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Gabriel C. Salter
Independent Scholar

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Tellers of Dark Fairy Tales: Common Themes in the Works of C.S. Lewis and Terence Fisher

Abstract

This article explores connections between C.S. Lewis and filmmaker Terence Fisher, notably how their works explore themes like the charm of evil, white magic's dubious nature, and myth hinting at divine truths. By viewing these themes, Fisher and Lewis's common views on fairy tales, and how feedback informed their work, scholars discover nuance in the perceived "Inklings versus secular British culture" dichotomy.

Additional Keywords

hammer horror; russell kirk; christopher lee; peter cushing; gothic horror; dennis wheatley; dark fantasy; roald dahl; david cronenberg; space trilogy; narnia; frankenstein; dracula; gorgon; the devil rides out; aleister crowley; order of the golden dawn



MAKERS OF DARK FAIRY TALES: COMMON THEMES IN THE WORKS OF TERENCE FISHER AND C.S. LEWIS

C. CONNOR SALTER

MENTIONING C.S. LEWIS AND HORROR IN THE SAME SENTENCE will shock some readers. Yes, Roman Catholic culture critic and ghost story writer Russell Kirk argues in “A Cautionary Note on the Ghostly Tale” that his ghost stories were “experiments in the moral imagination,” and that the successful ghost story requires “some theological premise” (402). Kirk goes even further and supports his work by arguing that “the tale of the preternatural—as written by George Macdonald, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and other masters—can be an instrument for the recovery of moral order” (402-403). By Kirk’s argument, ghost stories (and presumably other forms of horror fiction) are related to fantasy in that they are not naturalistic fiction, yet their lack of naturalism doesn’t keep them from exploring theological ideas. Horror, like fantasy, can be theologically-driven.

However, until recently, Kirk’s ideas about horror and preternatural tales have not been popular—at least not among American evangelical Christians, who’ve frequently seen Lewis as their “patron saint” (Packer). American evangelicals have typically supported the popular view that horror is “an intrinsically evil genre” (Godawa 46) without any religious substance. As recently as March 2021, John W. Morehead felt the need to introduce his co-edited book *Theology & Horror* with an article in *Pop Culture & Theology* answering objections by academics and “conservative religious believers” about discussing horror in a theological context (Morehead).

American evangelical nervousness about horror notwithstanding, studies of theology and horror have become increasingly popular. In their introduction to *Theology and Horror*, Brandon R. Grafius and Morehouse cite Timothy Beale’s 2001 monograph *Religion and Its Monsters* as “perhaps the first full-blown” study of theology and popular horror entertainment (viii). Later studies have provided theological explorations of everything from hell imagery in Clive Barker’s *Books of Blood* series (Cowan 3-20; Subissati 227-239) to human identity and violence in the TV show *The Walking Dead* (Parker 165-191). Concurrent with this change, an increasing number of Inklings scholars have

considered links between the Inklings and horror, particularly compared to the Inklings' contemporary H.P. Lovecraft (which will be discussed in detail later). To give a recent example, the Mythopoeic Society's Winter 2022 Seminar was titled *The Inklings and Horror*, with discussions ranging from C.S. Lewis and David Cronenberg (Brians, "Adoring the Head of Alcasan") to Kirk's novel *Lord of the Hollow Dark* and Williams' novel *War in Heaven* (Peralta, "Delight in Horror").¹

A surprising addition to the Inklings and horror conversation appeared in 2002, a year after Beal's monograph was published: Paul Leggett's study *Terence Fisher: Horror, Myth, and Religion [Fisher]*. Leggett argues that Terence Fisher, director of many other gothic horror films released by Hammer Film Productions in the 1950s-1970s, was a "kindred spirit" with the Inklings (Fisher 11). This is a surprising argument, given Fisher's reputation. Fisher's first gothic horror film for Hammer, *The Curse of Frankenstein*, appalled film censors and reviewers by showing groundbreaking gore in vivid technicolor (Pirie 35-39), helping create the "Hammer horror" brand which critics saw as silly or dangerous, certainly never as Christian. If the Inklings and their associates formed a "minor [Christian] literary renaissance" in British culture (Duriez 145), Hammer horror looks like the anti-Christian art that killed this renaissance. However, Leggett builds his claim on the first book-length study of Fisher, which argued that "faith in Christ was the bedrock of Fisher's system of values" (Dixon 366). Fisher's films may have seemed immoral, but contained various theological ideas. Leggett calls these films "spiritual allegories," exploring themes like the charm of evil and atheistic science's dangers (Leggett, *Fisher* 1-2). From this perspective, Fisher's horror films sound similar to Lewis' concerns about atheistic science raised in *The Abolition of Man*, while the charming evil brings to mind his concerns about the allure of "The Inner Ring."

Leggett's claims did not have much impact at the time. His book has been cited by film critic Stephen D. Greydanus ("The Cross and the Vampire" 1), Terry Lindvall in his study on film and religion (31), Markus K. Harmes in his study of *The Curse of Frankenstein* (20), and Mike Duran in a Christian defense of horror (12-13). None of these authors expand Leggett's connection between Fisher and the Inklings. More recently, Leggett returned to his thesis in his 2018 book *Good Versus Evil in the Films of Christopher Lee*. While new evidence indicates Leggett overestimated Fisher's religious convictions,² his analysis of the themes

¹ Published in this issue of *Mythlore*. (Ed.)

² Fisher was raised in a Christian Science household and learned Church of England teachings in school (Dalton 20-21), but rarely discussed his religious views. However, Fisher believed in the afterlife and "the eternal Battle between Good and Evil" (Dalton 467). The latter point contradicts his Christian Science upbringing, at least in that respect

in Fisher's films holds up. Surprisingly, Leggett misses an obvious point: he observes here and there how Fisher's films resemble the Inklings' work, without noticing many of the ideas he cites have clear parallels in Lewis's fiction. Exploring how these ideas connect to Lewis's films provides new opportunities to assess Fisher as a horror filmmaker who explored theological ideas, and an opportunity to expand the developing discussion about the Inklings and horror.

LEWIS, HORROR, AND THEOLOGY

Before exploring the common theological ideas in Lewis's and Fisher's work, it's important to consider past discussions about Lewis and horror. Scholars have rarely described Lewis as a horror author, although Lewis recalls a May 1923 conversation when he and a friend plotted a "horror play." Lewis's description, a play about a scientist who "discovers a means of keeping the brain and motor nerves alive in a corpse by means of injections" (*All My Road Before Me* 238) may have inspired the revived head of Alcasan in *That Hideous Strength* (Hooper 231). The play outline also strongly resembles *Frankenstein*, and several scholars have noted connections between Lewis's work and gothic literature. Mervyn Nicholson compares Screwtape's hunger for souls to Dracula's hunger for blood (17). Furthermore, Nicholson compares the dual narratives of a man and his wife (Mark and Jane Studdock) in *That Hideous Strength* to the dual narratives of a man and his fiancée (Jonathon Harker and Mina Murray) in *Dracula* (17). Sanford Schwartz builds on Nicholson's insights, showing how Mark's entry into N.I.C.E. headquarters, while naively missing sinister warnings, is similar to Harker's entry to Dracula's castle (102). Schwartz contends that Lewis's "blend of the realistic and supernatural is a virtual catalogue of Gothic conventions," including dreams about events the dreamer couldn't know about and craving the knowledge to dominate life (93-94). Despite these interesting comparisons, some scholars have found it difficult to connect gothic literature with Lewis or the other Inklings. Jonathon Greenaway suggests in *Theology, Horror, and Fiction* that because 19th-century gothic literature often explores theological ideas without reaching orthodox conclusions, it's been easier for scholars to apply theology to "writers who appear to be more theologically valuable such as C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and the work of the Inklings" (14). As we shall see, Fisher's gothic horror films, including his adaptations of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, frequently engage with theological questions while using images and conclusions comparable to

putting him closer to orthodox Christian tradition. Thus, Leggett overstates in calling Fisher a "challenging Christian apologist" (*Fisher* 156), but some of Fisher's views certainly parallel Lewis's views.

Lewis's work. Thus, looking at theological ideas in Fisher's work can help bridge comparisons between the Inklings and gothic literature.

Perhaps the largest discussion about Lewis and horror has been the growing literature about the Inklings and H.P. Lovecraft (and Lovecraft's associates who contributed to the Cthulhu Mythos). Thanks to L. Sprague DeCamp's 1987 letter to *Mythlore* about sending Tolkien a copy of his anthology *Swords and Sorcery* (41), scholars know Tolkien owned and read a book containing Lovecraft's short story "The Doom that Came to Sarnath." However, Tolkien's feelings about that specific story are not known, nor has it been established whether it influenced any of Tolkien's writings. John Stanifer observes that Lovecraft confirmed in a 1934 letter to Clark Ashton Smith that he read Charles Williams's novels *War in Heaven* and *Many Dimensions*; Lovecraft described enjoying the novels on a limited level because he did not share Williams's cosmological views (173). Eric Rauscher has suggested that Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu" inspired Charles Williams's character P'o-L'u in his Arthurian poetry—these characters not only have similar-sounding names,³ but both live as rulers somewhere in the South Pacific and are associated with octopi and nightmares (29-34). Dale Nelson has made an interesting (but contested) speculation that a short story by H.P. Lovecraft's colleague Donald Wandrei inspired *The Great Divorce* ("A 'Scientifiction Source'" 37; "Lovecraft Circle" 19).⁴

Alongside debates on whether Lewis or other Inklings read any authors in Lovecraft's circle, there are ongoing discussions about how Lewis used imagery comparable to Lovecraft's work. Nelson describes *The Dark Tower* as "a story with strong horror elements" and compares it to Lovecraft's "The Shadow Out of Time" ("Lovecraft Circle" 21). Nelson also sees parallels between Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* and Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet* (20). Philip Zaleski and Carol Zaleski describe N.I.C.E.'s world domination plan in *That Hideous Strength* as "Lovecraftian fantasy" (327). Certainly, the bent eldila in *That Hideous Strength* (dark beings from another plane of existence, dominating human life) resemble the many extraterrestrial beings in Lovecraft's

³ While the character similarities (and Rauscher's notes about two other Williams works similar to Lovecraft stories) make this a viable comparison, the similar names are coincidental. Lindop states that Williams found P'o-L'u, "a medieval Chinese name for present-day Barus in north-west Sumatra," while reading historical maps in the Oxford University Press Library (248).

⁴ In his 2006 *Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society* article and his 2018 *Mallorn* article, Nelson argues the story Lewis credits with inspiring *The Great Divorce* (ix-x) was Wandrei's short story "Colossus." Douglas A. Anderson asserts in *Tales Before Narnia* that in fact, Charles F. Hall's short story "The Man Who Lived Backwards" is the correct story (283).

fiction, just as N.I.C.E. resembles the secretive communities or organizations that sometimes further the dark beings' aims in Lovecraft stories like *The Shadow over Innsmouth*. John Stanifer compares Lewis's descriptions of Charn in *The Magician's Nephew* to Lovecraft's descriptions of R'lyeh in "The Call of Cthulhu," two ruined cities home to "a slumbering power just waiting for some hapless soul to wake up said power and unleash its reign of terror" (166). The opening of *Perelandra* also resembles many Lovecraft stories: a man who feels vague unease as if something otherworldly is near, then existential terror when he encounters a paranormal entity (1.12-19).

The fact that *Perelandra's* opening scene ends with the narrator surviving and realizing this paranormal being is benevolent highlights how Lewis and Lovecraft take their imagery in two different theological conclusions. As evidenced in Lovecraft's letter about Williams's novels, Lovecraft avoided the conventional religious view of the cosmos, preferring atheism; he built his stories to concluding moments where protagonists die or live knowing that a terrible apocalypse is pending. His version of *Perelandra* would have ended with the narrator dying from shock, or waking up after a blackout to realize the eldila (no doubt interplanetary invaders) are still out there. Stanifer highlights how Lewis and Lovecraft use similar imagery in *The Magician's Nephew* and "The Call of Cthulhu," but Jadis is eventually vanquished, while Cthulhu "presumably lives to conquer the human race another day" (173). While Lewis and Lovecraft both provided some horrifying stories with theological implications, one portrayed a nihilistic theology, the other an orthodox Judeo-Christian theology.

Another openly atheistic horror storyteller who has been compared to Lewis is David Cronenberg, the director behind horror films such as *The Fly*. Mark Brians describes Alcasan's revived head in *That Hideous Strength* as an example of body horror, "anticipating David Cronenberg by twenty years" ("Adoring the Head of Alcasan"). The term *body horror* was coined by Phillip Brophy for horror narratives about "the destruction of the Body [as well as] the fear of one's own body, of how one controls and relates to it" (1). Cronenberg's body horror narratives generate horror not just from gore (body parts thrown around, gushing blood, etc.), which Stephen King calls the "the gag reflex of revulsion" technique (25). Rather, the deeper threat in Cronenberg's films is that the human body is being broken down, violated, or reshaped. In *The Fly*, scientist Seth Brundle merges with a fly during a teleportation experiment and realizes he is becoming something between a human and a fly, a new organism. The horror of Alcasan's head being kept alive after death, divorced from its body, reshaped for a new purpose, can certainly be seen as body horror. However, it is not the first time Lewis enters that territory. In *The Pilgrim's Regress*, he shows the protagonist's experience trapped in a giant's prison:

Now I dreamed that the giant's eyes had this property, that whatever they looked on became transparent. [...] A woman was seated near him, but he did not know it was a woman, because, through the face, he saw the skull and through that the brains and the passages of the nose, and the larynx, and the saliva moving in the glands and the blood in the veins: and lower down the lungs panting like sponges, and the liver, and the intestines like a coil of snakes. (*The Pilgrim's Regress* 51)

Lewis doesn't only generate horror from the gag reflex of revulsion (the panting lungs, the blood moving through the veins), but through what the giant does to the woman's physical boundaries. Without physically tearing her body apart, the giant has exposed the woman's insides (intimate organs that skin is designed to hide) for public view. The woman's personal sanctity has been violated as her body's usual order has been broken.

Since body horror functions on people's inherent sense that the human body has a design that is being broken, it raises theological questions—does the human body have a universally recognized design, and therefore a designer? Cronenberg's atheism means his horror stories raise these theological questions without reaching orthodox conclusions, while Lewis accepts that direction. In *The Pilgrim's Regress*, the protagonist's belief in personal sanctity leads to him being thrown out of the giant's prison (52), and he continues on a journey to Christian faith. In *That Hideous Strength*, Mark Studdock feels horror at Alcasan's head and the realization that Alcasan's mind isn't speaking through the head, which shows that N.I.C.E. is seeking a vision of "human personhood where the mind, that too, can be disposed of" (Brians). Eventually, Studdock defects from these scientists who don't value personhood and becomes an ally of Ransom's fellowship, who seek a holistic relationship between God and his creations, a relationship that honors personhood.

While *That Hideous Strength* may be Lewis's only full-fledged horror narrative, he employs some horrific images even in the Chronicles of Narnia. Along with the aforementioned scene in *The Magician's Nephew* that resembles Lovecraft's work, there are scenes like the terrifying "I'm hunger, I'm thirst" monologue in *Prince Caspian* (12.166). This monologue is terrifying not just because of its content, but because Lewis holds off revealing the speaker is a werewolf—the characters cannot tell what this visitor is, hence there is no way to know how to confront or defeat him. Lewis utilizes the terror of the unseen/implied again in *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader,"* where the ship passes the island where nightmares come true: Rhince says, "I can hear *them* crawling up the sides of the ship" and Caspian says, "*It's* just going to settle on the mast" (12.185). Stephen King refers to the fear of the unseen/implied as a key element in horror stories: "what's behind the door or lurking at the top of the stairs is never as frightening as the door or the staircase itself" (117). Once

audiences see a monster, no matter how bizarre, they are frightened but “oddly relieved” (116). What can be seen can be assessed, defined, and potentially defeated. What is implied is undefinable and potentially endless, which Kirk J. Schneider argues is key to what horrifies humans: “the world of the nightmares and grotesque” horrifies us because of “its *unstoppability*, its *endlessness*” (6). Given how Lewis employs classic horror techniques for these scenes, one can agree with William Thompson that Lewis “incorporates various elements of horror throughout Narnia to create a composite fantasy” (“The Story, the Narrator, and the Reader”). Thus, Narnia can be seen as a complex intersection between fantasy and horror, which fits Jessica R. McCort’s argument that children’s literature (particularly fairy tales) has often combined horror and fantasy elements, especially before book marketing began treating children’s horror as a distinct subgenre (6). Narnia, like many fairy tales from the Grimms’s fairy tales to *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, contains dark moments and shows the permeable line between horror and fantasy. Here, Kirk’s statement about preternatural tales, connecting his ghost stories to Lewis’s fantasy stories, is immensely helpful: Kirk recognizes that the line between horror and fantasy is often permeable and that both genres consider theological ideas. This framework enables one not only to appreciate horror as a valid genre with theological ideas, but also to see how Lewis’s fairy tales simultaneously connect to fantasy and horror.

TELLERS OF DARK FAIRY TALES

It’s at this point, the way fairy tales may contain horror and fantasy elements, that we see a clear connection between Lewis’s and Fisher’s worldviews. Fisher disliked the term “horror” (Dalton 472), saying in a much-cited 1976 interview, “Please—I never made horror films. They’re fairy tales for adults” (qtd. in. Shorter, “Giving Them the Creeps” 16). This phrase strongly resembles the subtitle of *That Hideous Strength*, “A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown-Ups,” while the thrust of Fisher’s argument parallels Lewis’s argument that Professor Haldane misunderstood the Space Trilogy. Lewis argues that Haldane cannot critique the Space Trilogy for inaccurate scientific statements about space travel, because the books are “romances,” an older term for fantasy adventure stories (“A Reply to Professor Haldane” 71). Like Fisher, Lewis redefines what genre his work falls into, pushing his critics to reconsider their expectations.

While Fisher never wrote anything on fairy tales comparable to Lewis’s various writings on the subject, he did elaborate on his view of fairy tales for adults. In his foreword to Alan Frank’s book *Horror Films*, Fisher asserted, “the best horror stories are adult fairy tales, no more and no less” (12). In a 1975 interview, Fisher reiterated that his films were fairy tales: “Period vampire stories—even Frankenstein—are fairy tales. It is fantasy—grim fantasy, and

grim fairy tale. That is a pun. But it's a good pun, because Grimm wasn't a gentle storyteller, was he?" (qtd. in Ringel 22). As I have noted elsewhere, this comment echoes Tolkien's defense of the Grimms in "On Fairy-Stories" (Salter 1). It seems poetic that Tolkien's defense of grim fairy tales was first published in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* in December 1947 (Collier 1), and Fisher's first grim fairy tale premiered in May 1957 (Pirie 33), seven months shy of the book's 10th anniversary. While there's no established evidence that Fisher read Tolkien's or Lewis's work, his vision of dark fairy tales parallels their visions.

Not only did Fisher see his work in fairy tale terms, but several scholars have affirmed this view. David Pirie calls *The Curse of Frankenstein* "a colourful and witty fairy story with a few dark twists" (35). Paul Hutchings argues that Fisher's film *Dracula* takes place in "a world that, for all its solid physicality, stands apart from quotidian notions of the real, that in certain respects has a magical character" (*Dracula* 62). Thus, Fisher's claim that his films are fairy tales is more than just quibbling because he disliked the term "horror." In the same way that Lewis's children's stories can be seen as dark fairy tales that combine fantasy and horror, Fisher's films can be seen as dark fairy tales that draw on both the gothic horror tradition and have magical elements that tie them to fantasy.

Seeing Fisher and Lewis as tellers of dark fairy tales helps bridge the apparent genre gap between Fisher's gothic horror stories and Lewis's science fiction/fantasy stories. As the previous discussions about Lewis and horror fiction show, he may have only written one book (*That Hideous Strength*) that can be fully categorized as a horror narrative, but most of his fiction has individual scenes which could qualify as horror. One could argue that John Clute's definition of dark fantasy, "a tale which incorporates a sense of Horror, but which is clearly Fantasy rather than Supernatural Fiction," applies to at least *The Dark Tower* (Clute). Lewis's stories for children and adults play with the ambiguous line between horror and fantasy, as do Fisher's films. Their stories use horror imagery, but often have fairy tales' magical character, making them viable entries in both genres—thereby fitting Kirk's larger label encompassing horror and fantasy, "the tale of the preternatural" (402). Since traditional fairy tales also have a strong moral code, this combination allowed Fisher and Lewis to explore themes that may not be possible in naturalistic tales. As we shall see, their stories often used similar themes and images—themes and images with explicit theological concerns, and conclusions more in line with orthodox Christian tradition than storytellers like Lovecraft or Cronenberg.

THE CHARM OF EVIL

The first common theological idea that Fisher and Lewis convey is the charm of evil. In their dark fairy tales, evil is deadly but often takes a pleasing

form. Fisher's wife Morag observed, "He had a thing about the charm of evil, that evil has an attraction" (qtd. in Dixon 33). Many writers have noted how Fisher's *Dracula* film emphasized Count Dracula's erotic appeal. Dixon calls Fisher the first filmmaker "to be given comparatively free rein to explore the repulsion/attraction mechanic that informs the essence of *Dracula*" (257). As part of that, Fisher changed the source material to emphasize the charm of evil. In the novel, Jonathon Harker describes Dracula as an old man with a strange face including "peculiarly arched nostrils" and "very massive" eyebrows and visible fangs (Stoker 22), not to mention colorless skin and hairy hands with long nails (Stoker 20, 22-23). In Fisher's film, Christopher Lee's Dracula is "attractive and sensual" (Leggett, *Fisher* 56), not to mention charismatic: "the first thing we notice about the most evil man in the world is his charm and gentility" (Leggett, *Good Versus Evil* 20). Thus, Fisher eschews gothic literature's interest in phrenology for something more nuanced, something comparable to the warning in 2 Corinthians 11:14 that "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."

Fisher transforms his villain in similar ways for *The Devil Rides Out*, based on Dennis Wheatley's 1934 novel. Like the book, the film follows heroes rescuing their friends from Satanist Damien Mocata—Wheatley describes Mocata as "a fleshy, moon-faced man" with a bald head and a lisp (14). Wheatley's biographer Phil Baker claims this description is based on Aleister Crowley, with mannerisms likely based on Montague Summers (328). Wheatley interviewed both men for research purposes, but the depiction also fits Wheatley's larger schema: nearly all Mocata's followers (except those who defect to goodness) have ugly features or disabilities, probably following Alfred Adler's theory that inferiority complexes drive antisocial behavior (Baker 327-328). Wheatley's antagonist is evil, so he must be ugly.

Since Fisher saw charm as evil's central attack, he took the opposite approach. Using a rare chance to cast his own actors rather than Hammer's contracted actors (Dixon 361), Fisher hired Charles Gray. Best known for playing a debonair Bond villain in *Diamonds Are Forever*, Gray often played characters with "hauteur and elegance" (Shorter, "Charles Gray" 1). Gray used his charm to full effect in *The Devil Rides Out*, and thus Fisher "transforms Mocata from a hideous foreigner to a dapper and charming English gentleman with a red carnation in his buttonhole" (Pirie 74). Wheatley's ugly, suspiciously foreign Satanist becomes a proper English gent who doesn't look too different from his opponents. Thus, with both *Dracula* and *Mocata*, Fisher trades dualism (good and evil characters who are physically polar opposites) or Adlerian phrenology (villains with bizarre faces and disabilities) for a nuanced view that evil can masquerade as goodness. His nuanced view fits Biblical warnings about sin's attractiveness, making *The Devil Rides Out* a dark fairy tale with a theological warning: beware the charming serpent.

In *Dracula* and *The Devil Rides Out*, Fisher shows the charm of evil as a combination of social and (at least for *Dracula*) erotic charm. Fisher makes social charm a much clearer point of attack in his five films following Baron Victor Frankenstein. While Fisher's Frankenstein sometimes seduces women, his primary weapon is that "he is a supremely attractive and dynamic monster" (*Dracula* 33). Harmes argues that when Fisher made *The Curse of Frankenstein*, he drew on earlier experience working on Gainsborough Studio period films (78-81), which often followed "wicked aristocracy" (88). Frankenstein is a respected Baron living in a lavish castle, his social position hiding his crimes. Fisher even employs the classic period drama "'upstairs/downstairs' aesthetic" where decadent settings hide hidden inner worlds of intrigue (Harmes 77). The castle has an outer world (castle halls where Frankenstein entertains guests) and a darker inner world (Frankenstein's upstairs laboratory). This pattern continues in the sequel *Revenge of Frankenstein*, where Frankenstein dresses like a dandy to meet patients in his well-furnished office; after hours, he enters an undecorated laboratory to perform experiments. Thus, like many horror stories or traditional fairy tales, Fisher's Frankenstein films are stories with a clear warning: evil often hides behind respectability.

While Lewis eschews male villains with erotic charms, his dark fairy tales feature several villains who use social charm to hide their true intentions. When Ransom meets Weston and Devine in *Out of the Silent Planet*, he's suspicious but rationalizes that his old schoolmate Devine wouldn't do anything sinister (1.15). Mark Studdock watches Bracton College's insider group "with awe and with little understanding," then "intense pleasure" when he joins them (*That Hideous Strength* 1.15). The insiders include Devine, who impresses Mark with his luxurious car (2.47). Even after Mark sees N.I.C.E.'s true intentions, he longs to join "the true inner circle of all" (12.257). The appeal of the "Inner Ring" (Lewis, "Inner Ring" 143) can be just as tempting as lust.

With their female villains, Fisher and Lewis use mythic and sexual imagery to tell dark fairy tales about the charm of evil. Fisher takes a mythic turn in *The Gorgon*, in which a woman named Carla transforms into a monster who turns people to stone. The gorgon comes from Greco-Roman mythology, whose monsters often partake in bloodshed and sexual violence. Fisher's film makes blood and lust integral to the plot—the gorgon's first victim is a pregnant woman chasing her lover (00:04:05-00:05:00). Dr. Namaroff covers up the gorgon's deeds because he desires Carla; meanwhile, Peter Heitz's love for Carla distracts from his mission to defeat the gorgon. In the climax, the gorgon watches Namaroff and Heitz fight, like a queen seeing knights duel for her favor (01:18:30-01:20:05). Leggett argues the mythic imagery extends beyond Greco-Roman sources: Fisher's gorgon fits the "bloodthirsty and overtly sexual" mother goddess archetype of many pagan religions, from Ishtar to Astarte

(Fisher 115). As a mother goddess who seduces, then demands her conquests' blood, Fisher's gorgon provides a mythic image of charming evil who predates Dracula, as well as a theological image of idolatry: the seducer who effectively demands to be worshipped, taking the attention only due to God himself.

Lewis employs mother goddess imagery for Jadis and the Green Lady. When readers meet Jadis (at this time known as "the White Witch") in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* [*Lion*], Edmund first notes her beauty (3.31). Jadis behaves in a maternal way, having Edmund sit at her feet in the sledge (*Lion* 4.35) and offering his favorite snack, Turkish Delight (4.36-37). Jadis then tempts Edmund to visit her so she can make him a Prince (4.38-39). Jadis doesn't offer her body to Edmund, but giving a child exotic candy suggests a predatory image: she is grooming Edmund.

Pagan overtones follow when Edmund fails to follow Jadis's instructions. To stall the ancient prophecy, Jadis discusses killing Edmund on the stone table "where it has always been done before" (*Lion* 13.135), an image evoking a ritual sacrifice. Ultimately, Jadis kills Aslan with a stone knife on the stone table, which can be seen as a pagan ceremony with her as the priestess slaughtering the sacrifice. Jadis nominally performs this ceremony to appease the Deep Magic, but her true motivation is to promote the worship of herself.

When Lewis later published *The Magician's Nephew*, the White Witch is known by her proper name Jadis, so readers don't immediately realize they are the same character. Again, the first information readers receive is her looks: Jadis's beauty affects Diggory to the point that he always remembers her as the most beautiful woman he ever saw (4.53). Jadis assumes that Uncle Andrew is a grand magician who desires her (5.70-71). Once in London, Jadis treats Uncle Andrew like a child, examining his face (6.77) and making him her servant (6.78). Despite this, Uncle Andrew imagines that Jadis loves him (6.82-83). However, when Uncle Andrew lectures Jadis for mistreating him, he seems more like an angry child than a lover (9.113-114).

The book's climactic scene in the magic apple garden brings the mother goddess imagery to the forefront. Jadis tempts Diggory to eat a magic apple, "and you and I will both live forever and be king and queen of this whole world" (*Magician's Nephew* 13.175). Tempting Diggory to defy Aslan's wishes and eat the apple recalls the serpent tempting Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-7). Since Jadis demands worship from everyone, offering herself as Diggory's queen would mean a marriage where Jadis would be more a controlling mother than a partner. The offer also requires that Diggory abandon his mother, highlighting the perverted maternity (Jadis as spouse and maternal substitute). Thus, this scene makes the dark sexual implications of *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* more explicit.

Jadis's interactions with men in *The Magician's Nephew* provide a dark foreboding of the future: readers learn how she got to Narnia and her depravity becomes clearer. She is the mother goddess who demands worship (from everyone she meets), seduces then abuses (with Diggory, Uncle Andrew, and Edmund), and sacrifices victims in her own worship ceremonies (Aslan, replacing Edmund). Stanifer notes that Jadis and Cthulhu are both tyrannical leaders willing to sacrifice their acolytes (171-172). Her seductive qualities add another layer of horror, making her not only a theological threat (taking the worship that only God deserves), but also a mythic image of the dangers of lust.

The Green Lady in *The Silver Chair* also combines maternal attributes with beauty and proffered marriage, alongside mythological and Biblical imagery. Her beauty is established early by Lord Drinian (*Silver Chair* 4.59). When the heroes meet the bewitched Prince Rilian, he says he shall marry the Green Lady (11.158) and that "no mother has taken pains more tenderly for her child." Eustace sums up their relationship by calling Rilian "a great baby, really" (11.159). Biblical and mythic imagery arrives via the Green Lady's serpent form. She not only turns into a serpent but as Lisa Hopkins notes, a green serpent: "the colour, in popular iconography, of the serpent in the Garden of Eden" (364). The fact that Rilian is enchanted by the Green Lady, made into "the slave of my mother's slayer" (*Silver Chair* 12.185), hearkens back to Greco-Roman mythology. Amanda M. Niedbala compares Rilian's enchantment to Odysseus held by Calypso (79). Rilian also shares traits with Oedipus, which makes the Green Lady a more malevolent Queen Jocasta. If the Green Lady's plans succeed, Rilian must eventually kill his father to truly conquer Narnia, then marry his mother figure (the Green Lady). Lewis may not have been thinking of Sigmund Freud's theories when he wrote that Rilian looks a "little bit like Hamlet" (*Silver Chair* 11.151), but it fits the Oedipal schema: both princes are fixated on their mother figures.

Whether it's the in-group's allure (Devine and N.I.C.E.), decadence hiding darkness (Frankenstein), or the mother goddess' perverse sexual attraction (The Gorgon, The White Witch, The Green Lady), each image highlights the charm of evil. Theological concerns that this charm can lead to sexual sin or idolatry show up clearly in these dark fairy tales. Thus, Fisher's and Lewis's dark fairy tales are clearly tales "for the recovery of moral order" (Kirk 403).

TRUE MYTH AND THE DEMONIC WITHIN MYTH

To say that Lewis wrote dark fairy tales containing mythic imagery is hardly surprising, given his much-documented interest in myth as a means to convey truth. Biographers often mention Lewis's 1931 conversation with J.R.R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson where Tolkien called Christ's resurrection a mythic

story that actually happened (Carpenter 44-45). Thus, mythology can have hints of truth about the supernatural realm. Lewis utilized the idea of myths pointing to deeper realities in several stories, such as when Ransom explains that mythological gods like Venus are the natural counterparts of the eldila ruling particular planets, and those gods give hints of the eldilas' traits (*That Hideous Strength* 14.313-314). For example, Mercury is the patron god of wordplay ("Mercury"), and when Mercury's eldila descends upon Ransom's home, inhabitants engage in wordplay (*That Hideous Strength* 15.318-319).

The prospect of myths pointing to deeper spiritual realities naturally raises the question of whether demons, as well as God, could be hiding behind mythological beings. Fisher and Lewis both produce dark fairy tales that address that possibility, utilizing horror's long tradition of stories about the terrible fates of people who dabble in things best left untouched.

Lewis explores mythological figures representing (or disguising) demonic beings in several works. Julianne Johnson sees the story of Maleldil the Young fighting the Bent One in *Out of the Silent Planet* as a mythic retelling of Jesus fighting Satan (27-28). Nancy-Lou Patterson shows how when Lewis first describes Tash in *The Horse and His Boy*, he uses pagan and devilish terms (23). *The Last Battle* takes the Satanic association further when the ape Shift calls on Tash, and Tash appears (*Last Battle* 8.92-93). Poggin the dwarf comments, "[t]his fool of an Ape, who didn't believe in Tash, will get more than he bargained for! He called for Tash: Tash has come" (8.94). In the final conflict, King Tirian throws Shift into a stable and Tash eats Shift (11.131, 13.164). Shift's co-conspirator Rishda Tarkaan ends up in the stable and Tash says, "Thou has called me into Narnia, Rishda Tarkaan. Here I am. What hast thou to say?" Tash then picks his summoner up, and Peter expels them both to a darker place (12.150). Since Rishda "did not believe in Tash at all" (15.186), his death highlights his foolishness: he doesn't believe in gods, so he doesn't expect problems when he invokes a pagan god. The pagan god proves to be a Satanic entity who claims Rishda's life.

Fisher's film *The Mummy* plays on similar themes, depicting ancient Egyptian polytheism as a mythology with evil spirits at its core. An Egyptian princess's funeral is "the occasion for an orgy of sacrifice and murder" (Leggett, *Fisher* 107). When a priest is caught trying to resurrect the princess, the authorities cut off his tongue and mummify him alive (00:44:15-00:46:30). In this film, ancient Egyptian polytheism is "an expression of [...] the Devil's malevolence" (Leggett, *Fisher* 108). When three English archeologists find the Mummy in 1895, one resurrects the Mummy with a magic scroll (00:10:15-00:10:45). When the archeologists return home, an Egyptian named Mehemet (who warned against opening the tomb) transports the Mummy to kill the "desecrators." While *The Mummy* doesn't explicitly reference Satan, Mehemet

resembles the Satanists in many of Wheatley's thrillers, which Fisher admired (Dalton 419). In a very atmospheric scene, Fisher shows Mehemet wearing a ceremonial cloak over his suit, saying prayers in a shrine installed in his English country house (00:47:20-0:48:00). This scene, combining English décor with occult paraphernalia, resembles an early scene in *The Devil Rides Out*: the heroes gatecrash a London party and find a pentagram in the "observatory" (00:03:15-00:08:00). Fisher's *The Mummy* and *The Devil Rides Out* both exhibit the posh occultism of Wheatley's fiction, "a world of pentagrams in country house libraries, a place where rare tomes and old brandies meet the Prince of Darkness" (Baker 9).

However, while Wheatley's writing makes Satanism appear "strangely seductive" (Baker 9), *The Mummy* makes Mehemet distinguished but not seductive—and, like Rishda Tarkaan, he is headed for a fall. One archeologist has a wife resembling the Egyptian princess, and her presence stops the Mummy from killing her husband (01:05:00). When Mehemet attacks the archeologist's wife, the Mummy kills Mehemet (01:23:25-01:23:40). Leggett argues this scene shows Mehemet is ultimately self-centered: he seeks "revenge on those who defied the gods of Egypt, which is to say, those who have defied him" (*Good Versus Evil* 39). In that context, Mehemet's death parallels Rishda Tarkaan's death: a dabbler invokes a mythological deity for self-centered purposes, cannot control the demonic force, and pays with his life.

In telling dark fairy tales about villains who invoke pagan mythic deities only to be killed by the demonic forces behind those mythic deities, Fisher and Lewis contribute to the horror tradition where someone who experiments with black magic gets consumed by whatever they summoned. For example, in M.R. James' "Casting the Runes," occultist Mr. Karswell attempts to put a curse on someone he dislikes but then gets killed by the powers he invoked (206-233). Kirk provides a variation on the idea in *Lord of the Hollow Dark*, where occultist Appollinax summons a spirit that he means to control, but the spirit arrives at another's bidding and kills Appollinax (322-3). Both the novel and film *The Devil Rides Out* use this theme, with Mocata summoning the Angel of Death to kill a woman but the Angel eventually taking Mocata instead (Wheatley 318) (01:30:12-01:30:42). While each of these horror stories carries the theological implication that someone has been punished for dabbling in black magic, depending on the author and the story's surrounding elements, the implication may be more or less explicit. Peralta shows that Kirk makes this theological implication clear, that Appollinax "is meddling in forces he can't possibly understand, let alone control" (135). As we shall see, the way white magic is used in *The Devil Rides Out* complicates what seems like a clear-cut story about dabblers being punished and abstainers surviving. At least in Lewis's *The Last Battle* and Fisher's *The Mummy*, the theological warning is clear: remember that

“the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons” (1 Corinthians 10:20, *The Holy Bible New International Version*).

THE LAWFULNESS OF WHITE MAGIC

Not only do Fisher’s and Lewis’s dark fairy tales address the possibility of demons hiding behind mythic disguises and the dangers of black magic, but also the theological questions that white magic provokes. In *The Devil Rides Out*, a woman named Tanith dies and de Richleau summons her spirit for information. In Wheatley’s novel, de Richleau uses a combination of blood, incense, and hair (252-254) as well as meditation involving “rhythmic, inaudible Raja Yoga breathing” (254) to summon Tanith, whose “astral body” (257) appears. In the film, de Richleau uses the aforementioned blood and hair, but instead of meditation, he hypnotizes his friend Marie Eaton and makes ceremonial gestures while invoking angels (“before me Raphael, behind me Gabriel, on my right hand Michael, on my left hand Uriel”) (01:15:00-01:15:40). After burning the materials to summon Tanith, de Richleau finishes the ritual saying, “Osiris slain [...] Osiris risen” (01:16:25-01:16:35). Marie speaks in Tanith’s voice, answering de Richleau’s questions (01:17:40-01:19:45). The whole scene, an allegedly Christian hero calling on a dead person’s soul, comes across as bizarre. Stephen D. Greydanus calls the ceremony “a sanitized form of what is effectively necromancy or spiritism,” but observes that de Richleau “takes the trouble to establish that the spirit he has contacted comes from heaven, not hell, asking her to verify that she acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ” (Greydanus). This comment is particularly relevant since the ceremony’s words appear in both white and black magic ceremonies.

The invocation of Raphael, Gabriel, Michael, and Uriel appears in several occult rituals, including Arthur Edward Waite’s Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram for the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross (13), which is generally regarded as a “white magic” (or *magia*) organization. However, the phrase’s origin appears to be the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn’s Bornless Ritual for the Invocation of the Higher Genius (Regardie 442-6). John Lange explains that this Golden Dawn ritual comes from an allegedly ancient Greco-Roman source, the Bornless One ritual, published in 1852 by Charles W. Godwin (3). In the 1880s-1890s, Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers incorporated it into the Golden Dawn rituals⁵—rituals that Philip Zaleski and Carol Zaleski sum up as “stitched together from Catholic, Egyptian, and Rosicrucian threads” (230). In addition, the phrase “Sol, Osiris slain and risen,” appear in the Golden Dawn’s Adeptus Minor ritual (Regardie 263). Even granting that de Richleau follows

⁵ Thanks to Dr. Sørina Higgins for tracking down the Golden Dawn, Rosy Cross, and Thelema variations of the Bornless One ritual, and clarifying the composition chronology.

Biblical warnings to test if spirits recognize Jesus Christ (1 John 4:1-2), the fact his ceremony takes words from Golden Dawn rituals makes it hard to call this a “Christian ceremony.”

The question of sources is further complicated by the fact that the Bornless One ritual also appears in Aleister Crowley’s 1904 book *The Goetia*, published after Crowley left the Golden Dawn (Lange 3). As Humphrey Carpenter explains, *goetia* (also spelled “goeteia”) refers to black magic (82). Crowley’s version does not include the “before me Raphael” phrase, but “Osiris slain” and “Osiris risen” are the seventh and tenth ceremonial postures in Crowley’s *Thelema* (Lange 63). Thus, looking between the lines literally shows that de Richleau’s ceremony may be associated with the *goetia* practices of *Thelema* and the Golden Dawn or the *magia* practices of the Rosy Cross. The film’s contrast between de Richleau (leader of the God-fearing heroes) and Mocata (leader of the Satanists) means the ritual is presumably white magic, but such an argument is theologically dubious.

Lewis shows a similarly dubious white magic enterprise in *That Hideous Strength*, involving Merlin. Having learned Merlin will soon awake from hibernation, the heroes seek his help to fight N.I.C.E.: Dimble explains that Merlin’s magic is neutral, derived from a time when some spiritual beings hadn’t chosen between God and the Devil (*That Hideous Strength* 13.280-282). Dimble further classifies Merlin’s magic as “the old *magia*” as opposed to “the new *goeteia*” used by N.I.C.E. (13.283). When Merlin offers to use his magic, Ransom refuses because such magic is “in this age utterly unlawful. [...] It was never *very* lawful, even in your day” (13.286). Instead, Ransom explains that since Merlin is “one who has dabbled,” the *eldila* can enter Merlin’s body to exercise powers through him (13.288). Since earlier references identify the bent *eldila* as Satan or demons, the unbent *eldila* inhabiting Merlin are presumably angels.

Thus, *The Devil Rides Out* and *That Hideous Strength* combine similar ideas and images to talk about white magic. The Duc de Richleau does a white magic ceremony that invokes angels’ protection or aid. Ransom uses a white magician as a host for angels’ powers. While only Lewis’s characters question the lawfulness of white magic, the aforementioned sources behind the white magic in Fisher’s film mean that both stories lead to the same theological question: this may be expedient, but is it truly lawful?

Interestingly, both Fisher and Lewis use feminine overtones in these white magic ceremonies where someone becomes a host to a spiritual force. Monica Hilder argues that Ransom’s reference to “openness and invasion is obvious psycho-sexual imagery [...]. Merlin will become a ‘feminine’ vessel so that the celestial powers can work through him” (*The Gender Dance* 134-135). In *The Devil Rides Out*, Marie Eaton is biologically female and serves as a “feminine

vessel" to a soul speaking through her. Women becoming vessels to other people's souls also appear in Fisher's *Frankenstein Created Woman*, Lovecraft's "The Thing on the Doorstep," and Williams provides similar imagery in *All Hallows' Eve*.⁶ Thus, the idea appears to be an established horror trope, perhaps referencing the ancient medical notion that the female body is uniquely "porous, lacking boundaries between the body and the exterior world" (Morris). Given that men or women may become feminine vessels to spiritual forces (sometimes without consent, as in Lovecraft's story), this horror trope highlights why magic isn't lawful: it can simultaneously violate sexual and spiritual boundaries. Without using the gruesomeness of body horror, the trope illustrates a different kind of horror at bodily change—boundaries violated and roles changed, often without the recipient's consent. Thus, Fisher's and Lewis's dark fairy tales apparently fit into a horror tradition illustrating the theological implications of (black or white) magic, from its effect on bodily boundaries to the broader issue of dabbling in what is forbidden.

STANDING FOR GOOD REQUIRES SACRIFICE

Given that Fisher's and Lewis's dark fairy tales detail the insidious charms of evil, and also the dangers of both black and white magic, it's not surprising they also describe fighting evil as a sacrificial act, with particular theological imagery. In *Dracula*, Fisher portrays Arthur Holmwood as a distant husband who doesn't notice his wife Mina or his sister Lucy enough to see something diabolical is targeting them. His coldness makes Mina susceptible to Dracula's charms, and she comes home looking coy after a night with the vampire (01:02:30). A further tryst leaves Mina anemic, and Van Helsing helps Holmwood perform a blood transfusion to save her life, the first time he makes sacrifices for his wife (01:10:15-01:11:35). While Holmwood gives life for his wife and recuperates quickly, Van Helsing pays a stronger price to resist evil in the sequel *Brides of Dracula*, when a vampire hiding in a windmill bites his neck (01:18:40-01:18:45). After the vampire leaves, Van Helsing heats a metal tool, cauterizes his vampire bite, and covers the burn with holy water (01:20:15-01:21:50). Van Helsing collapses, and "his head reclines to one side, briefly evoking Christ on the cross" (Leggett, *Fisher* 64). The burn fades, showing the

⁶ *Frankenstein Created Woman* involves an unjustly executed man's lover committing suicide, and Frankenstein transferring the man's soul into her body. The man's soul then compels the woman to seduce and kill the true criminals. In the 1933 short story "The Thing on the Doorstep," a black magician implants his soul in his daughter's body (Lovecraft 483-506). Williams's novel *All Hallows' Eve* features black magician Simon Leclerc sending his daughter Betty Wallingford's spirit in and out of her body for various tasks.

bite marks are gone (01:21:55-01:22:00). Van Helsing heals from the vampire attack, but only by sacrificing something of himself.

Lewis depicts painful resistance/healing in various works, such as Puddleglum burning his foot to extinguish the bewitched fire (*Silver Chair* 12.180-181). When Ransom kills the Un-Man, he sustains a wound to his foot that never stops bleeding (*Perelandra* 15.187). Like Van Helsing's Christ-like pose in *Brides of Dracula*, the perpetual bleeding heel makes Ransom a Christ figure: his enemy strikes his heel (Genesis 3:15). Lewis's most iconic scene of painful healing is Eustace's "undragoning" in *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"*: Aslan must tear Eustace's dragon skin off before Eustace can become a normal boy (7.108-109). When Edmund asks what Aslan's claws felt like, Eustace says, "It hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off" (7.109).

Whether these characters suffer because evil infects them or they suffer while fighting evil, their suffering has theological tones: the suffering involves giving up blood or health, and always leads to someone's life being rescued or wisdom gained. Even when the suffering seems penitential (Eustace and Holmwood), the Biblical imagery (Holmwood giving his blood, Aslan's claws tearing Eustace's skin like Roman whips flaying Christ's back) shows how the suffering brings new understanding. Christ's suffering not only saved others: he "learned obedience from what he suffered" and it perfected him (Hebrews 5:8). While Fisher and Lewis may not always develop these characters into full-fledged Christ figures, the use of Christ imagery allows their dark fairy tales to highlight theological themes about sacrifice, penance, and growth by suffering.

THE HOLY FEAR OF GOD

The troubling questions that Fisher's and Lewis's dark fairytales raise about black or white magic, and the strenuous nature of sacrificing oneself to do good (i.e., to fight God's cause) raises the question, where is God in these stories? If these are stories about the recovery of the moral order, where is the moral order's keeper? Different aims and plot structures mean that Fisher and Lewis engage with this question in slightly different ways. In both cases, God appears and his holiness commands certain respect and fear, which suggests an encounter with true holiness may involve horror.

In Lewis's work, if God or angels physically appear, characters have one of two responses. Characters seeking good may be frightened when they first encounter perfect righteousness, but they learn to love it while still feeling unsettled at times. The narrator in *Perelandra* worries about meeting an eldila; when he meets one, he feels terrified but accepts it (1.19-20). Susan comments that Aslan may frighten her, and Mrs. Beaver replies, "if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than

most or else just silly" (*Lion* 8.80). In contrast, characters seeking evil stay frightened of righteousness unless they repent. Aslan's name conjures up joy for all the Pevensie children except Edmund, who feels "a sensation of mysterious horror" (*Lion* 7.68). In *The Magician's Nephew*, Diggory, Polly, Uncle Andrew, the Witch, and the cabby all hear Aslan's song bringing Narnia into being, but Uncle Andrew and the Witch hate it (8.108-109). Even characters who love goodness sometimes feel unsettled when God critiques their actions: Caspian shows no fear when he meets Aslan in *Prince Caspian*, but when Aslan appears to him in *Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* to critique his arrogance, Caspian recollects, "It was terrible—his eyes. Not that he was at all rough with me—only a bit stern at first. But it was terrible all the same" (16.240).

Even when God or angels don't appear in person, Lewis depicts the heavenly realm as challenging, something that may frighten unredeemed humans. *The Great Divorce* describes a Heaven so real it hurts Hell's visitors: leaves heavier than coal (3.23), grass so dense it hurts to walk on (3.25). Moore-Jumonville cites how charging unicorns frighten one self-conscious visitor as an example of how for these characters, only a "confrontation with the terrible good shocks them out of self-absorption" (2). People can find God and know about God; but for Lewis, only "submission to the divine leads to true knowledge" (Hilder, *Feminine Ethos* 129). Initially, experiencing the divine may be horrifying, because, for finite human beings, even a taste of infinite goodness is an unsettling experience. Schneider argues that in fact, "infinity (or the holy)" is the basis for human feelings of terror as well as ecstasy (2). Lewis affirms that the holy can be horrifying, especially in moments of judgment, but also affirms God's love for humanity. In his dark fairy tales, God both comforts and horrifies, challenges and nurtures.

Fisher never has God directly appear in his films, but he frequently depicts God via holy symbols which disturb evil people. These are often religious objects with a long history in horror fiction (holy water, crucifixes, etc.). However, unlike many horror fiction protagonists, Fisher's heroes can fashion these objects from nearby materials. In *Dracula*, Van Helsing defeats the vampire by holding two candlesticks in a cross shape before forcing him into a pool of sunlight (01:19:30-01:20:15). Leggett observes that the Bible uses light generally to symbolize spiritual enlightenment (*Good Versus Evil* 27). In *Brides of Dracula*, Van Helsing recovers from his aforementioned wounds and moves windmill blades to create a cross-shaped shadow; the vampire dies when he passes under it (01:23:50-01:24:25). In *Dracula: Prince of Darkness*, one character repels the vampire with a cross made from a broken sword (01:00:05). In the film's climax, Dracula dies falling into running water (01:28:45-01:29:15), a Christian symbol for baptism and rebirth (Leggett, *Fisher* 75; *Good Versus Evil* 31). Fisher's most dramatic holy symbol commanding respect comes in the climax of *The Devil*

Rides Out, when Mocata's followers are about to sacrifice a little girl, but she repeats an incantation for summoning angels (01:26:57-01:27:20). A lightning strike ignites the room, creating a fire that kills Mocata's followers; as one curtain disintegrates, it reveals a large cross on the wall (01:27:20-01:28:00). Like Jadis fleeing Aslan's presence (*Magician's Nephew* 116), Fisher's villains are undone by these holy images. The fact that these holy symbols may be commonplace (sunlight, running water) or fashioned from other items creates theological complexity: natural creation can literally be used to show God. Fisher's films may be horror films, but they are horror films in which God can appear around any corner.

Since Fisher's films only show symbols of God usually wielded as weapons, his exploration of God is less personal than Lewis's. Viewers may wonder whether to respect the object symbolizing God or the object's wielder. Leggett suggests that "the frequent use of the cross in *The Devil Rides Out* almost makes it seem like a spiritual hand grenade blowing up evil spirits" (Fisher 100). Others view the wielders as fundamentalists: Kim Newman sees Van Helsing and similar Hammer characters as "an elderly mystic [...] with an Old Testament 'vengeance is mine' fundamentalism" (28). Seeing these wielders as religious figures enforcing their particular views certainly undermines their claims to be the faith's true defenders.

While this emphasis on wielders of holy symbols runs the risk of creating a reductionistic theology where Fisher's wielders are gods unto themselves, occasional moments of weakness highlight how these wielders are only God's human servants. There are the aforementioned moments of sacrifice, like Van Helsing branding himself to remove a vampire mark. There are occasional moments where the wielder doesn't cast the decisive blow—Dracula is killed by sunlight, a holy symbol that Van Helsing uses but doesn't control; a little girl saves the day instead of De Richleau in *The Devil Rides Out*. These moments show ultimately God will win the day, through his human servants or otherwise. These may be horror stories, but they are horror stories ultimately shot through with a sense of providence, however much it may seem hidden at first.

Even though Fisher presents a more orthodox view of providence than some gothic horror novels, it broadly fits with what Greenaway sees as a vital trait of gothic literature: "Even in, and perhaps especially in, the midst of the anti-religious or ambivalently theological Gothic literature, there is the very real possibility of finding God at work in unexpected ways" (18). God's apparent absence, followed by surprising hints of signs of his presence, shows Fisher working within the complex gothic view of providence, even when his stories show God appearing in *deus ex machina* endings (the sunlight saves the day, heaven-sent lightning strikes the blasphemers) that make more sense in a fairy

tale than in a complex novel. Once again, reading Fisher's films as dark fairy tales helps reconcile their various horror and fantasy elements. His dark fairy tales bridge the gothic tradition and fantasy while working out a multilayered theology of providence.

An equally important point about Fisher's emphasis on wielders is it provides a dramatic function in his dark fairy tales: it creates an apparent hero-villain dichotomy. Hutchings argues that Fisher's first *Dracula* film juxtaposes Van Helsing with Dracula, a "doubling of authoritative males" that appears in later Fisher films (*Terence Fisher* 91). Pirie argues that *The Devil Rides Out* revolves "around the opposing forces" of De Richleau and Mocata (74), and Dixon notes how the film "repeatedly contrasts Christian ritual with Mocata's pagan ceremonies" (365). The occasional moments where the wielder doesn't score the final blow show that Fisher's dark fairy tales are not Manichean (equal and opposing forces of good and evil). Fisher addressed that concern, stating he believed good will ultimately defeat evil (Ringel 22) and that good always wins in his Frankenstein films since the villain is "faced with failure every time" (26). While God always triumphs in his dark fairy tales, the hero-villain dichotomies create suspense.

Lewis cultivates a similar hero-villain dichotomy in *Perelandra*, where Ransom and the Un-Man compete with each other to convince the Queen about whether or not to obey Maleldil's commands (9.113-10.139). Although the eldila appear at the book's beginning and end, they are assent in the book's most suspenseful sections, where Ransom seems alone on this new planet, unsure how to keep debating the Un-Man, wondering "why did no miracle come?" Ransom ultimately realizes that God's presence is with him on Perelandra, that it never left although he had been "ignoring it for the past few days" (11.140). Like Fisher's films, the fact God doesn't appear as a physical character creates dramatic tension as Lewis sets up a hero-villain dichotomy, creating suspense even though further inspection shows God is truly present. This creates a different atmosphere than Lewis's Narnia stories where God appears as a character, but works to the same theological point: God is here and at work, perhaps in ways that aren't immediately apparent. Thus, Lewis's and Fisher's dark fairy tales both depict the complex theological question of where God is in an evil world, working to the same conclusion even though they use different styles.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This study has considered the various ways in which Fisher and Lewis explore particular themes and images, conveying theological ideas and reaching sometimes surprising but orthodox theological conclusions. While Paul Leggett's original study overestimates how much Fisher can be categorized as a

practicing Christian thinker, Fisher's interest in fairy tales and the charm of evil, as well as his use of mythic imagery, and his treatment of themes like the lawfulness of magic and how God's presence manifests in a world where miracles seem absent, show him to be a kindred spirit with C.S. Lewis.

Exploring how Fisher and Lewis explore similar theological themes, in stories that bridge the gap between horror and fantasy, not only affirms that it is valid to discuss Lewis as a horror author, but provides new material for the ongoing discussion about the Inklings and horror. Comparing Fisher and Lewis' work reinforces the connection that Nicholson and Schwartz have seen between Lewis and gothic literature, even though the gothic literature that Fisher adapted his films from often explored theological themes in less orthodox ways. The comparison also establishes that while there may be a closer connection between the Inklings and horror storytellers like H.P. Lovecraft, Inklings and horror is a fruitful discussion that can be extended to other generations of horror storytellers, in other mediums and contexts. This is true not only for filmmakers like David Cronenberg, but also for filmmakers like Fisher who are closer to Lewis and other Inklings' theological worldviews. As Grafius and Morehouse put it, "it's an exciting time to be engaged in horror and religion" (ix), and it's certainly an exciting time to be exploring how the Inklings and kindred spirits fit into that conversation.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

G. CONNOR SALTER has a Bachelor of Science in Professional Writing from Taylor University. He has spoken on Inklings topics on several occasions, including "The Lion and the Vampire: The Inklings and English Horror Films in Conversation" (October 29, 2021) and "Fate, Hope, and the Dark Side of Enchantment: The Complicated History of Nightmare Alley" (January 7, 2022, with Brenton Dickieson and John Stanifer), both for Inking Folk Fellowship. His articles have appeared in many publications, including *A Pilgrim in Narnia*, *The Oddest Inkling*, and *Fellowship & Fairy dust*.

