his fear rests on a deeper level: “I felt sure that the creature was what we call ‘good,’ but I wasn’t sure whether I liked ‘goodness’ so much as I had supposed” (19). Lewis is disturbed at his encounter of goodness and hopelessness to escape it, but it is ultimately that helplessness that “saved me and steadied me” (19). The logic is evident in the text, “For now I was quite obviously drawn in. The struggle was over. The next decision did not lie with me” (19-20).

It is Ransom who ultimately helps Lewis, but throughout the narrative, Lewis doubts Ransom numerous times. First, Lewis doubts whether Ransom can know what these wholly other creatures, the Eldila, could want, and which side they are truly on. Then a “nasty idea” (12) occurred to Lewis—an example of putting ideas in—that Ransom might have fallen for a cosmic con and opened Earth to alien invaders. This line of thought develops into a kind of trilemma like the one that Lewis the BBC commentator uses in *Mere Christianity* (52; see Bassham 171-225) or that the Professor uses of Lucy’s story in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (46-50), where lunatics or cads are pitted against what can seem like truth-telling improbabilities. Was Ransom on the side of evil and drawing Lewis in, or was he a dupe who is ignorant of the real issues, or was he telling the truth? “How did I know he was even a dupe?” Lewis asks himself. “He might be something worse . . . and again I came to a standstill” (*Perelandra* 13).

While duty to Ransom is clearly part of Lewis's ability to go on, it is ultimately rational thought that steadies Lewis. Lewis himself "had come much too far to dismiss them [i.e., the Eldila] as unreal" (15), and he had a core knowledge of Ransom's character:

The reader, not knowing Ransom, will not understand how contrary to all reason this idea was. The rational part of my mind, even at that moment, knew perfectly well that even if the whole universe were crazy and hostile, Ransom was sane and wholesome and honest. And this part of my mind in the end sent me forward—but with a reluctance and a difficulty I can hardly put into words. What enabled me to go on was the knowledge (deep down inside me) that I was getting nearer at every stride to the one friend: but I *felt* that I was getting nearer to the one enemy—the traitor, the sorcerer, the man in league with "them" . . . walking into the trap with my eyes open, like a fool. (13)

Reason and knowledge do not eradicate the temptation and doubt. Lewis's arguments, however, put the issue back on "the Enemy's own ground," as Screwtape puts it, and Lewis ultimately makes it through the barrage, which at times "was such hard work that I felt as if I were walking against a headwind" (12).

The one thing that Lewis is not able to reason out is his temptation to feel like he is going mad. He not only feels the madness but worries about it, creating a downward spiral of worry about worry that readers can no doubt testify to in their own psychological experience of self-doubt. Lewis nearly loses himself in a cluster of self-bafflement, where "each moment my opinion about sanity changed" (14-15). This battle with madness and the fear of madness, and the various physical sensations that Lewis feels during the attack, demonstrates the close link between the psychological and physiological aspects of the attack. Humans are animals with souls, Screwtape argues, amphibians dwelling in both spirit and flesh (*Screwtape* 44), so "whatever their bodies do affects their souls" (25). Thus, we see a link between Lewis's sensations and his temptations. The atmosphere of Lewis's walk from the train goes from evening gloom to murky fog to early darkness and near-blind dark. And as he walks, his mental state moves from malaise to fear, then to absolute terror and ultimately blinding panic. The darkness and the fear are linked, reciprocal, and leading to a fear of the fear itself that mimics the downward spiral of madness. The temptation is layered with a self-reflective hysteria, as Lewis worries about being duped, considers a dozen manifestations of possible danger, and is terrified by his own insanity.

This tactic, I argue, is precisely the kind of temptation Screwtape would have encouraged when battle lines are drawn. In fact, this chapter in *Perelandra*

seems to be the inversion of Wormwood's unsuccessful temptation in Letter XIII of *Screwtape*. Both patients—Lewis in *Perelandra* and the unnamed "Patient" in *Screwtape*—go for a walk, but they experience temptation differently. Lewis's intellectual terror—which we are to imagine comes exceptionally close to being successful in turning him back—comes from the context of his temptation: it is night, there is mist and darkness, and the shadows form a reciprocal horror that augments and supports the intellectual attack. Lewis experiences not just the sheer physiological terror of darkness, mist, loneliness, and supernatural presence, but these things make him consider the possibility of his own madness. Wormwood, however, allows the Patient to go on a pleasant walk, on a nice day, past nostalgic and beautiful scenery, giving the disastrous context for the Patient to read a book that gives him real pleasure for its own sake. It is at this point that the Patient begins to strengthen in noticeable ways in the narrative; Letter XIII is a turning point in the relatively loose plot of *The Screwtape Letters*. Wormwood lost the battle not merely because of the nature of his internal temptation, but in the context of the attack. As such, the Patient was protected from Wormwood's advances.

While the parallels are not precise as the respective battles in the long-term war have different consequences, I argue that attacks in the first chapters of *Perelandra* are Screwtapian in form as it sets in place the ideal demonic context that is lacking in Wormwood's approach and because it applies Screwtape's approach of misdirection skillfully. Although the demonic attack on the Lewis character-narrator in *Perelandra* is comprised of various kinds of arguments, it is reason and rational thought—including reasonable trust in a friend—that steadies Lewis and keeps him from giving in to the temptation. The temptation follows Screwtape's approach of using misdirection to re-center the Patient's focus by having him concentrate on his own fear, a sense of the unknown, and doubts about his sanity. Where the temptation ultimately fails is in creating doubt about Ransom, which roots Lewis's intellectual response and allows him to press through to the cottage. Even in attending to the soul-body link, as Screwtape encourages Wormwood to do, Lewis's argument of the truth of Ransom's character keeps him trudging forward. The *Perelandra* prologue presupposes *The Screwtape Letters*, showing that the two books can be profitably read together in terms of the psychology of temptation.

#### **SPEAKING IN UNKNOWN TONGUES: WESTON'S MIRACULOUS RECEPTION OF OLD SOLAR**

More briefly, a second example of how *Perelandra* presupposes *Screwtape* is the explanation for the antagonist Weston's acquisition of the Old Solar language in *Perelandra*, which is obscurely described in the text. Weston was one of the great villains of *Out of the Silent Planet*. He had learned some Old

Solar on that planet, but he never went beyond a tourist guide's level of Malacandrian tongues. When the Malacandrian Oyarsa places Weston on trial for the first murders of a planned genocide, he needed Ransom to translate for him on his defense. When they returned to Thulcandra, Ransom strengthened his significant grasp of Old Solar gained from the native Malacandrians through conversation with Eldila, preparing him for the next move in the cosmic resistance. When he went to Perelandra, Ransom spoke comfortably with the Lady of that world in Old Solar. Though her words were often simple and even childlike, and Ransom must improvise at points when there are translational difficulties, her philosophic use of the language is particularly vivid. As Tami Van Opstal argues, communication on Perelandra is so connected to the ancient unity of language Barfield argues for, that speech is sometimes even unnecessary. Moreover, "the Green Lady's own use of language is concrete and metaphorical. [...] Her world is meaningful and unified; she even translates Ransom's abstract terms back into concrete and living terms" (107).

The ways in which Weston/The Unman is an interpretation of Milton's "suttlest Beast" Satanic figure are no doubt worth pursuing in detail. Though there are apparent differences, there is certainly a parallel between the barrage Lewis experiences and the multiple approaches of Weston to tempt the Lady. Moreover, Ransom's inner battle with his "vulnerable self" (*Perelandra* 140-47)—where he is sick of the entire demoniacal conversation—is not unlike the mental spirals of Lewis in the prologue. For Ransom, however, Weston's project is far from subtle. Within minutes of arriving on Venus, Weston holds Ransom up at gunpoint. Impatient with the crudity of it all, Ransom chides Weston to go ahead and "begin and end as soon as possible whatever butcheries and robberies" he intended to perpetrate (88). Ransom is then shocked when he realizes that Weston can converse in "the Old Solar language with perfect fluency" (86). In a lengthy tutorial, Weston informs Ransom that God and the Devil are really both aspects of the same Pure Spirit or Life Force—a proposition that sounds remarkably like the "Materialist Magician" of Letter VII in *Screwtape* (39-40). To support his thesis, Weston offers his Old Solar proficiency as proof of his calling from the Force. How did he learn the language?

"Guidance, you know, guidance," croaked Weston. He was squatting at the roots of his tree with his knees drawn up, and his face, now the colour of putty, wore a fixed and even slightly twisted grin. "Guidance. Guidance," he went on. "Things coming into my head. I'm being prepared all the time. Being made a fit receptacle for it." (94)

There is no doubt in the context that Weston has really been guided by the Eldila of Earth, and was sent to Venus and equipped linguistically by the Oyarsa of Earth, ultimately possessed by the Devil (Lobdell 90-91). What is perhaps



implicit in the text is made explicit by the handwritten preface to *Screwtape*: the Eldila of Earth, devils, also speak Old Solar. Others have written about the Unman Weston as demonic figure (e.g., see Downing, *Planets* 83; Lobdell 90; Schwartz 73-82); what the handwritten preface does is synchronize the possibilities and reassert the link between primary and secondary world. The Oyarsa of Earth can teach Old Solar because it is the native language of his kind, and we know more about Earth's Oyarsa from pictures of "Our Father Below" in *The Screwtape Letters*.

What else would one expect in the speculative universe of Arbol? Languages develop over time, and as Earth's language systems are so different from Old Solar, one might wonder about the demonic linguistic development. The handwritten preface suggests that demons/Fallen Eldila must learn the local language they use in temptation (e.g., English, Kiswahili, Manx, or Japanese), which is also confirmed in the fact that the Oyarsa of Malacandra did not know the many languages of Earth. Linguistically speaking, Eldila are not omni- or supra-sentient (*THS* 202); they must learn languages as Hnau learn them, or at least be exposed to the language before using it.

C.S. Lewis fans and researches have delineated, as far as is possible in published materials, the linguistic system of Old Solar.<sup>13</sup> The handwritten preface adds two dimensions to the linguistic system heretofore unknown. First, the translation from demonic Old Solar to English is "necessarily very free" — a fact that explains the difference in linguistic style between *The Screwtape Letters* and the Old Solar speeches in the Ransom books. Second, there is a linguistic trick within Old Solar that gives deference to The Enemy (God, or Maleldil) in every reference. Dr. Ransom's translation of the Letters uses capital letters for "representing a quite different (and involuntary) phenomenon in the original" ("Unpublished Preface" 297). We can deduce that Lewis's fictional language, Old Solar, is so close to "one of Barfield's 'ancient unities,'" as Ransom calls it in *That Hideous Strength* (261), that God is praised in the very utterance of slighting references or pronouns where God is the referent. Speaking the name of Maleldil, or even giving indirect reference to that Being, then, must have been distasteful to all the Eldila under the Oyarsa of Earth, hence the use of the term, "the Enemy." This distaste might cause Earth's Eldila to develop their own

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<sup>13</sup> E.g., see Hamm; "Old Solar." See also the 11 Aug. 1945 letter to an American linguist, Victor M. Hamm, whom Lewis credits with being "the best Old Solar scholar among my readers so far" (CL II.666). Van Opstel extends the value of this linguistic work in her argument that Old Solar ancient unified language (106-07). *Perelandra* shows the linguistic evolutionary movement that Owen Barfield talked about in *Poetic Diction and History in English Words* in three characters: the Green Lady (ancient unity, original participation), Ransom (recovered unity, final participation), and Weston (established disintegration, abstract nonsense).

patterns of speech over time, but even as they spit out through gritted teeth reference to the Creator of the universe, the essential structure of Old Solar displays deference. Despite these irregularities of translation, according to the handwritten preface, Dr. Ransom is able to create a capable translation of Screwtape's correspondence into English, and Weston is able to learn—or simply to receive—Old Solar from the Oyarsa of Earth.

At one place in the Ransom Trilogy—before the entire speculative framework has been worked out—the question arises of whether angels and demons on Earth are also Eldila. The Malacandrian Oyarsa notes that Earth's Eldila are different in some way, but Ransom was not able to determine in what way (*OSP* 158). We can only conjecture about what this difference may be, but reading *Screwtape* with the Cosmic Trilogy suggests that any difference between Terran demons and extraterrestrial Eldila is the result of the Fall—the great tragedy that sequesters Thulcandra to a secluded corner of the solar system. Given Weston's supernatural reception of Old Solar—not to mention an enhanced strength, though not omnipotence—it is clear that the Bent One of Earth is the Oyarsa of Earth. The Oyarsa of Malacandra explains how the Oyarsa of Thulcandra was a great Eldil who "became bent." The Oyarsa of Earth waged war upon the Earth and in the heavens, endangering not only Thulcandra—a world under his protection—but spilling out violence upon ancient Malacandrians as well. The "Bent Years" dominated until the other Eldila of the Field of Arbol won a great war, driving the Bent Oyarsa back to Earth, where he was then bound (*OSP* 153). The Prince of the Air (Eph 2:2), Lucifer, the Bent One of Earth is, in the speculative universe of Lewis's WWII-era fiction, the Eldila known as Oyarsa of Tellus; the handwritten preface suggests he is also Our Father Below of Screwtape's fictional world.

#### OTHER POSSIBILITIES

The force of my argument, then, is that we no longer have a Ransom *trilogy*; instead, *The Screwtape Letters* is the second book in a rough tetralogy. Moreover, in a recent paper I have published with Lewis handwriting expert Charlie W. Starr, we argue that Lewis attempted to answer *The Screwtape Letters* with a parallel angelic correspondence. "The Archangel Fragment" is a literary experiment, a 239-word fragment that shows the essential problem with writing in a heavenly diction. In a single 231-word sentence, Lewis flies from the negligible to the eternal, from the details of butterfly's wing to divine heights, from human animality to angelic imagination, from a tiny spark to the entire cosmos, from fetal life to glorified, deified humanity. The experiment in divine prose is lost in its own ever-exalting language, but adds critical details to the speculative framework of the Screwtape-Ransom universe—including a reminder that although the Bent Oyarsa rules our world, we are not left without

aid and succor. Finally, if we include *The Dark Tower*—an incomplete story about a parallel space or time, a hellish echo of Cambridge where people are enslaved by a demonic Stinging Man—we really have a Ransom Cycle that forms the bulk of his WWII-era fictional literature.

This analysis is only a beginning toward a reconstruction of the speculative universe of the Field of Arbol. However, there are numerous benefits if we conceive of *The Screwtape Letters* as a Ransom book and Screwtape's fictional world as part of the Field of Arbol. I have already indicated that aspects of *Perelandra* make sense with *Screwtape* in the background. Specifically, *Perelandra* is an extension of the "psychology of temptation" Lewis imagined when he first conceptualized *Screwtape*. Indeed, despite the mythic leap from Tellus to Venus, the temptation of Lewis and the Lady of *Perelandra* are case studies no less revealing in subtlety and piercing relevance to Terran readers than Wormwood's patient. Moreover, *The Screwtape Letters* bridges the far more complex Eldilology of *Perelandra* with the relatively undeveloped vision of the Eldila in *Out of the Silent Planet*. Linking *The Screwtape Letters* to the Ransom books allow us to reconsider the cosmic framework of that series, and augments our understanding of the oft-read but under-studied *Screwtape*. The publication and analysis of the handwritten preface adds to the linguistic analysis of Old Solar—the first new evidence to emerge on the topic in some time.

Finally, this paper, the result of considering significant manuscript evidence in a rereading of canonical texts, is suggestive of new directions in understanding Lewis's WWII-era myth-making project. Downing argues that in the Ransom books, "Lewis makes plain his intent to break down the barriers between myth and history" (*Planets* 141)—an argument that Starr extends in his study on C.S. Lewis and myth, *The Faun's Bookshelf*. The Ransom Cycle, considered as a conceptual whole, proposes a mythic, cosmic, universal language from which all tongues are born, extending the argumentative possibilities of Wolfe and Van Opstal. The Ransom Cycle is situated within a secondary world that spans all of the mythopoeic dimensions of the human and the divine, the ethereal and the earth-bound, darkness and light, and the heavens, the earth, and the worlds beneath the earth. And the Ransom Cycle tells the story of creation and transformation, the Fall of our world and a fall averted,<sup>14</sup> the Incarnation and the Cross as the reconstituted center of time, and an interstellar war where the battle lines are not merely the great theaters of war on Earth, but the threat of European colonial genocide of indigenous peoples, the fate of a newborn world in the temptation of her Lady, the mundane temptations at our kitchen table or on a short walk, and the intimate yearnings

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<sup>14</sup> "Milton wrote the epics of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Mr. C.S. Lewis has essayed the epic of *Paradise Retained*" (Hamm 271).

of the human heart. The extent of Lewis's myth-making in the Ransom Cycle remains to be explored in full. Using newly published manuscript discoveries, however, allows us to deepen our reading of canonical texts, thus expanding our vision of the playful and imaginative possibilities that Lewis invites us into in his WWII-era speculative world-building project.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**BRENTON D.G. DICKIESON** (B.A., M.C.S., Ph.D.)'s research focuses on popular writers like C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and L.M. Montgomery, considering how the creation of fictional universes helps in spiritual formation, theological exploration, and cultural criticism. His popular blog, [www.aPilgrimInNarnia.com](http://www.aPilgrimInNarnia.com), explores the intersections of faith, culture, and fictional literature. He is the author of more than 1,000 academic essays, popular articles, blog posts, and public talks and lectures. Brenton is Lecturer and Preceptor in Signum University's M.A. in Language and Literature, a Sessional Instructor at the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture at the University of Prince Edward Island, a Distance Education Instructor at Regent College, Lecturer in Theology and Literature at Maritime Christian College, and Lecturer in Literature at The King's College, NYC. Brenton's wife, Kerry, is a superstar Kindergarten teacher, and their son, Nicolas, is an emerging recording artist and songwriter. They live together in the almost fantastical land of Prince Edward Island, Canada.