

PROLEGOMENA: C.S. LEWIS'S PEDAGOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP

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C.S. Lewis seems known today among Americans interested in his work as primarily a Christian apologist and fantasy and science-fiction writer.¹ This image of Lewis elides a key element of his biography at least as important to those interested in his writings: his professional career as Oxford University tutor and Cambridge University Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature. His *oeuvres*, in fact, evince the central place academe had in his life. Reviewing the bibliography Walter Hooper published in 1965 just two years after Lewis's death, we find listed forty-one single-authored books, two edited books, 125 essays, and thirty-four book reviews, among other publications (120-48). Of these publications, we would recognize the following as scholarly, that is, based on research and critical reading of primary texts and written within an academic context and for an academic, or professional, audience: nine books; thirty-two essays on topics ranging from Milton's *Comus* to Dante's similes; six prefaces to scholarly books written or edited by others; and twenty-six scholarly book reviews.² In the midst of a writer's life spent producing Christian apologetics, fiction, poetry, letters, and essays, Lewis managed an active academic publication schedule impressive in its own right. And, obviously, he met his lectures, tutorials, and faculty obligations as well.

Though Lewis's apologetics and fiction have elicited much commentary, analysis, and appreciation since his death, his academic work has drawn little focused attention beyond particular citations and critique. Still, it has drawn some. In her analysis of Lewis's scholarly writing, for instance, Dabney Adams Hart argues that by placing early literature in historical contexts while emphasizing mythopoeic elements Lewis attempted "to reclaim the world of fantasy" (73) for modern readers. Joe R. Christopher, on the other hand, categorizes Lewis's scholarly books as literary histories which are intended to aid the study

of early literature, but which might possibly interest the “student of Lewis” as well (22-37). Kathryn Kerby-Fulton examines key contributions Lewis made to early English studies, particularly his work on allegory and historicism, as she also reviews blind spots in his work, namely his dislike of modernism, which led to a lack of appreciation for early texts exhibiting proto-modern tendencies such as William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* or John Donne’s lyrics (261-68). In his magisterial survey of twentieth-century medievalists, Norman Cantor considers Lewis’s contribution to medieval studies as three-fold: a view that high medieval literature encompassed courtly traditions, a learned cosmic order, and a warrior ethos; a view that medieval literature is both remote from and accessible to twentieth-century readers; and a view that medieval culture itself paradoxically sought a generalizing unity while encompassing particular details (214-15). And in a recent contribution to Bruce L. Edwards’s four-volume reference set *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy*, Stephen Yandell explores what he characterizes as Lewis’s “medievalist identity” in his work as scholar and teacher of medieval literature (118).

In this essay, I wish to build on and complement Hart, Christopher, Kerby-Fulton, Cantor, and Yandell’s assessments of Lewis’s contribution to early studies by focusing in order of publication on the genesis and on key rhetorical aspects of five of his scholarly books: *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (1936), *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942), *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century excluding Drama* (1954), *Studies in Words* (1960), and *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1964).³ Taking the books in order of publication allows us to examine them within the context of Lewis’s developing academic career. In these books, as in much of his other scholarly writing, Lewis emphasizes what he sees as differences between medieval and early modern cultures on the one hand and twentieth-century culture on the other. In a sense, he probes what Hans Robert Jauss, writing some sixteen years after Lewis’s death, calls the “alterity,” or surprising otherness, of medieval literature and culture (187-94). As a result, Lewis’s purpose in these books is fundamentally pedagogical.

Now, to clarify my use here of the term “pedagogical,” I am not suggesting Lewis’s work centers on the “scholarship of pedagogy,” which I take to mean research and writing on classroom experiences,

theories, and practices; rather, in these books Lewis harnesses the results of his research primarily to teach—that is, he seeks to interpret and explain the otherness of medieval and early modern cultures in an effort to guide his audience to a “receptive reading” of texts produced within those cultures (*Image ix*).⁴ To borrow a word of which Lewis himself was fond, he offers in these texts *prolegomena* to medieval and early modern literature. In each case, Lewis articulates a clear sense of audience in the texts and invites his real readers—those who hold the books while “reading [them] in an armchair” (*Preface 40*)—to join that audience. I conclude the essay with an assessment of the place of Lewis’s scholarly writings in medieval and early modern studies today.

Before proceeding, I would like to review briefly the outline of his academic life in order to set the general context within which Lewis wrote his scholarly works. Born November 29, 1898, in Belfast, Ireland, Lewis spent a good deal of his time from age nine in English boarding schools and then later studying with a tutor as he prepared for university. Gaining entrance to University College, Oxford, he completed Trinity Term in the spring of 1917 before volunteering for the Army in June. Commissioned an officer, Lewis served in France from November 17, 1917, until he was wounded in battle at Mount Bernenchon in Flanders on April 15, 1918 (Lewis, *Joy*, 188-98; Green and Hooper 50-55; Gilchrist, “2nd Lieutenant,” 64-5, and “Continuing,” 47-50; Duriez 79-101). The war ended while he was still recovering from his wounds, and he mustered out in time to return to Oxford for Hilary Term in January 1919. He achieved a first in Mods (Latin and Greek) in 1920, the Chancellor’s English Essay Prize in 1921, a first in Greats (philosophy) in 1922, and a first in English language and literature in 1923 (Green and Hooper 67-75). Though he considered pursuing a research degree upon completing his undergraduate work (*Letters 1*: 610, 624), he accepted instead a one-year replacement position as tutor in philosophy at University College in 1924 in hopes of securing a more permanent position at Oxford. His patience paid off when, in 1925, he was appointed Fellow and English Tutor of Magdalen College, a position he held for twenty-nine years (Green and Hooper 79-85). During his Oxford years, Lewis individually met English language and literature students for weekly tutorials and offered a regular schedule of lectures for the English faculty (Brewer, “Tutor” 45-60; Bayley, “Master” 77-80). He also developed friendships

with fellow dons and colleagues, most famously perhaps J.R.R. Tolkien, who encouraged and challenged him as a thinker and writer (Carpenter; Calhoun 252-70). Then, in 1954 Cambridge University appointed him first holder of a newly-created Chair of Medieval and Renaissance English Literature and Fellow of Magdalene College. In Cambridge, he commenced a regular schedule of lectures, but as a professor he no longer conducted tutorials, which considerably freed up his time for writing (Ladborough 98-104). Commuting from Oxford during term, he held these positions in Cambridge until resigning them in late summer 1963 due to poor health (Green and Hooper 281-82). He died at home in Oxford on November 22, 1963, a few months into retirement and seven days short of his sixty-fifth birthday.

1. Early Career and *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*

With all those years still before him, however, and not so very long after his appointment as Fellow and English Tutor at Magdalen College, Oxford, Lewis began work on a study during summer vacations and between terms that led him “deep in medieval things,” as he wrote his brother in April, 1928 (*Letters* 1: 754). References to this study—an examination of “mediaeval love poetry and the mediaeval idea of love” (*Letters* 1: 767)—begin to appear more frequently in subsequent letters, and it becomes clear he was serving a research apprenticeship of sorts, but without the supervision of a dissertation director. He reported his progress, for instance, in a letter to his father dated November 3, 1928, as having completed the first chapter but stating:

The unfortunate thing is that nobody in Oxford really knows anything about the subject I have chosen. I may have made some elementary blunder which the French people—who have so far mainly studied the matter—would pounce on in a moment. (*Letters* 1: 779)

Though other Oxford scholars presumably knew little about the subject, his students were beginning to learn it, for he wrote this letter near the midpoint of Michaelmas Term 1928, during which he first offered a

series of lectures on "*The Romance of the Rose* and its Successors," a set of lectures he repeated the following academic year as well (Hooper, "Lectures," 448). Clearly engaged with the project, he forged on with his research and writing, sharing bits with friends and interested colleagues over the next few years, until he reported to his friend Arthur Greeves in a letter dated December 7, 1935, "I have finished my book, which is called *The Allegorical Love Poem*" (*Letters* 2: 169). Oxford University Press convinced Lewis to change the title and then published the book as *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* on May 21, 1936 (*Letters* 2: 191).

Met almost immediately with approval, albeit guarded in some instances, *The Allegory of Love*—audacious in scope and engaging in style—is part literary history and part history of ideas in the vein of Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being*, which also happened to appear in 1936.⁵ Publishing the book not only secured Lewis his position at Oxford but also, and more importantly, established his scholarly credentials, capping what I see as his largely self-directed period of apprenticeship in research. Beginning with tenth-century Troubadour poetry and working through twelfth-century Old French romance, Lewis traces first the sentiment of courtly love, "whose characteristics," he states, "may be enumerated as Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love" (2). As Lewis characterizes the phenomenon, there is no room for marriage between the lover and the beloved in the world of courtly love.⁶ He then examines the allegorical mode, that is, the expression of an immaterial object, an idea like "chance," through a concrete image such as a blind-folded woman with wheel in hand named Fortuna. Tracing this artistic mode from classical through twelfth-century Latin poets, Lewis draws the two subjects together in the heart of his study: a discussion of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's thirteenth-century encyclopedic love allegory *The Romance of the Rose*. In the remainder of the book, he turns to English poetry, taking up in turn Geoffrey Chaucer, Chaucer's immediate contemporaries, and fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English poets. He concludes with the Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser, whom Lewis declares is the "great mediator between the Middle Ages and the modern poets" and is "the greatest among the founders of that romantic conception of marriage which is the basis of all our love literature from Shakespeare to Meredith" (360).

While the book established his academic credentials among his Oxford colleagues, perhaps Lewis's most important accomplishment with *The Allegory of Love* was introducing both a fairly esoteric subject to modern readers and himself as an erudite interpreter of that subject. Rhetorician that he is, he opens the book as follows:

The allegorical love poetry of the Middle Ages is apt to repel the modern reader both by its form and by its matter. The form, which is that of a struggle between personified abstractions, can hardly be expected to appeal to an age which holds that 'art means what it says' or even that art is meaningless—for it is essential to this form that the literal narrative and the *significatio* should be separable. As for the matter, what have we to do with these medieval lovers—'servants' or 'prisoners' they called themselves—who seem always to be weeping and always on their knees before ladies of inflexible cruelty? . . . In every way, if we have not outgrown, we have at least grown away from, the *Romance of the Rose*. (1)

In the book's first sentence he not only admits the challenges of his subject—its alterity—but also acknowledges the subject's apparent irrelevance in the twentieth century. This move is bold, for by opening his discussion with counterarguments, Lewis risks losing "the modern reader" he invokes: a reader who by implication follows the *zeitgeist* and "holds that 'art means what it says' or even that art is meaningless." But then he shifts ever so slightly. Using the plural first-person pronoun "we" in describing a response to "these medieval lovers," he begins to unite himself as the inscribed speaker, or voice, of the text with an other, an auditor if you will, thereby constructing what Gerald Prince calls an "implied reader," that is, "the audience presupposed by [the] text" (43). Just as every text has inscribed in its language a speaker, or voice, each also implies or inscribes an audience or reader. Prince continues:

The implied reader of a text must be distinguished from its real reader. In the first place, the same real reader can read texts presupposing different audiences (and let himself or

herself be shaped in accordance with different implied authors' values and norms). In the second place, one text (having, like all texts, one implied reader) can have two or more real readers. (43)

Thus, as Walker Gibson observed in 1950, "every time we open the pages of another piece of writing, we are embarked on a new adventure in which we become a new person. . . . We assume, for the sake of the experience, that set of attitudes and qualities which the language asks us to assume, and, if we cannot assume them, we throw the book away" (265). Like Gibson himself in this passage, who creates through language a shared experience of reading between speaker and audience through his use of the pronoun "we," Lewis the author of *The Allegory of Love* creates a speaker and an audience who share a common response to the *Romance of the Rose*. Addressing this "we," Lewis continues: "The study of this whole tradition may seem, at first sight, to be but one more example of the itch for 'revival', that refusal to leave any corpse ungalvanized, which is among the more distressing accidents of scholarship" (1).

Though acknowledging counterargument at the start seems a bit risky, combined with his simple use of the first-person plural pronoun, such a rhetorical move is also as likely, perhaps more likely, to draw real readers in. Lewis uses this move to establish himself as interpreter and guide and to set up his fundamental rationale for studying old literature. Following on from the above, he states:

But such a view would be superficial. Humanity does not pass through phases as a train passes through stations: being alive, it has the privilege of always moving yet never leaving anything behind. Whatever we have been, in some sort we are still. Neither the form nor the sentiment of this old poetry has passed away without leaving indelible traces on our minds. We shall understand our present, and perhaps even more our future, the better if we can succeed, by an effort of the historical imagination, in reconstructing that long-lost state of mind for which the allegorical love poem was a natural mode of expression. (1)

At this point, Lewis the author attempts to grab fully his real readers by refuting these initial counterarguments as “superficial.” Who, after all, would want to hold “such a view” once drawn into the discourse by the first-person plural pronoun “we”? Lewis seems to be saying to his implied reader something like “while other more typical modern readers might superficially discount the value of this project, you and I—willing to exercise our imagination—understand its essential worth.” Lewis also expresses for the first time the two-fold assumption underlying all his academic work on early literature and culture: this literature is indeed other, remote, even strange, yet it is accessible if one works to understand its historical and cultural contexts. Moreover, such work, Lewis tells his implied reader, can offer the added benefit of better self-understanding. And who would be a better guide through this imaginative reconstructive act than the erudite mind behind the inscribed voice of *The Allegory of Love*? From the beginning of his scholarly work, then, work that is by nature public, Lewis develops what seems a conversational, almost informal, discourse with his implied reader.

2. Mid Career and *The Preface to Paradise Lost*

The sense of audience and the sense of voice we find in *The Allegory of Love* sharpened as Lewis developed as a writer and professor. Published on October 8, 1942 (*Letters* 2: 531), *A Preface to Paradise Lost* came at nearly the mid-point of his thirty-nine-year academic career. With *A Preface*, Lewis fully adopted for the first time a writing process he touched on early in his research for *The Allegory of Love*: a process he employed both in later scholarly works and in apologetical works such as *Mere Christianity* (1952). The genesis of *A Preface* centered on two series of lectures initially presented before live audiences. In Trinity Term 1938, Lewis delivered lectures on “Milton and the Epic Tradition,” and in Michaelmas Term 1939, he delivered another series on *Paradise Lost* (Green and Hooper 160; Hooper, “Lectures,” 449). Having tried out his ideas on his Oxford undergraduates, Lewis then selected parts of these lectures to form the core of the Ballard Matthews Lectures he delivered December 1-3, 1941, at University College, North Wales, in Bangor, Wales (*Letters* 2: 494 n105). Upon his return to Oxford, he revised again the texts of his

lectures to produce *A Preface*, which Oxford University Press published the following autumn. Lewis's way of working here, recognizable to most academics, not only was economical but also underscores the book's pedagogical genesis.

A slim volume of 136 pages, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* encompasses nineteen chapters ranging in length from three to twelve pages. Though Lewis does not organize the text in this way in the Table of Contents, the book falls fairly neatly into two parts: in the first, chapters one through eight, he discusses genre, articulating distinctions between primary epic (the Homeric corpus and *Beowulf*, for instance) and secondary epic (Virgil's *Aeneid* and, of course, *Paradise Lost* itself); and in the second part, chapters ten through nineteen, he focuses on Milton's poem, but not in a new critical fashion. Rather, he offers three series of discussions on cultural and theological ideas underpinning the poem (Chapters 10-12), on the poem's key characters (Chapters 13-16), and on the poem's main action (Chapters 17-18) before closing his discussion in the final chapter. Chapter nine, then, transitions between the two parts.

Mindful of his audience as well as his subject, Lewis engages his implied reader from the beginning, as presumably he had engaged his auditors in the earlier public lectures. In the opening paragraph of the book, Lewis writes:

The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know *what* it is—what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used. . . . [A]s long as you think the corkscrew was meant for opening tins or the cathedral for entertaining tourists you can say nothing to the purpose about them. The first thing the reader needs to know about *Paradise Lost* is what Milton meant it to be (1).

Setting aside the question of authorial intent, and the question of unintended uses of things, we can see Lewis working to inscribe here a reasonable, thoughtful reader: one who knows the right (that is, intended) uses of corkscrews and cathedrals and one who should, consequently, want to know "what Milton meant [*Paradise Lost*] to be." As his own wit shines through, his final assumption seems fair;

after all, he is writing for a reader who has picked up this particular book to learn something about Milton's poem.

Through instances of direct address such as this opening paragraph, Lewis inscribes his implied reader rather clearly in this text. As his discussion unfolds, Lewis like any good teacher frequently uses such direct addresses to engage this reader; he also especially uses direct address to reveal his critical stance. We see this move particularly in chapter nine, where he transitions from the discussion of genre to the poem itself. After articulating the problem of cultural distance between Milton's seventeenth century and his own, Lewis describes what he calls "the method of *The Unchanging Human Heart*," saying:

According to this method the things which separate one age from another are superficial. Just as, if we stripped the armour off a medieval knight or the lace off a Caroline courtier, we should find beneath them an anatomy identical with our own, so, it is held, if we strip off from Virgil his Roman imperialism, from Sidney his code of honour, from Lucretius his Epicurean philosophy . . . we shall find the *Unchanging Human Heart*. (61)

Not surprisingly, Lewis opposes this method not as entirely useless but as less than what is possible for a diligent reader of old poetry. He turns directly to this reader and writes:

Instead of stripping the knight of his armour you can try to put his armour on yourself; instead of seeing how the courtier would look without his lace, you can try to see how you would feel *with* his lace. . . . I had much rather know what I should feel like if I adopted the beliefs of Lucretius than how Lucretius would have felt if he had never entertained them. The possible Lucretius in myself interests me more than the possible C.S. Lewis in Lucretius. (62-63)

Using this familiar tone in direct address, Lewis invites his implied reader to enter Milton's world as best as imagination will allow, saying, "Our plan must be very different . . . to see [Milton's

seventeenth-century] world as if we believed it, and then, while we still hold that position in our imagination, to see what sort of a poem results" (64).

This discourse, though more familiar in tone, echoes that of *The Allegory of Love* where Lewis similarly invites his implied reader to reconstruct a "long-lost state of mind" (1) in order to understand better the old poetry at hand. Though remote, Lewis suggests, the world of Milton's poem is recoverable—at least imaginatively—in the much different twentieth-century world he shares with his implied reader. Like *The Allegory of Love*, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* was fairly well received when initially published. Although most reviewers found points of disagreement, nearly all considered it a solid introductory, scholarly study to the poem (Watson 161-93).

3. Mid to Late Career and *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*

Shifting from *The Allegory of Love* and *A Preface to Paradise Lost* to *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, we move to a largely different kind of book with a somewhat checkered genesis. Shortly after Lewis made final revisions on *The Allegory of Love* in September 1935, his friend and former English tutor F.P. Wilson invited him to contribute to the Oxford History of English Literature, a twelve-volume series then recently conceived by the Delegates of the Oxford University Press (*Letters* 2: 167). Envisioning the project as offering a continuous history of literature from the Anglo-Saxon period to the present, the Delegates and editors sought to bring together specialists from each period to contribute one volume, with the idea that together the twelve would integrate recent research into a general literary history. Wilson wanted Lewis to write the sixteenth century volume, but he deferred, suggesting Wilson ask R.W. Chambers and requesting rather the fifteenth century if anything for himself (*Letters* 2: 168). Wilson, however, persisted, and eventually Lewis agreed, though completing the volume proved a struggle off and on for the next eighteen years.

Lewis took to calling his volume "O HELL," based on the project's acronym for Oxford History of English Literature (OHEL): a nickname with apparently little affection but plenty of wit. In a letter to

Wilson dated January 25, 1938, for instance, Lewis wrote: "The O HELL lies like a nightmare on my chest ever since I got your specimen bibliography: I shan't try to desert—anyway, I suppose the exit is thronged with dreadful faces and fiery arms—but I have a growing doubt if I ought to be doing this" (*Letters* 2: 221).⁷ Aside from early work he had developed for a series of lectures on "Some English Thinkers of the Renaissance," which he gave in 1928, '29, and '30 (Hooper, "Lectures," 448), bits of which eventually made it into the volume, work on the book primarily languished until, in a letter dated February 2, 1943, George Macaulay Trevelyan, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, invited Lewis to give the Clark Lectures at the College in 1944 (*Letters* 2: 552). Sparked by this series of public lectures, which he gave April 26 and May 3, 10, and 17, 1944, Lewis restarted work on the project and for the next several years frequently found himself, as he noted in a 1948 letter, "still pegging away at . . . Oh! Hell" (*Letters* 2: 877). This "pegging away" continued into the early 1950s, where we find him still trying "to get that infernal book on the XVIth Century done" (*Letters* 3: 112). When he finally completed a draft in the summer of 1952, he was exhausted. In a letter to William Borst dated July 21, Lewis wrote simply: "I *must* have a holiday from English poetry! (I'm doing an orgy of the classics at present: feeling that, all said and done, the *really* delightful thing about any bit of ancient poetry is that it's *not* English and *doesn't* rhyme)" (215). In subsequent letters over the next year and a half, his struggle with OHEL resurfaces when he corrected proofs, reviewed the index, checked the chronological table, and completed the bibliography. His relief at nearing completion is almost palpable when, in a letter to Dorothy L. Sayers dated December 16, 1953, he wrote: "I have got my huge 16th. c volume for the Oxford History of English Literature nearly off my chest now, and feel inclined never to do any work again as long as I live" (387). Oxford University Press published the book September 16, 1954 (*Letters* 3: 506), some nineteen years after Wilson first approached Lewis about the project.

So what do we make of this book that cost its author so much energy and time? Taking his advice about first approaching *Paradise Lost*, we would be wise to consider what Lewis, responding to his editors at Oxford University Press, meant this book to be. *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, at 696 pages, is a fairly exhaustive

survey of English poetry and prose, excluding drama, written between 1485 and 1600. Adopting the relatively strict point of view of the literary historian, Lewis first reviews the idea of the Renaissance in England and assesses the degree to which cultural innovations like new geographic knowledge, classical humanism, and religious reform affected the literature. Then, working chronologically, he begins with what he calls "the close of the Middle Ages," first in Scotland and then in England, before proceeding to the middle years of the sixteenth century, roughly 1540-70—a period he labels "Drab." He pushes forward with what he calls the "Golden" period, the last quarter of the century or so, before tracing developments in early seventeenth-century prose and verse in an epilogue. We almost hear him sigh when he concludes the text, saying:

I do not suppose that the sixteenth century differs . . . from any other arbitrarily selected stretch of years. It illustrates well enough the usual complex, unpatterned historical process; in which, while men often throw away irreplaceable wealth, they not infrequently escape what seemed inevitable dangers, not knowing that they have done either nor how they did it. (558)

In addition to his treatment of nearly every poet and prose writer of the century, Lewis also posits a relatively provocative thesis, one he alluded to in a January 22, 1939, letter to A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, in which he asked: "Did I tell you I have discovered the Renaissance never occurred" (*Letters* 2: 246)? As Lewis sees the literature of the period, English writers still function within a conceptual world that is largely medieval.⁸ The real break with the medieval world, he argues, comes not with humanism or new science, as important as both are, but with the rise at the end of the century in Puritanism and the growing influence of Calvinist theology. For Lewis, the alterity of the sixteenth century lies in its variety and messiness rather than in a new, remarkable sense of unity or rebirth a label such as "Renaissance" suggests (*Sixteenth* 1-65). As he provocatively declares to his implied reader: "our legend of the Renaissance is a Renaissance legend" (56).

If Lewis has a scholarly magnum opus, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* fits the description. It is the kind of book that merits both cover-to-cover reading and discursive reading as one dips in and

out of the discussion. As with *The Allegory of Love* and *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, Lewis himself comes through clearly as interpreter and guide, but here his voice strikes one as a bit more detached and his engagement with his implied reader a bit more formal than in the earlier works. When introducing the term “Golden,” for instance, he writes:

At the outset of this chapter I once more beg the reader to remember that the adjective Golden is not here used in a eulogistic sense. By ‘Golden poetry’ I do not mean simply good poetry (that is another question) but poetry in its innocent—as the theologians would say, its ‘once-born’—condition. Marlowe’s ‘Come liue with me’ is Golden, Donne’s answer to it is not. (318)

Instead of the direct second-person address we find in *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, Lewis uses a third-person reference to “the reader,” lending the discourse a less personable feel. This sense of detachment may derive as much from the size of the project and the nature of the series for which he writes as it does from anything else. Yet, at other points, Lewis draws his implied reader closer by using first-person plural pronouns such as “we” and “our,” as he does in *The Allegory of Love*. When discussing Edmund Spenser’s *Four Hymns*, for instance, he interrupts his explication to address the question of whether or not Spenser had Plato’s “ladder of love” from the *Symposium* in mind. Lewis states:

It is we, after all, not Spenser, who have called these poems Platonic. They are substantially meditations on chivalrous, monogamous, English love, enriched with colourings from Plato, Ficino, Lucretius, and the medieval poets. If we speak of the Platonic colourings at all we have to do so at some length because they are difficult: not because they are of immense importance. (376)

Here, Lewis more closely engages his implied reader, echoing the intimacy of the tutorial and the dynamism of the lecture, by offering a corrective reading of critical explications of the text. Considering the

evidence, the “we . . . who have called these poems Platonic” will, by implication, no longer bother, for to do so involves great effort for little effect.

Throughout the book, but especially in passages like these, Lewis remains ever the teacher, using analogies, examples, or direct arguments to illustrate points for his implied reader. In reading *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, we get a clear sense from Lewis’s voice in the text that he not only has read nearly everything but also has done so with sensitivity and attention—even when discussing “Drab” age verse and prose. This book was clearly a labor for him, but at times a labor of love, perhaps most strikingly evident in those passages of near intimate discourse with his implied reader.

4. Late Career and *Studies in Words*

Though exhausted by writing *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, Lewis seems to have renewed his scholarly energy following his move to Cambridge in late 1954. No longer tied to giving tutorials, he continued to offer lectures on medieval and Renaissance literature and culture and developed a new series of lectures entitled “Some Difficult Words,” which he presented during the Easter terms of 1956, ‘57, ‘58, and ‘59 (*Letters* 3: 739; Hooper, “Lectures,” 452-53). As with *A Preface*, and to a lesser extent *Sixteenth Century*, these lectures formed the basis of a new book entitled *Studies in Words*, which Cambridge University Press published September 9, 1960 (*Letters* 3: 1183). Taking just eight words as starting points—Nature, Sad, Wit, Free, Sense, Simple, Conscience and Conscious—Lewis combines semantics with the history of ideas approach he employs in *The Allegory of Love* to explore, as he says, “the history of thought and sentiment which underlies the semantic biography of a word” (2). Perhaps not surprisingly, he has in this book, too, a clear pedagogical end. He writes:

The readers I have principally in view are students. One of my aims is to facilitate, as regards certain words, a more accurate reading of old books; and therefore to encourage everyone to similar exploration of many other words. . . . If we read an old poem with insufficient regard for change in the overtones, and

even the dictionary meanings of words since its date . . . then of course we do not read the poem the old writer intended. What we get may still be, in our opinion, a poem; but it will be our poem, not his. (3)

Here again Lewis clearly implies a reader: a student of old poems who wishes to exercise sufficient "regard for change . . . [in the] meanings of words" so as to read "the poem the old writer intended." As he does with implied readers in his earlier scholarly works, Lewis invites his real reader here, that is, "everyone" who picks up the book, to adopt the role of the student, eager to understand words in "the sense the author intended" (5).

As he examines each word, Lewis raises a number of themes such a study explores, including ramifications, that is, a word's "branches" of meanings, the importance of context to distinguish between meanings, and the idea of what he calls a word's "dangerous sense" (d.s.), or that meaning dominant in a reader's particular historical moment. This meaning of a word can be "dangerous," Lewis suggests, as it might lead to misreading texts (8-14). For instance, when discussing Wit, he defines its dangerous sense as "that sort of mental agility or gymnastic which uses language as the principle equipment in its gymnasium" (97)—word-play, puns, jokes, "witty" banter and the like all fit under "wit (d.s.)," including his own witty use of gymnastics as a metaphor for the verbal-mental activity encompassed by "wit (d.s.)." Though clearly related, this meaning of wit differs from earlier meanings of the word: "mind, reason, intelligence" (86), the "five inward and five outward *wits* or senses" (87-88), or poetic talent and imagination (90-96). To read literature with only the dangerous sense in mind, Lewis argues, could lead to confusion and misreading in many instances.

Moreover, during those times in a word's history where multiple meanings can be at play, the reader especially needs to be alert for ramification and context. When discussing Dryden's multiple use of wit, for example, Lewis draws an analogy that both illustrates his point and reveals his sense of audience. He writes:

The situation [i.e., a writer using a word in its multiple meanings] is common enough. You and I at nine o'clock any

morning, poring over the pencilled washing bill presented by our bedmakers, complain 'I can't read the last figure'. At ten, during a supervision, we mention a figure (of rhetoric). At our elevenses we say to a friend that the young woman who has just left the tap-room has a fine figure. So then. Dryden. . . .
(102)

Lewis clearly implies at this point in the text a presumably male Cambridge student reader—double-checking a washing bill, attending morning supervisions, admiring a young woman—as he articulates an analogy to illustrate the different contextual meanings of a word, in this case “figure.” In this brief moment, we see Lewis the lecturer draw his audience close through second-person address. While no reader today fits the role of the “you” in this intimate discourse, this view of Lewis’s original sense of audience for his lectures offers an almost quaint image of Cambridge in the 1950s even as it distances most, if not all, real readers of the book since its publication. More importantly, however, the analogy illustrates Lewis’s key principle for reading implied throughout the text, namely, that understanding the historical context of a word is as important as knowing its ramifications.

Early in its drafting, Lewis refers to *Studies in Words* in a letter to Jocelyn Gibb dated July 17, 1957. Though he writes to his friend, “You couldn’t find a duller, less saleable, more erudite, work,” adding with wit, “Thus the influence of a Chair spreads upwards” (*Letters* 3: 871), the final product offers much more than its title might suggest, for it reveals the results of Lewis’s liberal, voracious reading habits, as he ranges from ancient Greece to the twentieth century in his exploration of a word’s ramifications and contexts. Reading the works Lewis cites in the book would be a liberal education in itself; developing the philological habit of mind the book illustrates would equip one in critical thinking skills useful in any situation involving language. Lewis presumably intended a second volume and to that end composed three more studies based on his final set of “Difficult Words” lectures given in 1959 (*Letters* 3: 1240). Cambridge University Press published a second edition of *Studies in Words* in 1967, silently adding these three studies: World, Life, and I Dare Say.

5. The Sum of a Career and *The Discarded Image*

Published May 7, 1964, nearly 28 years to the day after *The Allegory of Love*, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* was Lewis's final scholarly book. Here, we find a project quite different from the earlier books in that Lewis does not focus on explicating literary texts or exploring semantics; rather, he draws on numerous texts to offer an exposition of the medieval model of the universe, the discarded image of the book's title. In a preface and nine chapters, Lewis presents, as his subtitle suggests, "prolegomena to the study of medieval and Renaissance literature" (Griffin 430). After introducing his project, Lewis reviews key classical and late-antique texts that fed the medieval model before turning to the model itself, which he presents by moving from the outer heavens through the spheres to Earth and its inhabitants. He concludes the book with a discussion of the model's influence and its post-medieval and Renaissance life.

Though different in subject, *The Discarded Image* is also quite similar to his earlier works both in its critical stance to its subject and in its origin. As with *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, and *Studies in Words*, Lewis based *The Discarded Image* on a course of lectures, only these he gave and revised over several years at both Oxford and Cambridge, beginning in 1932 (Griffin 430; *Letters* 3: 1361-62; Hooper, "Lectures," 448-52). In the prefatory remarks he wrote for the book in July, 1962, Lewis states: "Some who attended [the course] have expressed a wish that its substance might be given a more permanent form" (ix). One of those people encouraging publication at the time was Roger Lancelyn Green, the book's dedicatee. Green was Lewis's student at Oxford in the late 1930s, sitting in the front row of the lecture hall when Lewis delivered the course's 1938 version. Noting that Lewis read the book's final proofs in October, 1963, just a month before he died (Green and Hooper 304; Griffin 445), we might say the book gestated throughout his professional career and, in this sense, is a fitting final scholarly effort.

In those prefatory remarks penned the summer of 1962, Lewis orients his implied reader immediately to his critical stance. Drawing a simple analogy between reading literature from the past and traveling

in a foreign country, he suggests his book is like a guide to be consulted before a trip. His intention, he says, is to lead into to the literature as a map “will lead us to many prospects; including some we might never have found by following our noses” (ix). He continues:

There are, I know, those who prefer not to go beyond the impression, however accidental, which an old work makes on a mind that brings to it a purely modern sensibility and modern conceptions; just as there are travellers who carry their resolute Englishry with them all over the Continent, mix only with other English tourists, enjoy all they see for its ‘quaintness’, and have no wish to realise what those ways of life, those churches, those vineyards, mean to the natives. They have their reward. I have no quarrel with people who approach the past in that spirit. I hope they will pick none with me. But I was writing for the other sort. (ix-x)

Through his, by now familiar, familiar tone and this simple, almost comfortable analogy to foreign travel, Lewis draws his audience into his critical stance. No longer satisfied with mere impression, Lewis’s audience—like the English traveler who wishes to “realise what those ways of life, those churches, those vineyards, mean to the natives”—is different, too, just like the old literature and foreign country itself. And it is that “other sort,” of course, whom he constitutes as his implied reader.

For Lewis, then, his entire text is an effort to orient his modern implied reader to the otherness of this model in an effort to understand what it meant “to the natives,” that is, to the medieval and early modern people on whose imaginations the model worked. In a strange paradox, Lewis seeks to familiarize his implied reader with this different past in order to make it less different, less foreign, much as he strives to do in his earlier scholarly works as well. We see him do this in several places in the text but perhaps the most provocative is in his discussion of the heavens. After reviewing how the ancients and medievals calculated and understood the heavens, he admits such facts are “in themselves curiosities of mediocre interest...[which] become valuable only in so far as they enable us to enter more fully into the consciousness of our

ancestors" (98). His solution is to step outside the study into an imaginative experience. He states:

You must go out on a starry night and walk about for half an hour trying to see the sky in terms of the old cosmology. Remember that you now have an absolute Up and Down. The Earth is really the centre, really the lowest place; movement to it from whatever direction is downward movement. As a modern, you located the stars at a great distance. For distance you must now substitute that very special, and far less abstract, sort of distance which we call height. . . . The really important difference is that the medieval universe, while unimaginably large, was also unambiguously finite. (98-99)

Here we find an instance of Lewis at his pedagogical best. He not only helps his implied reader exercise historical imagination but also gives an assignment: one that reinforces the theoretical lesson on the heavens by making a vivid impression. Even if real readers do not actually wander on a starry night, Lewis's implied reader does, and he directs the kinds of conclusions he hopes this reader will draw from the experience.

This attentiveness to his implied reader, an attentiveness we can see throughout the book but particularly in passages like the ones above, lends a conversational quality to Lewis's style in *The Discarded Image*, a style even more intimate in spots than we find in *The Allegory of Love* and *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. Though such a style leads Lewis occasionally "to oversimplify . . . and to overcategorize," as Morton Bloomfield noted in his generous 1965 *Speculum* review (355), he never loses sight of his chief aim: to illuminate old literary texts by placing them within their cultural and historical contexts. As A.N. Wilson noted twenty-six years after publication, "*The Discarded Image* . . . was written by a man with an unusual sensitivity to the differences between past and present" (164). We could say the same about *The Allegory of Love*, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, and even *Studies in Words*. The author who comes through these texts seems a consummate teacher as well as scholar. Academics who knew Lewis echo this assessment. Following Lewis's death, for instance, J.A.W. Bennett—his former student and

replacement at Cambridge—observed in 1965 that “fine scholar though he was, he was an even better teacher” (44-45).⁹

6. Conclusion

Reviewing these five scholarly books together and within the context of Lewis’s professional career leads to a clearer sense of his contribution to early studies than reading them in part or even singly might do. As a result of this review here, two key assumptions governing much of Lewis’s scholarly work emerge. First, and by now most clear, is Lewis’s assumption that reconstructing the sensibilities, beliefs, and thought patterns of a remote past is indeed worth doing for modern readers. Though endowed with and somewhat hampered by the assumptions of their own age, Lewis suggests, these readers can nevertheless recover an intellectual understanding of the past through an exercise of their imaginative faculties. This imaginative act of reconstruction—one assisted by the kind of discussion Lewis puts forth based on his research—allows readers to approach older literature with intellectual sensitivity to its historical and cultural contexts. Second, though less clear but closely related to and equally important as the first, is Lewis’s assumption that reading literature can—perhaps even should—transform the reader. Important as it might be, an intellectual recovery of the past in order to read old literature with a fuller understanding of its historical and cultural contexts is not an end in itself for Lewis; rather, it is a step for readers on the way toward nothing less than an expansion of the self. In *An Experiment in Criticism*, the book in which he most clearly addresses the question of why one should read literature at all, Lewis writes:

The nearest I have yet got to an answer is that we seek an enlargement of our being. We want to be more than ourselves. Each of us by nature sees the whole world from one point of view with a perspective and a selectiveness peculiar to himself. And even when we build disinterested fantasies, they are saturated with, and limited by, our own psychology. To acquiesce in the particularity of the sensuous level—in other words, not to discount perspective—would be lunacy. We should then believe that the railway line really grew narrower

as it receded into the distance. But we want to escape the illusions of perspective on higher levels too. We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own. (137)

For Lewis reading literature is one way to avoid the myopic, to perceive the world through other points of view, to expand the self. He concludes the book with a paradox fundamental to experiencing all art: "in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. . . . Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do" (141). Though he does not directly address the question "why read literature" in the five books discussed here, Lewis's assumption of reading's transformative potential underlies the pedagogical thrust of his scholarly work from *The Allegory of Love* to *The Discarded Image*. This assumption complements and in a sense fulfills his more obvious assumption about the benefit of accessing the past's remoteness through an exercise in historical imagination.

After assessing these five scholarly books within the context of Lewis's professional life, a question still remains for us at present: how useful is his pedagogical scholarship today? We are more than a generation past his death and, as Wilson notes, "little *criticism* as such survives the generation in which it is written" (173). Insights into medieval and early modern literature and culture have changed. New questions are being asked. Our understanding of courtly love, for instance, has changed significantly since Lewis was pursuing his pioneering research on the subject eighty years ago. And, there is a dated quality to much Lewis wrote, particularly in those places in *A Preface to Paradise Lost* where he takes on fellow critics of the day or in *The Discarded Image* where he refers to "the savage" as compared to medieval man or even in *Studies in Words* where he clearly implies a pre-1960s Cambridge-man reader. Yet, his attention to the alterity of medieval and early modern literature and culture, his encouragement that readers seek to understand literature within its historical-cultural terms, his assumption that such reading can have a transformative affect on modern readers, and his essentially pedagogical thrust all point to a key reason why his scholarly work remains useful.

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Lewis, like E.M.W. Tillyard, D. W. Robertson, Douglas Bush, Robert Ackerman and others writing forty, fifty, sixty years ago, still offers fine introductions to his subjects. Taken for what he intended, these five studies deliver reflections, commentaries, and definitions prefatory to the close study of literary texts. They are maps, inviting his real readers into his subjects, but they are not the subjects themselves. If read in conjunction with *Paradise Lost*, for example, *A Preface* yields insights into epic poetry in general and specific aspects of Milton's poem. Similarly, if one read *The Discarded Image* in conjunction with the texts he mentions, Lewis's book offers a veritable syllabus and commentary for an introduction to medieval cosmology. And once taken, who could forget the starry-walk exercise or the insights it yields into Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Chaucer's *House of Fame*, or James I's *The Kingis Quair*? The same can be said for *The Allegory of Love* and *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*. Though neither in any sense offers a final word on its respective subject—nor would Lewis likely have thought either did even at the time of publication—both studies remain useful, particularly in Lewis's explication of individual works. So, though Lewis died nearly fifty years ago, though he is known today primarily for his non-academic writings, and though his scholarly writing is necessarily dated in particular places and superseded in others, his pedagogical scholarship can still offer useful *prolegomena* to medieval and early modern literature and culture, especially for those new to the fields, as he invites real readers to take the role of the implied readers he inscribes in his texts.

The College of St. Scholastica

Notes

¹ In his later years, Lewis's Christian apologetics and his fiction enjoyed a popular readership in North America that has continued unabated—if publication records are an indication (Edwards 4)—since his death in 1963. Indeed, since his death, a number of organizations have developed largely around Lewis's role as Christian apologist. The New York C.S. Lewis Society, for instance, was founded in 1969 to foster “an active interest” in Lewis and to “make discreet overtures to persons not familiar with the writings of C.S. Lewis, but who are clearly afoot on their life's pilgrimage and who may have . . . an affinity for the Christian Spirit that he represents, and to whom his writings may prove, as to us, welcome guides” (<http://www.nycslsociety.com/charter.htm>). Similarly, the C.S. Lewis Institute was founded in 1976 with an evangelical intent “to develop disciples who will articulate, defend, and live their faith in Christ in personal and public life” (<http://www.Cslewisinstitute.org/>). And the C.S. Lewis Foundation, established in 1986 and arguably the most academically focused group, seeks to foster “mere Christianity” among academics through various programs, including The C.S. Lewis Study Centre located at Lewis's Oxford home (<http://www.cslewis.org/>). Interestingly, this foundation announced in December 2009 that it has established C.S. Lewis College, a Great Books and fine arts institution of higher education, with intentions to open in 2012 in Northfield, Massachusetts (<http://www.cslewiscollege.org/index.html>). Considering Lewis's fiction, his space trilogy, theological fantasies (*The Great Divorce* and *The Screwtape Letters*), and Narnian tales continue to draw readers, and interest in the latter has particularly resurged with the release of film versions of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* in 2005 and *Prince Caspian* in 2008 (Edwards 4-5).

² In 1979, Hooper published a revised and enlarged bibliography that includes books Hooper and others edited following Lewis's death. It also includes a more complete list of incidental pieces Hooper identified as Lewis's after he published the 1965 bibliography.

³ The four other academic books published during Lewis's lifetime are *Rehabilitations and Other Essays* (1939), *The Personal Heresy*, with E.M.W. Tillyard (1939), *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961), and *They Asked for a Paper: Papers and Addresses* (1962).

⁴ Lewis fully develops his theory of the reception of art, as opposed to the use of art, in *An Experiment in Criticism*. In her study, Hart discusses what she calls Lewis's "Pedagogical Style," by which she means his use of analogy, classification, and provocation, that is, Lewis's use of what Hart identifies as mixed metaphor, incongruous imagery, and artificial analogy "in order to startle the reader out of mental lethargy and to bring imagination as well as the reason into play" (108). Interestingly to me, I encountered Hart's discussion after I had completed my research and an early draft of this study. While we explore similar aspects of Lewis's writing, I differ from Hart in my assessment of how Lewis constructs his audience in each of the texts reviewed here.

⁵ The range of reviews published in Watson (79-123) might be summed up by one not included in that collection but similar: Patch's mixed assessment that *The Allegory of Love* "affords excellent reading," yet Lewis's "light touch has at times led him into extravagant statement" (272).

⁶ Readers found this four-part definition of courtly love so compelling that it held sway for the next several years until challenged and revised by other scholars beginning in the 1950s and 60s, including D.W. Robertson (391-503), E. Talbot Donaldson (154-63), and Peter Dronke (1-98) among others.

⁷ The allusion, a slightly disordered quote, comes from Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms" (12.644). In subsequent letters, Lewis frequently uses such witty, infernal imagery when discussing O HELL.

⁸ At the time, Lewis was not alone in his re-assessment of the English Renaissance. Tillyard (*passim*) and Bush (1-38) both similarly argued for re-examining sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature in light of medieval literature and culture. In this stance, all three sought to revise what had become a standard, even entrenched, view based on Jacob Burckhardt's thesis that the Renaissance signaled a radical break from medieval culture.

⁹ A number of former students and colleagues have reflected on Lewis as teacher and colleague. For my purposes, in addition to Bennett, some of the more illuminating have been Peter C. Bayley, Derek Brewer, Alastair Fowler, and Richard W. Ladborough.

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