C. S. Lewis in *The Spectator*, 1920-1970

From the online archive of weekly magazine *The Spectator* for the period 1920-1970, I have tried to extract all items in which C. S. Lewis's name (or his early pseudonym Clive Hamilton) appears. Pending further discoveries, the result is a collection of 86 items. Twenty-one of them were written by Lewis: eight essays, seven poems, one review, and five letters to the editor.

Printed below are all the sixty-five items *not* written by Lewis, plus those of Lewis's letters to the editor (four of the five) which were not reprinted in his *Collected Letters*.

Publication dates are given at the beginning of each item (YYYY MMDD), in each item's web address, and in the table of contents. Each web address also features, as its last element, the first page number in the relevant issue as presented in the online archive.

Footnotes in square brackets are editorial, all others are original. For information about reprints of Lewis's shorter writings see www.lewisiana.nl/cslessays. His poetical works are found in *The Collected Poems of C. S. Lewis: A Critical Edition*, edited by Don W. King (Kent State University Press, 2015); Lewis's *Collected Letters*, edited by Walter Hooper, were published in three volumes in 2000, 2004 and 2006.

Arend Smilde
Utrecht, The Netherlands
November 2015; last update 28 February 2025

update, November 2018 and June 2021

Two items have been added and the additions are accounted for in the 2015 note above. Regrettably, the *Spectator*'s online archive is no longer accessible for non-subscribers.

update, November 2024

With the *Spectator*'s online archive back to open access (but not searchable further back than 1940), I found three more items meeting the criteria for inclusion in this collection: 1940 1025 (Bevan), 1961 0210 (Whitehorn), and 1963 1129 (Portrait of the Week).

update, February 2025

Further additions: two letters from Lewis (1935 0222 and 1951 0622); two reviews (1945 0907 and 1958 0912); two further letters to the editor (both 1947 0523).

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¶ 1926 1030 | Clive Hamilton, *Dymer* · review by C. Henry Warren
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/30th-october-1926/34

Gems and Coloured Glass

The Land. By V. Sackville-West. (Heinemann. 6s.)
News of the Devil. By Humbert Wolfe. (Benn. 3s. 6d.)
Dymer. By Clive Hamilton. (Dent. 6s.)
Irish Doric in Song and Story. By Alfred Perceval Graves. (Fisher Unwin. 6s.)
Flying Fish. By Grace Hazard Conkling. (Knopf. 8s. 6d.)
The Close Chaplet. By Laura Gottschalk. (Hogarth Press. 5s.)
April Morning. By Stanley Smith. (Hogarth Press. 2s. 6d.)

It is surely a heartening sign when, out of a batch of eight volumes of verse, we can point to four of them as being single-poem books. After a decade that has been as prodigal of slender lyrics as an April tree of blossoms, it looks as if contemporary poets were turning to the longer narrative forms once more. That argues gathered strength of sustaining purpose. Can it be, then, that we are emerging from the period of experiment and apprenticeship at last, with all sorts of new tools in our hands, understood, mastered?

Or is it that our poets, vocal as ever for the inarticulate heart of the people, are being compelled into the longer more-embracing forms of verse by an increasing spirituality in the land? Certainly this is what all the first four books mentioned above might argue.

Miss Sackville-West gives us modern Georgics as redolent of Kent as ever Virgil's were of Mantua. The cycle of the seasons is her theme; and she has packed them with such wealth of coloured lore, such pictures of exact observation, and such a richness of intuitive understanding of the peasant-mind that we might say who carries her poem with him into a foreign land carries all the best of England in his pocket. Perhaps *The Land* leans a little to the gloomy side; but, then, the particular county of which the poet is singing is Kent, clayey Kent. Strewn across her rhymed strong pentameters are some of the most charming lyrics Miss Sackville-West has yet given us; but it is for the way in which she has revealed here the spirit of the English peasant (who, coming and going all year amongst the beauty of the living fields, inarticulately, almost unknowingly, yet sucks therefrom the grace that informs his heart and mind till they work to a single purpose), that our best gratitude is due. She knows, too, what the townsmen have lost in forsaking their heritage of the green earth: –

> "They meet together, talk, and grow most wise,
> But they have lost, in losing solitude,
> Something – an inward grace, the seeing eyes,
> The power of being alone;
> The power of being alone with earth and skies,
> Of going about a task with quietude,
> Aware at once of earth's surrounding mood
> And of an insect crawling on a stone …"

Far removed are the methods and purpose of Mr. Humbert Wolfe. His poem opens with a picture of Mr. Paul Arthur, modern business-man, contemplating the reorganization of religion on a sound commercial basis. Out of these satirical and rather over-intellectualized high-jinks we are lifted, as the poem becomes more spiritually loaded, on to another plane. Perhaps it was the effect of the drug Arthur swallowed to allay the stabbing pains at his heart; or it may have been the lovely face of the Botticelli that hung in the room before him; anyway he dreamed God spoke with him, and then the devil, arguing with him that good and evil were but degrees of the same thing, and both "nothing in the nothingness of God." Then, deftly, the poet takes us on to a yet higher plane, and we behold what is virtually Arthur's final apocalypse wherein, after a bitter realization of his life's folly, he learns that: –

"your sins and you have here become a part
of the immortal movement of the Heart,
that does not judge, nor blame, nor yet forgive,
but being needed by all things that live,
needs all of thorn …"

Dymer, if not so masterly, is perhaps the better for its simplicity. Here is the evolution towards spiritual freedom of a young man bred in the standardized society of the Perfect City; but Mr. Hamilton objectifies his theme so effectively and dramatically that it is not until the moving events are all done that we realize the full purport of what we have been reading. Here is a little epic burnt out of vital experience and given to us through a poet's eye. Mr. Hamilton's work is new to us; seldom does a poet first blazon upon the printed page with such a wise and lovely poem. Beside him, Mr. Fletcher seems almost turgid, turbulent. His theme is the biblical myth of man's childhood upon the earth, from the creation of Adam, through the strife of Cain and Abel, to the vision of Noah. "I say there are two sides to God," writes the poet in his preface, "the light-bearer and the darkness-bearer, Lucifer and Jehovah"; and his poem treats of the progress of those two forces towards the envisioned harmony of the rainbow. Mr. Fletcher deals in symbols; but he seems to lack the single clear-seeing eye to present them to his readers.

There is nothing abstruse about Mr. Graves. He sings his Irish songs so happily he sets our feet a-tapping. In the longer songs – or stories – is a fine humanity and a tender humour.

Though this side of the Atlantic we know Mrs. Conkling's prodigy-daughter better than we know herself, this volume makes us anxious to remedy the omission; for her lyrics and sonnets combine the fresh-coloured image with the deep intent that makes true poetry. Her art is so sure we can afford to forget it, and live in the immediate loveliness of the impression she conveys; indeed, it is so sure that there are times (notably in the section of her book called "The Child in the Mexican Garden") when she seems to recapture the simple buoyant rapture of a child. Although the first line of one of Miss Gottschalk's poems runs, "And a poor prayer, in these days, to be simple," it can hardly be said that she attains simplicity; yet she forestalls our tendency to be irked with her stiff, packed, difficult phraseology, by the plea of her first poem: –

"For in untravelled soil alone can I
Unearth the gem or let the mystery lie
That never must be found."

And if I confess that most often both gem and mystery remained for me undiscovered, that is because I have (and proudly) a simple mind, preferring the fresh beauty of such uncerebralized verses as these by Mr. Snaith, on Edward Thomas: –

"He went, and comes not home again.
Under the guns, that wide and well
Crumpled the meadowlands, he fell:
A linnet in a hurricane.

"Herein he conquers: there shall be
Scarred upon human memory
A shamefast foolishness that slew
Some of the precious singing few."

There is no need for Mr. Snaith to pray for simplicity; his mind does not get in the way of his heart; his craftsmanship is sure because his purpose is single.

¶ 1935 0222 | *letter to the editor*
https://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/22nd-february-1935/20

THE FUNCTION OF EDUCATION

Sir. – In your last number Mr. Graham Greene, reviewing Professor Pelham Edgar's *Art of the Novel*, states that at Oxford "the Professor of English Literature is a Member of the Book Society Committee." Why this should be considered discreditable I need not inquire, for it is untrue. What is more important is the reviewer's assumption that it is the business of a school of English literature to criticize recent or contemporary work. He is doubtless entitled to hold this view, but not to take it for granted, since it is highly controversial. Most of us at Oxford, I believe, proceed on a premise which Mr. Greene seems to be unaware of, and which may he stated as follows:

The function of education is to lift the individual out of the provincialism of his own place and time, to liberate him from the tyranny of the immediate, and so to make him more of a man *simpliciter* and less of a man *secundum quid*. Hence, as a colleague once laughingly said to me, "a university aims at making a man as unlike his cousin as possible." For those whose minds tend to the abstract, this liberation is effected by philosophy, science, or mathematics; for those of a more concrete turn, by the various forms of history. Among these, "English Language and Literature" may claim to be the most concrete, studying, as it does, a thousand years, not of war and polities, but of human thought, sentiment, and idiom. With the decay of classical studies, indeed, "English," thus conceived, bids fair to become the only discipline at our older Universities which still gives man a living acquaintance with civilizations, modes of expression, and basic assumptions other than his own. We believe that a school of English which adheres to these principles may do invaluable work; by devoting itself to contemporary criticism it would merely abandon that work in order to enter an arena which is already as well supplied with combatants as any temperate spectator can desire. – Yours faithfully, C. S. LEWIS

Magdalen College, Oxford.

¶ 1936 0904 | C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* · review by William Empson
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/4th-september-1936/25

Love and the Middle Ages

The title is not a description of the book but of the excellent mediaeval works which it expounds and places in their long historical background; curious how one's heart sinks on supposing a modern specimen; what the romantics could read as wild and fascinating needs now to be praised as exact and important. The book is learned, witty, and sensible, and makes one ashamed of not having read its material; in the first flush of renewed admiration for the *Romance of the Rose* I tried to read the Chaucerian version. But it is intolerable. Far better to read Mr. Lewis and his admirable quotations, and recognise that these works were developing a method which is still normal and living, and frankly admit that there are great pleasures not our own.

The book starts with vast and vague claims for its theme. There have been "three or four real changes of human sentiment" in history, and one was the discovery of "courtly love" in eleventh-century Provence; compared to this the Renaissance was "a mere ripple"; only because of this, the American film is now a surprise to the oriental. Certainly something important happened, and Mr. Lewis might have found a narrow enough definition to make the troubadours unique. But he had only to open the *Tale of Genji* to find the practice of courtly love in full blast in tenth-century Japan; it came, and it soon went, with the conditions for it; and it comes rather when women are mutilated and imprisoned than when they are free. The main troubadour theory, the comparison of a noble successful love to the vision of God, could not well be pushed further into Buddhism than by the mutual suicides who still expect a Buddhist heaven; in Islamic poetry it could and did appear fully, and earlier than the troubadours. One does not need to claim Moslem influence (never adequately disproved) to refute this idea

that love was discovered like matches, only once, which Mr. Lewis has to support by calling Catullus an exhibitionist and hiding the *Song of Solomon*. Mr. Lewis is rather bitter about "the modern reader," that vulgar fool looking for excitement, and it seems fair to point out the journalism of his first pages.

Indeed he oversimplifies the allegories, too, but that is to our gain if it makes them readable. Before expounding the *Romance of the Rose* he produces various butts to make it seem easy, readers for instance "who had never noticed that the fountain of Narcissus represented the heroine's eyes." The fifteenth-century scholiast Molinet is then called crude, and he too had not noticed this point, preferring to combine in the Well the fountain of Wisdom, with Truth at the bottom, and that of Love, either divine or "vain" enough to destroy Narcissus, and again, by stressing the overhanging pinetree as the Cross, that of grace and piety in the water from the side of Christ. But Mr. Lewis is making a real point, and no doubt Molinet could have produced a literal and a Freudian meaning if he chose. You have only to hold both the image itself and its most sensible interpretation, then read slowly and let fancy play. You then read the only known love-story (as Mr. Lewis shows very well) which understands its heroine profoundly and never mentions her. But I cannot do this; the whole excitement of the slow poem was in gradual partial discovery; and even a simple-minded modern reader will start discovering from some wrong place. It is the rare case of a thing that one can see was very good and yet cannot enjoy.

This point about the Well seems important, because Molinet states what Mr. Lewis leaves out; the Well is wisdom and the crystal in it that reflects the whole garden is the just person who includes everything in himself. The idea that love is a means to *knowledge* is already clear in the poem of Bernart of Ventadorn, from which Mr. Lewis quotes a verse to prove that the well only meant eyes – the lady has "stolen the whole world" into her "mirror full of power." Cavalcanti is perhaps the first to theorise in verse about this, but it is one of the few Provençal ideas that Europe still plays with, and incidentally just what might have been learned from the Arabs. (The Koran explicitly states, after providing houris in heaven as a powerful allegory, that they will be neglected because men will prefer the vision of God; this is exactly the position of Aquinas about the pleasures of heaven, except that love is given the highest place among things neglected.) The other side of the Provençal position, the lady actually in control of the drawing-room, was alive enough among the Byzantines; what one would like to know is how far the Provençal mixture was a crucial cause of later sentiment. Were Eloise and Abelard busily modelling themselves on troubadours? And I suspect another hole in his account around the allegory of triumph. We are told that Hawes, one of the last figures in the book, "did a most surprising thing"; after the death of his Lover he describes successive triumphs of Fame, Time and Eternity, and Mr. Lewis has an interested foot-note about Sir Thomas More's father's pictures. Of course, this is simply Petrarch's *Trionfi* in order, and for that matter the stuff of many mediaeval pageants; when Mr. Lewis feels an obscure triumph in the apparently depressing close of many allegories he is noting a variant of this stock form.

Such complaints as I can make are only an agreement about the interest of the topic. Mr. Lewis is excellent on the essential point of allegory, and on its growth in Silver Latin, as against the gods, because of a new consciousness of an inner world of moral struggle, so that it was the basis of psychology and gave St. Augustine tropes that no one has dared call unreal. But the real use of the book for a general reader I think lies elsewhere; it gives an effective account of works whose beauty and reality for us we need to recognise, and yet which, in all willingness, nobody who simply likes a good book can read.

¶ 1938 1209 | C. S. Lewis: "Experiment" (poem)
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/9th-december-1938/12

¶ 1940 1025 | C. S. Lewis, *the Problem of Pain* · review by Edwyn Bevan
https://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/25th-october-1940/18

Faith's Dilemma

I do not know how other people will be affected by this little volume contributed by Mr. C. S. Lewis to the 'Christian Challenge' Series, but I am myself very grateful for it. It is a new treatment of the old, old problem with an arresting personal note. It says so many things which seem to me to need saying today, and traverses so many glibly repeated modern opinions, that it will help many people, I think, to revise what they have taken for granted and face possibilities which had not occurred to them. The scope of the book is somewhat wider than the title indicates, for it considers not only the problem of pain but the problem of evil as a whole, moral evil being a harder part of it than pain. Of course, there is no problem of evil at all except on the supposition that the world was made and is ruled by a good God: apart from that there is no more reason why evil should not exist than anything else. If you do believe that the world was made and is ruled by a good God, there is the stock dilemma formulated long ago by the ancient sceptics: either Gad cannot create a world without evil, and then He is not omnipotent, or He could, and did not, and then He is not all-good. And the regular answer made on the side of believers is that God's omnipotence does not mean that He can do what is self-contradictory, and it would have been self-contradictory to create creatures with the power of choosing between good and evil and not allow the possibility of their choosing evil. Mr. Lewis reproduces this, the old answer: perhaps, indeed, no other answer is conceivable, and if it is not completely satisfactory, that is because the interaction of the Divine Will and the will of the creature is something which no one on the human level can pretend to understand. But Mr. Lewis's originality is to be found in the farther-ranging reflections which accompany and illuminate the old answer. His chapter on "The Divine Goodness" goes deep and is of striking beauty. In defending the idea of retributive punishment, Mr. Lewis, I am convinced, states a truth which the sophistications of fashionable philosophy do not avail to evaporate. If present-day conditions did not restrict the space for reviews, I should like to say more about this book, which I commend as a really remarkable one.

¶ 1941 0131 | C. E. M. Joad
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/31st-january-1941/8

GOD AND EVIL

The controversy as to the existence of purpose and design in the universe is an old one. Why, it may be asked, raise it again? I suggest that it raises itself, and does so in the following way. Many, perhaps most, of the thinking men and women of my own and later generations were agnostic. We did not, therefore, believe in the doctrine of original sin and we did not believe in the innateness of evil. Professionally optimistic, we regarded evil as a by-product of circumstance; of economic circumstance, in the first place – it was in poverty, over-crowding, under-feeding, under-education, racket, dirt and stench, that Shaw had assured us was the root of evil – later, when we had learned our Freud, of psychological circumstance. Bad psychological environment in early childhood laid the foundations of the repressions and complexes which later expressed themselves in the psychological defects – we did not call them vices – of adult life. And the inference? Remove the poverty, change the psychological environment of early childhood, ensure that everybody had good food, fresh air, proper education and understanding and sympathetic treatment from his very earliest years, and the evil in man would disappear. A world of perfectly psycho-analysed Communists would, in fact, be millennial.

Since the Nazis came, it has become increasingly difficult to hold this view. Can the brutalities and injustices of the Nazi *régime* be written off as merely the by-product of adverse circumstance? Are all the sadists of the concentration camp made sadistic by poverty and early repression? It seems unlikely. But if not, what follows? That men, some of them at least, are evil by nature and not by circumstance;

that evil in fact is endemic in the heart of man. Did He who made men, then, make them evil? Were the brutalities of the Nazi *régime* designed when the universe was conceived? It is difficult to believe that they were, and with these questions and with this difficulty we are once again in sight of the nineteenth-century controversy as to the existence and purpose of design in the universe. That we are indeed in sight of it, the revival of interest in the subject by students with whom it is my lot as a university teacher to come into contact, students who persist in asking precisely the questions which I have cited, affords significant testimony.

What is the answer? There are, it seems to me, three possible answers. First, that the universe is uncreated and, therefore, undesigned. The commonest form of this is the mechanist hypothesis. The universe is conceived after the model of a gigantic clock functioning through the automatic interaction of its parts. It is possible that at some time or other somebody wound the clock up, but we have certainly no right to assume the occurrence of such an event. For mind, as we know it, is not prior to, but a by-product of, matter, an emanation from material substances thrown off at a certain point of the earth's physical development and subject to the same laws, the laws of physics and chemistry, as those which govern the behaviour of the material substances which produced it. One day material conditions will cease to be favourable to life, which will then finish its pointless journey with as little significance as, in the person of the amoeba, it began it. Till then, life travels an incidental passage across a fundamentally alien environment, in which the material and the inanimate everywhere condition the spiritual and the animate. In such a universe there is, it is obvious, no room for purpose or design. This view, popular in the early part of this century, was largely derived from the physical science of the time, which was thought to require it. Recent developments in physics, and in particular the changed attitude to the concepts of force and mechanical law, have largely destroyed the foundation of simple, solid, obvious matter on which it was based, and it is today no longer held with the old certainty.

Secondly, there is the answer suggested by theories of emergent and creative evolution. There are many variants of these views, but broadly it is held that the universe, initially unconscious and, therefore, unpurposing, evolves consciousness, and with consciousness purpose, in the process of its own development. The universe in fact is inherently creative, developing real novelties as it goes along. One of these novelties is mind, another purpose. This view became fashionable just before the last war owing to the genius of Bergson. A variation more immediately relevant to my present theme is contained in Alexander's *Space, Time and Deity*. To each level of evolution there is, according to Alexander, its appropriate purpose, the purpose namely to achieve the next. The level next to be achieved performs, therefore, the function of an end, or goal, for the level that already exists. As Alexander puts it, the Universe yet to be realised is God to the universe that seeks to realise it. God, therefore who is the universe's purpose, is a later development of the process which both engenders and strives after Him. Always potential, He is never actual; continually approached, He as continually recedes. God, therefore, is not transcendent but immanent. He is wholly within the universe.

And therefore? Therefore, as Dean Inge has pointed out, He shares the fate of the universe. This fate, if the second law of thermo-dynamics is to be trusted, is to run down until – the metaphor of the clock again suggests itself – the cosmos reaches a permanent condition of static eventlessness. In so far, then, as the evolving of a God-generating universe can be said to be purposive its purpose is its own extinction.

The third alternative is the view which has commended itself to most human beings, the view, namely, that God is outside and prior to the universe, and created it in pursuance of a plan. It is obviously not a view which can be discussed at the end of an article. There is, however, one observation which I will venture to make which relates it to my starting point. The most serious difficulty with which this view has to contend is the existence of pain and evil. "Just look at the world," says the sceptic in effect. "Are you really going to maintain that this was designed, that intended? If so, the designer was a half-wit, a satirist, or a practical joker. I prefer to believe that nobody was responsible for such a mess." The commonest method of meeting this difficulty is to ascribe pain and evil to the agency of man. In order that man might become a fully moral being, God endowed him with the gift

of freewill. To be free is to be free to choose between good and evil, free therefore to do evil, free to cause the pain which comes from the doing of evil. God is thus absolved from responsibility for the condition of the universe; the responsibility devolves wholly upon man.

Does this answer really fill the bill? It has two deficiencies. Nature was red in tooth and claw, and the world of nature was, therefore, shot through with pain, before man appeared on the scene. Can we hold man responsible for events prior to his appearance? Secondly, God, being omniscient, must have known what the result of endowing man with freedom would be. Therefore, though not Himself the creator of pain and evil, He wittingly connived at their introduction into a world which knew them not. If it be maintained that God did not know, and did not know precisely because the universe really is free to develop as it pleases, then we can no longer maintain that the process of its development is designed or the end purposed.

What is the upshot? I have space only for one impression. My impression is that in face of the new urgency of the fact of evil, the claims of dualism are once again making themselves felt. There is evil in the world not because God put it there, or even because man put it there, but because God shares the government of the world with a spirit of evil which is His antagonist. With it He struggles for the mastery of men's souls. This, the hypothesis of the Zoroastrians and the Manichees, has in my experience during the last few months, cropped up in the most unexpected quarters.

[The issue raised in the last paragraph of this article will be discussed next week by Mr. C. S. Lewis, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and author of a recent book on "The Problem of Pain."]

¶ 1941 0207 | C. S. Lewis: "Evil and God"
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/7th-february-1941/9

¶ 1942 0220 | C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* · review by W. J. Turner
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/20th-february-1942/18

The Devil at Work

This is a witty and profound book. It is also a flag hoisted on an advanced stronghold which shows us the direction into which the wind of opinion is blowing. From every quarter during the last ten years stray voices have been murmuring that the chief need of our times is a religious revival. These voices have been heard even in the churches, where the clergy might well be pardoned for thinking that since they existed throughout the country religion also existed among the people. It did, and does still, otherwise our social state would be far worse; but all honest clerics have known, nevertheless, that the good felt by men in their hearts and the good they have done in their lives was, for most, quite unrelated to any particular religious faith. The majority of intellectuals, for instance, no longer believe or disbelieve as their forefathers did, in Christianity; for them it is not a living question at all but has long ceased, like alchemy or witchcraft, to have any meaning. So much so that a decent, honest man like the late Arnold Bennett could declare that it passed his comprehension how even the meanest mind could accept Christianity as a revealed religion. It is an irrelevant though interesting fact that intellects of a luminosity and power besides which Bennett's was a mere rushlight have accepted the Christian faith in the past, and still accept it, for this only shows that such acceptance is not a purely intellectual matter.

It is not Law that makes men honest, and it is not Religion that makes men good; indeed, we may say that just as it is only the Law that makes men officially dishonest, so it is only Religion that makes men officially bad, and that honesty and true goodness are always outside the scope of either. Now this works well enough in society so long as men have no beliefs, but live warily in humility from day to day, trusting their own instincts and conscience, and for so long as these still remain vital and un-

corrupted. It is when a new doctrine or myth has come into the world, and has won men's belief, that society is in danger. I would go so far as to say that men only can begin to believe in a general creed when there is already something radically wrong with them – by which I mean when their own instincts and conscience have become corrupted, their minds confused, and they begin to feel lost.

This is exactly where the Christian apologist can insinuate this doctrine of original sin and the need for redemption, and can find credence for it. Here is Mr. Lewis's intellectual foothold, and I admit that it is solid and firm enough for his purpose, though I am not of his way of thinking. From this Christian standpoint he has written the most vital restatement of religious truths produced in our time, and he has found a brilliantly original form in which to do it. These letters are supposed to be written by a higher fiend "Screwtape" to a lesser fiend "Wormwood," and they form a course of instruction in the art of winning souls from Heaven to Hell, and the story of how one was lost by "Our Father Below." At every point they reveal Mr. Lewis's penetrating understanding of good and evil. There are no vague abstractions or homilies here; all is concrete, practical, lifelike and of an extraordinary vividness. I do not hesitate to compare Mr. Lewis's achievement with *Pilgrim's Progress*. Unlike that great book, the story it relates is not of a real person, but like that great book, it breathes a vivifying Puritan spirit, and if its intensity is slightly less passionate, it shows a more humanistic breadth. There is a superb passage in Letter XIV on the intention of God (here, in these letters, of course, called "The Enemy") towards man. What Mr. Lewis has to say about pleasures and joy is full of discernment; he has great knowledge of our human capacity for infinite self-deception, with the remarkable virtue of being both witty and serious in his exposure of it. Like all Mr. Lewis's books, it is a delight to the intellect. If Mr. Churchill is still looking for an Archbishop of Canterbury to give a lead to the Church here is the man; for who could be fitter for the task than one who could give counsel to Satan himself? It is true that Mr. Lewis is not in holy orders, but that can be quickly remedied.

¶ 1942 1009 | C. S. Lewis: "To G. M." (poem)
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/9th-october-1942/11

¶ 1942 1113 | C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* · review by Jackson Knight
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/13th-november-1942/16

Milton the Christian

"The purpose of these lectures," says Mr. C. S. Lewis on page 125 of the important and friendly little book in which they are now printed, "has been mainly 'to hinder hindrances' to the appreciation of *Paradise Lost* …" He is successful. He makes us take down the poem, and feel it more strongly than before, and like it still better. After arguing acutely against Mr. T. S. Eliot that others besides the "best practising poets" may judge poetry, he estimates from a survey of Homer and Vergil, and of *Beowulf*, what should be expected in epic, and decides that it should have a certain quality of ritual. Next he applies an up-to-date interpretative method to the evocative associations of Milton's poetry, showing how it should be read, and explains that Milton, writing as a unified individual, sets forth, according to his settled intention of affecting his audience as he desires, a system of belief which he himself accepts, and which is, in fact, orthodox. Mr. Lewis shows that Milton's story is designed to elicit "stock responses," that is, to strengthen and enliven our acceptance of traditional and especially Christian values. The poem displays to us a world which is "hierarchic," in the sense that all beings have the duty of obedience to superiors and of command over inferiors. Obedience to God is Milton's supreme message; disobedience is both sin and folly, too. This may seem in a way obvious; but it is an obvious view of a kind that is hard to prove, and it makes a heavy claim on Mr. Lewis's known learning and philosophical method.

Mr. Lewis writes, of course, as a Christian and an Aristotelian, and he reacts sharply from much recent work which has taken self-identity and dignity from the individual and transferred them to economic and psychological forces. He believes that discipline is central and the freedom and dignity of the individual primary. Milton, by his ritual verse, teaches us to believe in obedience, righteousness, chastity, splendour and joy itself. These values have been won through culture, especially Christian culture; we can lose them, for there is no such thing as "the unchanging human heart," which will react as it should, even if tradition is abandoned. It is through the theology that Milton exerts his intended effect; indeed, Mr. Lewis says on page 64, "Milton's thought, when purged of theology, does not exist."

I think that this is going rather too far, unless we are to assume that there is much of value for us in Milton besides his "Thought." Mr. Lewis's view is most welcome and valuable, at present especially; but the elusive mystery of great poetry is always awkward to any single view. Is there a possibility that we may be reading the *story* of *Paradise Lost* as we should and as Milton intended, but not quite reading the poem which, not entirely according to his wishes, Milton wrote? Can it be that on pages 126 to 129 something like this is confessed, and we are led to think that there is, after all, some paradoxical truth in Mr. Eliot's fallacy, if that is what it is; and that, poets or no, we must try to read poetry as if we were poets, not only listen to it as if we were a congregation – though, of course, if we derive both advantages together, so much the better?

Possibly Mr. Lewis does not really mean to insist so strongly on Milton's singleness of mind. Indeed, on page 7, quoting Pascal, he says that Milton is one of the great men who touch both extremes, and that he does not stand at the lonely end of a single line of development. Certainly Milton's prose works do not suggest quite the sort of singleness of mind that is argued. True, Milton planned to affect his readers; but one of the mysteries of poetry is that the great poets want to say, or cannot help saying, what the readers eventually are glad to read. Mr. Lewis is inclined to overlook this binomial mystery, perhaps even to adopt too static and isolated a conception of the great poet in his surroundings.

But this does not spoil his general success; still less, perhaps, does it detract from the merit of many splendid parts of the book – such as the most progressive account of the evocative effect which Milton's verse should have, the fine defence of ritual and tradition, the almost frightening demonstration of the intimate value of Milton to each one of us in our moral life with its dangers, and the most able review of ancient epic, in which the account of Vergil is a little masterpiece.

¶ 1942 1211 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/11th-december-1942

RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS
[Published in C. S. Lewis's *Collected Letters*, Vol. II, p. 540.]

¶ 1943 0205 | D. W. Brogan · book review
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/5th-february-1943/8

The Conquering Tongue

Every few years someone sounds the clarion and fills the fife, calling on us to man the breaches and repel the assailing hordes or Americanisms that threaten the chastity of the pure well of English undefiled. Sometimes the invaders intend to clip off the strong verbs, sometimes they threaten to enrich our language with new and horrid words. Whatever they do, or threaten to do, it must be resisted. But despite all the rallying battle-cries, the battle, when it is delivered so far forward, is always lost. We may regret that the battle is so ill-conducted, but we should not hide the truth. "Even our newspapers, hitherto regarded as models of correct literary style, are many of them following in their wake; and,

both in matter and phraseology, are lending countenance to what at first sight appears a monstrously crude and imbecile jargon; while others, fearful of a direct plunge, modestly introduce the uncouth bantlings with a saving clause." So wrote John Farmer in 1889. So, with very slight modifications, could our contemporary viewers-with-alarm write today. In vain they belittle the merits of the importations from America ("belittle" is one of them). In vain they forbid Americanisms to darken our doors (and "darken our doors" is another). However talented as controversialists the defenders of the old English tongue may be, they will find facts too much for them, such facts for example as the American origin of "talented."

There is nothing surprising in the constant reinforcement or, if you like, corruption of English by American. And there is every reason to believe that it has increased, is increasing and will not be diminished. If American could influence English a century ago when the predominance of the Mother Country in wealth, population and prestige was secure, and when most educated Americans were reverentially colonial in their attitude to English culture, how can it be prevented from influencing English today when every change has been a change of weight to the American side? That the balance of linguistic power is upset is hard to doubt. Of the two hundred million people speaking English nearly seven-tenths live in the United States, and another tenth in the British Dominions are as much influenced by American as by English English. Nor is this all. As an international language, it is American that the world increasingly learns. The grammatical simplicity of English, its hospitality to new words, its freedom from the purist fetish that afflicts modern German for instance, make it a good international language. Its handicaps are its spelling and its pronunciation – and American is in some degree less erratic in spelling and less troublesome in pronunciation than is standard English. It is easier to learn to speak like Raymond Gram Swing than like Alvar Liddell. Whether it be true or not that Pius XI said he could understand spoken American but not spoken English, it is *ben trovato*.

To understand what is happening to the language in whose ownership and control we are now only minority shareholders is an object of curiosity worthy of serious persons. It is also an object worthy of less serious persons, for the study of American is rich in delights and surprises. And this is especially true when we begin by slang. It was Mr. Dooley who said that when the Americans were done with English it would look as if it had been run over by a musical comedy. Today, we should substitute the talkies for the musical comedy, for it is the latest of the arts that most affects English speech and, in America itself, is the main vehicle for the spread of general slang, as apart from the trade slang of special groups or crafts, such as tramps or railroadmen. It is an error, it is true, to think of "American" as merely a regularised form of slang; it has other roots than the luxuriant undergrowth of slang. But slang not only plays a great part in the growth of any language, it plays an especial part in the growth of a language like American where the pressure of a uniformly accepted standard speech is I less than it is with us and where such standard literary speech as there is, is further divorced from the living tongue than it is with us.

So that even if the merits of the *Thesaurus* just launched on the world[*] were less great than they are, its interest would still be considerable. But Messrs. Berry and Van Den Bark have produced first-class survey of current American slang, a growth as rapid and rich as Iowa corn in a good June. It is not a dictionary but *Thesaurus*. Under a head like "religion" and under "sect; cult" we start with nudism and end up with astrology, which is sociologically as well as linguistically interesting. Then under "Attractive Person: I. Attractive Young Woman," there are fifty lines of synonyms, but under "Handsome Man" there are only two and a third lines and three of the synonyms are merely the names of film stars (Messrs. Valentino, Gable and Taylor). This may prove nothing more than that men not women make slang, but it may reflect the general American view of the relative distribution of pulchritude between the sexes.

[*] *The American Thesaurus of Slang. A Complete Reference Book of Colloquial Speech*. By Lester V. Berry and Martin Van Den Bark. (Constable. 40s.)

Relations between the sexes naturally get a great deal of space. If the makers of slang are fertile in terms of admiration for female beauty, they are equally fertile in derogatory terms for the sex. The most misogynistic Father of the Church could read some of this section with approval, and, indeed, with some self-criticism: "Why didn't I think of that one?" As is necessary, if a book of this kind is to have any real value, it includes many words that will shock the middle-aged, and may even, in a few cases, bring a blush to the cheek of the young person. Without taking the evidence of college slang too seriously, it is obvious that to some American college lads and lasses, praise of chastity might well come as almost as much of a novelty as, Mr. C. S. Lewis tells us, it recently came to the young men and young women of Oxford.

There is a good deal of humour, and a good deal of wit, in the slang reported here. The extravagance of American popular literature that Professor Krapp noted as a stylistic mark is not dead. The countrymen of Paul Bunyan are still inventive, especially in the field of sport and personal physical achievement. The early American who was

> "the uncle of the sun
> Half alligator and half hoss,"

is still doing business at the old stand. At times he is not quite convincing. He recalls those excessively virile literary men of whom Mr. Max Eastman said that they "have false hair on their chests." But more are like Luis Angel Firpo, whose toughness was defended by a Press agent: "Really tough? Why, he's got hair on his teeth."

Of the utility of the *Thesaurus* it is hardly necessary to speak. A command of current American is for the politician what a few Latin tags were a century ago. No false quantity dropped in Parliament under Pitt could have caused more shock that Sir Samuel Hoare's famous mistake about the meaning of "jitterbug." It showed that he (and the Government he was defending) were not on the beam, were not cooking with gas. It is characteristic of the difficulties of authors of books like this that neither of these slang terms has been noted in time for inclusion. Nor has such a symbol of the slang-making spirit as "zoot suit," the material embodiment of jitterbug Weltanschauung. Yet (the defenders of English should note), the "zoot suit" is so well known here that a song about it was used recently as a clue in the B.B.C. programme, "Monday Night at Eight."

No slang dictionary or thesaurus can be really up to date or completely convincing. (There are several important words or phrases whose source and meaning seem to me to have been missed.) A great deal of slang is synthetic, made deliberately by talented journalists like the staff of *Variety*, or the Hollywood script-writers. And it is given artificial currency by the movies and the columnists. Messrs. Runyon, O'Hara and the rest are makers. The hoofers and Broadwayites might well say like Oscar Wilde, "How I wish I had said that," and receive the classical answer, "You will." Much of the synthetic slang invented by lesser lights is mechanical, and fortunately ephemeral. But there are living growths here that will push above the weeds and become trees.

Whether we like it or not, much of our future speech is listed ere. So we had better go to school and avoid provoking the violent reaction of Mr. Ogden Nash:

> "Boy, you will certainly throw your lunch
> When you glim an Amurrican joke in *Punch*."

If anyone is foolhardy enough to try to write idiomatic American, he is given indispensable assistance here, and the wiser majority, who merely want to understand the movies, are richly catered for.

¶ 1943 0423 | C. S. Lewis, *Christian Behaviour* · review by J. K. Mozley
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/23rd-april-1943/20

The Christian Life

When, in one of the Talks included in this book, Mr. Lewis remarks, "I am telling you what Christianity is, I didn't invent it," he points, without knowing it, to the cause of the impression which his addresses and writings have made. Books of varying merit disclose what their writers think about Christianity and how they think it should be presented. Mr. Lewis is always going behind all that; the whole of his exposition and apologetic starts from his recognition of the facts of Christian doctrine and ethics in their definite, objective character. It is that which he is continually making his readers face; in doing so, in his clarification and interpretation of the issues, he often shows remarkable insight; his capacity for getting to the heart of some moral situation in the individual life is particularly arresting; but these gifts, great and valuable as they are, do not make us concentrate our attention on Mr. Lewis, but on Christianity, not on what we might like Christianity to say, but on what it does say. As to that, some Christians will here and there differ from Mr. Lewis; for instance, that "Christianity asserts that every individual human being is going to live for others"[*] would not be universally accepted. Dr. Gore thought that the extinction of the irredeemably evil was not ruled out as a belief Christians might hold. And admirable as a Christian will find Mr. Lewis's pages on Sexual Morality and Christian Marriage, one must allow that some great Christian teachers have gone much further than he has made plain in their aversion from the sexual pleasure of marriage. But, in general, Mr. Lewis is a quite safe guide, giving his readers thoroughly reliable knowledge of the country which some of them may think of entering. With the Talks on matters of sex I would bracket those on Forgiveness and on the Great Sin, that is pride. Of the latter, in particular, I would say that I cannot imagine a better and more illuminating treatment in five pages.

¶ 1943 0514 | C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra* · review by Kate O'Brien[†]
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/14th-may-1943/18

To "assert eternal Providence, and justify the ways of God to men," in terms of what we call the whole creation, and of imaginable evolutions of good and evil throughout the solar system; to pursue these "Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme" was, when Milton said it, "an adventurous song" – and so remains. Nor does it seem to be made easier or clearer by recruiting to the high, visionary plan the hypotheses and guesses of modern science. But at least, however suspicious we may be made by the plodding, explanatory first pages of *Perelandra*, we go on with it to learn that Mr. C. S. Lewis is no mere "scientific romancer," but a man poetically and courageously obsessed, in the midst of all our palpable evil, with Ideal Good; dreaming in darkness of heavenly light, of "Deep Heaven"; passionately concerned to give us in symbolical shape, in some outline which may be momentarily apprehensible to our senses, a vision of perfectibility, of human progress towards perfection, towards what was lost to us of Thulcandra, "which the small ones call Tellus," when we fell into original sin.

Perelandra is Venus, a young planet, still innocent, still floating speckless in the solar seas; and there Maleldil and His great angels design to begin again with the human ideal, the new Paradise, where *l'animal rationnel*, reborn of two mythical, untainted creatures, The Lady and The King, is to have a further chance of fulfilling his true destiny. So, on Venus, the Temptation is enacted again; and the Tempter comes from our old Earth. But help comes too, in the person of one Ransom, who, returning to our planet after he has assisted at the apotheosis of The Lady and The King, narrates his legendary experience vividly, and at times even movingly. But with too great a weight of circumstantial detail, and too laboured an insistence on relating the ineffable to the obvious. The truth being, I think,

[*] [A misprint; Lewis's actual text is "... that every individual human being is going to live for ever."]
[†] [A review of three novels under the single heading "Fiction".]

that bravely as Mr. Lewis has assaulted the high and mighty symbols of human hope, serious and imaginative as is his purpose, the thing he intends – as we glimpse it towards the end in his best chapters cannot be done at the pace and within the structure of narrative prose. It is a subject only for verse, and verse at its most immense; and were its purpose not even philosophic and nobly didactic, as it is, but simply imaginative and sensuous, it still would ask too much of prose. Words used poetically and in singing form can achieve vast effects of association and suggestion with an economy which is impossible to descriptive prose. Indeed, though this may seem a hard saying, passages in this book which tremble near the absurd because they have to be so much explained, might well have been majestic and beyond question in the simple, inevitable dress of poetry.

It is a recognised and legitimate convention that certain situations, places and figures stand for romance in the world of fiction. High on the list come love-at-first-sight, the deep South, the young and star-crossed lovers. Frances Parkinson Keyes, in a very long novel entitled *If Ever I Cease to Love*, has used all these stock ingredients, and although the result does not approximate to a picture of real life, it does succeed in presenting readers who frankly enjoy a romantic saga with just exactly that. The author, in fact, has done what she set out to do, and has done it well. New Orleans in 1940 was still ruled by the conventions and customs of old Creole society, and rigid enough they were. Three generations, all the result of inter-marriage amongst the leading families of Louisiana, play their parts in a series of emotional dramas and, if the last marriage seems too good to be true in its fairy-tale atmosphere of "It all came right in the end," the Pearl Harbour tragedy, and the entrance of America into the war, close the on a more realistic note. But this novel definitely belongs to the school of "escape " reading, and as such should achieve, quite deservedly, a considerable success. It is lively, *mouvementé*, and full of colour and drama.

Still As a Stranger [by Marjorie Villiers] has this in common with *If Ever I Cease to Love*: the background is the best of it. But it is a rather drab, tiresome background as here depicted; the small snobberies, the immense family solidarity, and the lack of mental or spiritual resilience of the French and Belgian *haute bourgeoisie*. Camilla, a tiresome English girl, loves one man and marries another – a Belgian count. The story is written in a jerky fashion, and actually gives the effect of a not-very-good translation.

¶ 1943 0827 | C. S. Lewis: 'Equality'
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/27th-august-1943/8

¶ 1943 0903 | *letters to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/3rd-september-1943/13

EQUALITY
Sir – Mr. Lewis begins his article on equality with a brilliant statement of the truth which the world must some day discover and accept for its own salvation. Then unaccountably he loses his way and his argument becomes a defence of egoism. As a small child, secure in family affection, I cherished the notion, as children will, that I was an adopted foundling whose unknown parents were persons of high genius. Later, a classmate copied into my autograph album a maxim that helped curb my exuberant vanity. "Never despise any man, for each can do something you cannot." My progression thereafter was in the bright path of faith that most men were saints, to its dark conclusion that all men are sinners and myself not the least of them. It was a typical journey, and perhaps Mr. Lewis came a parallel way; in any case, here we meet – and part. Mr. Lewis travels on into a drab region in which equality has been so nearly achieved that its dangers have become apparent. But where I go man has not yet learnt to identify himself in others, and so is incapable of loving his neighbour as himself.

From all the descendants of fallen Adam Mr. Lewis makes an arbitrary selection of two superior classes, monarchs and husbands. To him, honouring a king is food for the spirit; honouring an actor or an athlete, spiritual poison. This dietitian classifies without analysing. The virtuous monarchist's opposite number is the republican of stunted and envious mind. Yet I fancy it was neither a desire to see himself in purple velvet nor even a hatred of beautiful apparel that shaped Tom Paine's opinions, but a recognition that a truly healthy society can support no position of power or influence that is not open to merit.

Mr. Lewis sees in the male's physical domination of the female in primitive societies his right to a position of authority in modern marriage. The greatest pleasure in human relationships is the knowledge that the beloved has delight in one's love; the deepest joy, the knowledge that the beloved benefits by it. Since such realisation is an intrinsic part of all consummated love I should have thought that a sense of inferiority or a consciousness of less active participation cannot exist for the woman in the perfect sexual union, nor a feeling of superiority in the man: humility surely belongs to both. On the technical side modern theory confirms that ideally the partners are equal in desire, action, satisfaction. Mr. Lewis's lovers do not look towards each other; they proceed in single file.

If there is any grace to be found in a position of subordination its significance is overwhelmed by the fact that men who abuse their power in legal and economic inequality are no more likely to prove incorruptible in the sphere of personal relations. There, too, equality is a necessary remedy against the Fall. To undress each night as Mr. Lewis suggests is an essential act of humility. For only then does one recognise that the body beneath the clothes that have been purchased by toil or talent or beauty or position or privilege is of like flesh to all other human bodies. – Yours faithfully, FRANCES MILES.

Doneraile House, Ebury Bridge Road, London, S.W. 1.

Sir, – No one has admired, been amazed by and disagreed with C. S. Lewis's scintillating essays on his up to date Fundamentalist theological views more than myself. In fact I keep his essay on human and animal pain always at hand to show friends who have not read him what an intellectual who confessed (when a guest of the Brains Trust) that he was an atheist 15 years ago can do as an apologist for Hell, the Devil and all the suffering of living beings. He now seeks new worlds to conquer and to spread his reactionary energies over the political field. "Where men are forbidden to honour a king they honour millionaires, athletes or film stars instead; even famous prostitutes." Taken literally this is a little hard on our three great allies. For, as Mr. Lewis talks of "our ceremonial Monarchy," he excludes their great leaders and implies that in their countries the people can only satisfy their "craving for inequality" in the somewhat degraded ways above mentioned.

Mr. Lewis says a "man's reaction to Monarchy is a kind of test" – evidently in his view a particularly good one. But cannot Mr. Lewis's alleged craving for inequality be more intelligently satisfied in a world full of moral, intellectual, cultural and artistic superiorities and inferiorities? Is there not enough in all these to make men humble, beget self-discipline and perhaps (though Mr. Lewis would doubtless regret it) reduce his alleged "craving for inequality"? Why make man's reaction to a Monarch – who may be good or everything that is bad – a test? Surely our duty is to respect our Monarch or our leaders just as long as our intelligence so directs. I confess that there are few more unpleasant suggestions than that by doing so we are satisfying "our craving for inequality." By the bye, although I know that Mr. Lewis does not think much of our scientists it would be interesting to learn what, if any, biological evidence there is for the existence of a "craving for inferiority" in the human race. – Yours, etc.

ATHELSTAN RENDALL.

Sir – Can you find space to let your readers know that in an article of mine on "Equality" which you printed in your issue of August 27th the words "Medicine is not good" are a printer's error? I wrote "Medicine is not food." – Yours, &c.,

Magdalen College, Oxford. C. S. LEWIS.

¶ 1943 1119 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/19th-november-1943/13

CHURCH PARADE

Sir, – The correspondence in your columns about church parades in the Services emboldens me to protest, both as a citizen and a Christian, against what I consider an even greater evil – church parades in the Home Guard. As a citizen, I submit that the members of the Home Guard made a voluntary sacrifice of their leisure at a time when the country was in extreme danger. Since then their service has been made compulsory and their leisure further encroached upon. Both these evils are borne with patience because they are taken as necessary evils. But what shadow of right can the State pretend for using the power it has thus acquired over them to compel them to go to church? Or in what spirit are we to suppose that a man who has lost his Sunday morning for an object which he understands and approves will see his Sunday evening also taken from him for an object which was never even mentioned when he first became a Home Guard? As a Christian, I submit that such interferences with the private life of the Home Guard are calculated to harden ordinary English indifference into fierce anti-clericalism of the Continental type. Angry men do not reason clearly. They will transfer to the Church itself the resentment they justly feel for the busy-body who has marched them to it. Some of them no doubt are Christians. But why should a Christian by entering the Home Guard be deprived of the right to go to the church and service he chooses with his own wife and children, or be forced to the difficult exercise of praying amidst a crowd of comrades either bitterly resentful or (worse still) contemptuously patient? War demands compulsions; all the more reason to guard against gratuitous compulsions which it does not demand. By the mere act of putting on uniform men should not be reduced to the status of toy soldiers, moved about for the mere amusement of their owners. – Yours faithfully,

Magdalen College, Oxford. C. S. LEWIS.

¶ 1943 1217 | Sir Herbert Grierson
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/17th-december-1943/7

Equality and Hierarchy

In a recent article Mr. C. S. Lewis raised questions on a reply to which a great deal depends for any right ordering of social and individual life, especially any solution of the problem raised so sharply of late of the relative claims of an authoritarian and a democratic society. Into the question of the Fall I shall not enter. In the absence of any historical evidence the position seems to be that the orthodox Christian *must* accept it on the authority of th Church, and less orthodox thinkers *may* do so as a possible explanation of the obvious fact that we are not what we ought to be. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*. One legitimate inference from that fact is that no form of society will be perfect – authoritarian, aristocratic or democratic. Each will suffer from faults common to all and from some specific, peculiar to itself. It is Montesquieu, I think who points out on what special virtue the security of each depends.

What do we mean by saying that all men are equal: "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"? No sane man has ever failed to recognise that men are unequal in physical strength, in mental ability, in moral excellence. But does superiority in these respects give any man or body of men a right to rule their fellow-men? I do not think so. It gives a claim to respect: and there is perhaps no better test of a civilisation, or the character of a people, than what qualities they in general show respect for. The Scotch are an equalitarianly-minded people. "A man's a man for a' that," but for long they showed an unforced respect for intelligence, for ministers, doctors, even that now despised class, professors. The Irish have the same bent of mind, but have always respected holiness. The English, with their more hierarchical turn of mind, have perhaps made, as a German critic complained,

the "gentleman" their too exclusive ideal, their ambition always to rise in the social scale, so that, e.g., our great London specialists have to be paid not only for their skill and learning; but for West-end houses and social ambitions. A friend of mine, after consulting London oculists, had occasion to try the great German, Pagenstecher. There were no footmen, &c., but one old woman who showed you into the waiting-room, and, however many were there, never forgot the order of arrival. He had no ambition to become a "gentleman" or a peer of the realm, but only to be a good oculist.

Mr. Lewis complained that "where men are forbidden to honour a king they honour millionaires, athletes or film-stars, &c." I do not think the facts go necessarily together. The Byzantines respected the Emperor, revered him, and had a due respect for the hierarchy which Gibbon has described – the Illustrious, the Respectable, the Honourable, &c., but this did not prevent their having inwardly a perhaps sincerer admiration for a successful chariot-racer. In Spain, it would be the bull-fighter, the toreador, who evoked a greater interest and respect than the absolute monarch. And, after all, respect for actors, film actors, and athletes is respect for persons who can do certain things exceptionally well, and seems to me infinitely superior to the respect for wealth as such or rank as such, a lord because he is a lord. If we are disposed to think the Americans have a too great respect for millionaires one should read the *History of American Civilisation*, by Charles and Mary Beard, and one will see how a free people can fight its way through corruptions and abuses, as it becomes aware of them, and reduce the power and the prestige of millionaires, despite even the complacency to wealth of Supreme Courts. There is, despite apparent turbulence and contempt for things not practical, a great deal of respect for ability and character in the States.

But respect is one thing, the right to govern – authority – is another. Government has always rested on two things: force and consent; force in the first place: "there is a sacred veil to be drawn over the beginnings of all Governmentsm," says Burke in the trial of Warren Hastings. Most Oriental Governments, and the latest authoritarian Governments in Europe, have made force their one weapon. Consent may be and has been supported by many adventitious circumstances – as belief in some divine right of kings, acquiescence in an established order, inability to see how things are to be changed, indifference to injustices that do not touch oneself. But ultimately the right to govern or exercise authority rests not on the inherent right of classes or individuals to rule, but on the character of their rule, allowing that in many, perhaps most, States consent is partial, an acceptance of imperfect conditions for fear of incurring worse by rash changes. For as Burke again says: "It would be hard to point out any error more truly subversive of all the order and beauty, of all the peace and happiness of human society, than the position that any body of men have a right to make what laws they please, or that laws can derive any authority from their institution merely, and independent of, the quality of the subject-matter." "In reality there are two, and only two, foundations of law (or 'authority'), and they both of them are conditions without which nothing can give it any force – I mean equity and utility. With respect to the former, it grows out of the great rule of equality which is grounded upon our common nature, and which Philo, with propriety and beauty, calls the mother of justice. … The other foundation of law, which is utility, must be understood, not of partial or limited, but of general and public utility, connected with and derived directly from our rational nature, for any other utility may be the utility of a robber, but cannot be that of a citizen – the interest of the domestic enemy and not that of a member of the commonwealth." (*Tracts on the Popery Laws*.) "Partiality and law are contradictory terms. Neither the merits nor the ill-deserts, neither the wealth and importance, nor the indigence and obscurity of one part or of the other can make any alteration in this fundamental truth. On any other scheme I defy any man living to settle a correct standard which may discriminate between equitable rule and the most direct tyranny." (*Ditto*.)

The one thing to which the human heart will not *consent*, but may have to *submit*, – for as Swift says, though "in reason all government without the consent of the governed is the very definition of slavery; yet, in fact, eleven men well armed will certainly subdue a single man in his shirt," – is arbitrary power, laws that have no discoverable bearing on the happiness, the welfare of those on whom they are imposed. I once crossed the Atlantic with, among other fugitives from Germany, an

oldish lady. I asked her whether it was on account of some Jewish blood that she was leaving. "No," she said, "but to be a *persona grata* with the last Government was enough to justify one's dismissal, *and there is no appeal*." The last were the significant words. There is always some hope for justice in the long run, while there is liberty to appeal against even the agents of the Government. The fight for justice may be prolonged and difficult, as the history of Britain and the United States shows, but it is continuous. It is not in democracy that people are reduced to a base equality. "Political liberty," says De Tocqueville, "which possesses the admirable power of placing the citizens of a State in needful intercourse and mutual dependence, does not on that account make them alike; it is the government of one man which in the end has the effect of rendering all men alike, and all mutually indifferent to their common fate." The danger of all hierarchies is that they become stereotyped. The justification of any existing hierarchy is in direct proportion to the degree in which it protects and preserves the essential equalities and keeps *la carrière ouverte aux talents*. The motto for the gentleman in a democratic State is Arnold's, "Shun greed and cultivate equality."

¶ 1944 0211 | C. S. Lewis: 'Is English doomed?'
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/11th-february-1944/9

¶ 1944 0218 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/18th-february-1944/12

IS ENGLISH DOOMED?
Sir, – I should like, if I may, to express the pleasure and entire agreement with which I read Mr. C. S. Lewis's vindication of the place which in the last forty years or more the study of English Literature has taken among humanist studies, hastened by the decay of the Classics in school and University. It is the first time I have read a statement of a view I have held with increasing conviction for long. But in case I should appear to be just echoing Mr. Lewis's words, may I quote from what I have myself written lately? In putting together for possible publication the lectures I gave for many years on Rhetoric, as we still called it in Scotland, I was tempted in the Preface to go back on the history of English teaching in Aberdeen where I was student and later a Professor. My remarks were evoked by a recent statement that "our university departments of English are in the main departments for the training of literary critics, and pay far too little attention to the students' own power of expression." That was not, I ventured to point out, the main theme of the English Class as taught by Dr. Alexander Bain; and even under his successor (William Minto) the lectures till Christmas were confined to grammar, with some philology, and composition. After that we had some twenty-five lectures on the history of English literature from Chaucer to Marlowe. It was listening to Professor Minto on the great mediaeval romances, Carlovingian, Arthurian and others, and on the religious drama of the Middle Ages, that I, for the first time, began to have some inkling of what the adjective "mediaeval" meant. It was the same with the word "Renaissance" as we approached the Elizabethan drama. In 1893 a separate Chair of English Literature was founded (for hitherto the subject had gone with the Chair of Logic owing to the tradition of the mediaeval trivium) and I was the first occupant. With Minto's teaching in my mind I, too, gave some lectures to Rhetoric, but the larger part of the time I devoted to a sketch of the history of our literature. But this was *not* with aim of attempting to give critical estimates of individual writers. What I thought of myself as doing was contributing a chapter to the history of European and English culture – the Middle Ages and the influence in our literature of French romance[,] allegory, fabliau and lyric; that complex movement the revival of learning and its effects in Reformation and Renaissance the latter substituting for French influence (for a time) Italian direct and indirect. It was impossible to approach the eighteenth century without some account of the great change of thought which came about at the end of the seventeenth, the greatest change, Professor Stout declared, which had

happened in human thinking since human beings began to think – the *Aufklärung* and its consequences; and so with the reaction which produced the also complex movement which we call, rather imperfectly, the Romantic Revival. It seemed to me that in all this the English class was supplying something which the class of History could not in the same degree because of its preoccupation with constitutional changes and foreign relations. It is in literature that are reflected, concretely and vividly, those changes in the thought and feeling of a country which have their importance beside economic and political factors. Consider the effect of the Reformation on the relation of Scotland to England and to France respectively. I cannot but welcome, coming from Mr. Lewis, so powerful a statement of a fact which is so strangely overlooked in discussion of English Literature and its place in a liberal education. – Yours, &c., H. J. C. GRIERSON.

Edinburgh.

¶ 1944 0728 | C. S. Lewis: 'A Dream'
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/28th-july-1944/9

¶ 1944 0922 | C. S. Lewis: 'The Death of Words'
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/22nd-september-1944/9

¶ 1944 1229 | C. S. Lewis: 'Private Bates'
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/29th-december-1944/8

¶ 1945 0112 | *letter to the editor*[*]
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/12th-january-1945/11

WHAT THE SOLDIER THINKS

Sir, – Readers who accept Mr. C. S. Lewis's tasty soothing syrup will be in for a rude awakening. They had better take the harsh medicine of "Captain, B.L.A." and face the realities of the modern Serviceman's outlook. Shakespeare knew and understood his contemporaries. Mr. Lewis obviously does not. I have been back with the R.A.F. for three years, in an operational command in close contact with aircrews, and it has been an eye-opener to me on the profound change in intellectual quality that has occurred between my generation and the present-day flying men. In my time flying itself required just about as much mental effort as riding a bicycle; the rudimentary bomb-sights of those days could be mastered by a child of ten; air-fighting was a matter of guts, marksmanship and luck.

Today, flying a modern aircraft calls for a clear, cool, methodical and highly-trained mind; and the various purposes for which the aircraft are flown – reconnaisance, bombing, interception and so forth – make heavy demands on intelligence. Yet there are tens of thousands of men who have gone through exacting training courses and simply mopped up knowledge and instruction which we in our time never had to consider. This remarkable generation from the secondary schools is something entirely new in our national life. It has been taught to think, and now is being compelled to develop its mental capacities at high pressure. Moreover, it must never be forgotten that these young men grew up under the economic depression. If they were not themselves actually turned out of school to go on the dole – and many were – they were surrounded through their most impressionable years by families and friends for whom, apparently, the community had no use. The iron has entered into their soul. Can it

[*] A response to Lewis's essay "Private Bates", which was itself written in response to an essay entitled "What the Soldier Thinks", published in *The Spectator* on 24 November 1944 under the pseudonym "Captain, B.L.A."

be wondered that they have no faith in the competence or honesty of government? They contrast the frustrated and meaningless society of their boyhood with the purposeful organisation of totalitarian countries, which at any rate knew where they were going and set some value on their populations. I don't suggest these men are Communists or Fascists; but they will become so, unless those of us who still believe in free democracy show that the system is capable of giving meaning to life and a tolerable life to its citizens. To sentimentalise their deep discontent, as Mr. Lewis does, and pretend they are just rather lovable old grousers who don't mean any harm would be a fatal misunderstanding.
– Yours sincerely, EX-PILOT.

¶ 1945 0309 | Owen Barfield, *Romanticism Comes of* Age · review by C. S. Lewis[*]
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/9th-march-1945/16

¶ 1945 0608 | C. S. Lewis: "The Salamander" (poem)
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/8th-june-1945/9

¶ 1945 0615 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/15th-june-1945/14

POET AND PRINTER
Sir, – Spare me, of your charity, room to correct a misprint in a small poem by me which you printed today. For *Existed amid the boundless dark* read *Enisled amid the boundless dark.* The salamander is an Arnoldian animal. – Yours, &c., C. S. LEWIS.
Magdalen College, Oxford

¶ 1945 0907 | C. S. Lewis: "Under Sentence" (poem)
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/7th-september-1945/11

¶ 1945 0907 | C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* · review by John Hampson[†]
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/7th-september-1945/20

CHAOS – a state of chaos makes the common background for each of these three long novels. Allan Seager, the gifted young American writer, who has gained a reputation in Europe as well as in his native country for his short stories, sets his theme in New York during the nightmare period when the war was "bogus" C. S. Lewis advances into the vague future and employs a vague locality for his upheaval: Jack Lindsay takes us back firmly for the sack of Rome. Each of these books might be called a fable, for each points a moral, but actual similarity ends with this comparison. The characters in *Equinox* are not mere types, which is sufficient justification for placing this book at the head of the list, but not less important is a subtle quality which lifts a work out of the general welter of fiction into a rank apart; the quality may be defined by the use of the word formal, which means simply that the author's work is consciously influenced by the tradition and art of the novel. The central figure of *Equinox* is a smart, rather worldly, journalist, who, realising the carnage in store for Europe, turns his back on her

[*] [Entitled "Who gaf me Drink?", Lewis's only review written for *The Spectator* was reprinted in C. S. Lewis, *Image and Imagination: Essays and Reviews*, edited by Walter Hooper, Cambridge University Press 2013, pp. 87-91.]
[†] [A review of three novels under the single heading "Fiction"]

with horror. Waiting for him in America is his young daughter whom he has not seen since she was a child of ten. He intends taking her away from the convent boarding-school and freeing her from the influence of her maternal grandmother. Unwilling to assume responsibility, he delays doing this, and eventually Mary runs away from school and joins him in New York. The self-centred Richard Miles has meanwhile proposed to his ex-mistress and been refused; she is a promiscuous and sophisticated creature who, while anxious to renew the liaison, has no illusions about Miles and few about herself. When she finds he has finally abandoned her to make a home for his daughter she is furious. To be revenged, she suggests to Miles that his daughter's feelings for him are incestuous. This idea has already been made to him by a casual male acquaintance, who, meeting father and daughter at a night club, takes them for lovers. The second attack does its terrible havoc. Miles gets frantic and eventually seeks the aid of a corrupt and wealthy psychiatrist, who has become the husband of his ex-mistress. This man, Henry Verplanck, ruthless and dangerous, in pursuit of research, undertakes the task with ghoulish zest. The damage done, Mary, still a mere child of seventeen, tries to escape by making a hasty marriage with a youngster whom she has met casually at an art school. Miles rejoices, but the abnormal Verplanck quickly persuades him to intervene, so that the union is unconsummated, and the girl returns to her father's roof. Mary is the least successfully imagined of Seager's characters, she is drawn on too slight a scale perhaps for her fate.

Having heard so much about the earlier excursions of C. S. Lewis into fiction, it is rather disconcerting to find the structure of *That Hideous Strength* on the clumsy side. The tale he tells is of the struggle between the forces of good and evil, and will be enjoyed by the admirers of the novels of the late Charles Williams, for here again magic of the black and white kinds are actively employed with equal learning – if with less skill and subtlety than that of the author of *All Hallowes Eve*. C. S. Lewis bothers little about the variations in character, his people are much too sheeplike whatever their colour; his rather more elaborately contrived heroine develops into a nice woman with nasty ideas, especially about domestic servants. The theme for all its importance to the author (does he not sub-title it *A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown-ups*?) is cluttered up and enfeebled by too many tame details and an over-boyish exuberance: all those varied but sanguinary killings at the climax are much too reminiscent of the twopence coloured dreadfuls. And surely the very attributes of scientists, which make for the common distrust of their activities, are not made very credible in the mythical gang of Merlin kidnappers gathered together for this further exploiting of Dr. Ransome's supernatural adventures.

The Barriers Are Down is also concerned with a clashing struggle for power, this time against the background of history. Jack Lindsay makes his characters serve as ideas, but for all their discussions, his young men remain types who fail to rouse the reader's interest, they begin dully and dullness pursues them faithfully through the epoch in which they are presented to us, though their adventures are varied and violent enough. Paulinus, son of a wealthy father, seeks religion and embraces poverty; Prosper, swindled out of inheritance, pursues ambition madly, but with little success; while Audax takes to communal life with the *Bagaudae* with priggish fervour. Robert Graves has demonstrated that the historical novel can be serious without being dreary, but then he never allows period to swamp personality.

¶ 1945 1116 | Theodore Barker
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/16th-november-1945/10

Youth and the Churches

One of the most noteworthy symptoms of the last few years has been the growing interest in religion among young people, and the failure of the churches to satisfy this interest. It is estimated that only 10 to 15 per cent. of the people of this country attend church with any regularity. Since most congregations are evidently made up in the main of the middle-aged and elderly, it seems reasonable to suppose that the percentage of men and women under thirty is considerably less – probably not more than 5 per

cent. of those age-groups. This means not only that the numbers of churchpeople will continue to decline steadily in the future, but also that the churches today lack the lively enthusiasm and originality which youth both provides and expects. I am a church member, and am convinced that a firm religious faith alone gives our lives purpose in these days when it is so easy to drift. But I am also in my early twenties, and am not in the least surprised that the majority of churches today fail to have any attraction at all for my generation, who sense from outside the churches what some of us feel from inside, that so often churchgoing does not ring true. For many it is a social function rather than an act of worship.

Yet, in spite of the conditions in which we have grown up – for the most part conducive to a materialist outlook – I know that my generation has a very keen interest in living a better life. Moreover, many appreciate that a firm faith is essential, and not merely an ethical code. They sense – though they often cannot explain why – that a religious approach alone provides the key to our many problems on whatever plane they be. This may surprise some of our elders, who look on us as rather irresponsible beings who do not (in the words of the recent Commission on Evangelism) "possess the faculty for apprehending the realms of the spirit." My own experience among friends convinces me that we are misjudged in this respect. This conviction is supported by Dr. Macalister Brew, who has written of her visits to a hundred public-houses in one of our cities on a hundred nights. There she mixed with young people, and, without leading the conversation, listened to what they had to say. She found that living a better life was more frequently discussed than the cinema or dancing. But she also found that these same people had little time for the churches because they saw too often the yawning gulf between the respectability of Sunday, and the mediocrity of the other six days. As a canon recently put it:

> "So often good churchpeople seem less nice, less loving, less Christ-like than those outside the church. Often the latter are not materialist; they have a genuine reverence for things not seen and eternal."

I feel sure that the churches will fail to attract young people until they spend far more time showing that there is a practical value in Christian worship which has a very definite resultant effect in daily life. It will not be sufficient to tinker about with the surface trappings – to make the sermons shorter, to introduce modem hymns and the like – and certainly it would, be very unwise to launch a great propaganda campaign until a real change has taken place inside the churches. We who make up the church need first a real faith in God which will impel us to do good and to fight evil and injustice.

There are two separate and clearly-defined stages in gaining support for any cause: first, confidence must be won, and, secondly, the cause must be explained clearly and reasonably. This is true of Christianity. But today the churches, grinding along without much show of enthusiasm in a high-speed world, do not inspire much confidence, and their teaching often consists of little more than a few personal ideas on some trivial issue, hastily scraped together by some well-meaning preacher, and hitched on to a verse of Scripture to add weight. Those outside are not interested, and the few who do go to church to find what it is all about are befogged.

The churches will win confidence if they reduce the application of Christian teaching from abstract generalities to concrete conditions of life. C. S. Lewis's Screwtape showed truly diabolical cunning when he instructed his earthly lieutenant to keep the mind of their intended victim "off the most elementary duties by directing it to the most advanced spiritual ones." There were certain parts of Christ's teaching which apply immediately to our lives in society today. For instance, it is wrong that a man should earn more than enough of this world's wealth when his neighbour is in want. It is equally wrong that political power should be wielded by any person at another's expense. That Archbishop Temple, who was fearless in his denunciation of economic injustices, had the confident interest of so many outside the churches – particularly the young – is not surprising. Nor is it surprising that so few church-people rose up to support him. It may well be that the great, underlying conflict of our time between the individual economic unit, increasing continuously in size, and national control of industry

can only be met if there is a change of heart on the part of those concerned which will go at least some way to eliminating the innate desire for excessive wealth or extreme political power.

But it will be of little avail gaining interest by showing the results of Christian teaching in everyday affairs in such a way that it appeals to the sense of values, if there is no clear-cut exposition of the tenets of the Christian faith with which to follow up the interest aroused. There has been much clarification of Bible teaching in this century. It is right that advantage be taken of this to lay before us the suggested answers to the problems in Scripture which at the moment puzzle and perplex. Although Christianity is essentially a matter of faith – that is, its efficacy can be experienced rather than explained – there is a small part at the worldly end of the spiritual road, so to speak, which, when examined, shows that it is not an unreasonable faith. If attention could be drawn to this initial highway the churches would be showing the direction of further spiritual progress which every individual person has then to make himself with God's help and the companionship of others in the church who are striving for the same Christian ideals. Above all, we should have an answer for the man, frequently encountered today, who asks why it is not sufficient to live a good life according to his own ideals. The answer would seem to be that communion with God through prayer gives that extra help and direction to our lives which makes all the difference between success and failure in attaining a certain level of conduct. And the activity which follows confirms that faith in God.

If any further support is required, we need only look at the world around us. At all levels and in all places we are confronted with material achievement and moral failure. Underlying (and underlining) all discussion on the atomic bomb is the constantly recurring idea that we have advanced farther scientifically and materially than we have morally and spiritually. The years 1919-1939, dominated by fear and insecurity, stand on permanent record as the decades of humanism. Only a firm religious belief and the realisation that an ethical code is not sufficient will enable us in the future to catch up on this material lead, to turn our great scientific achievements to good purpose instead of to our own earthly destruction. As Field-Marshal Montgomery said on VJ Day:

> "I firmly believe that every enterprise which man undertakes, if it is to achieve any lasting success, must have a strong spiritual basis. If we attempt any great thing for solely material reasons, the results cannot be good."

In any attempt to build on this strong, spiritual basis, it is reasonable to join a church, by which is meant a group of people who have a real faith in God and the teachings of Christ which they do their best to translate into action.

Young people are, I believe, ready for a lead. One thing is certain: without youth, no regeneration can take place inside the churches as now constituted.

¶ 19451207 | C. S. Lewis: 'After Priggery – what?'
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/7th-december-1945/8

¶ 1945 1214 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/14th-december-1945/12

YOUTH AND THE CHURCHES

Sir, – As an undergraduate of 18½, may I endorse all that "Student" says[*] about the inadequacy of the religious teaching of the Church today to satisfy the demands – and particularly the intellectual demands – of those of us who have been educated to believe that it is right to examine and question every important thing we are told, and not to accept it until our reason has endorsed the authority of tradition?

[*] [http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/7th-december-1945/12/letters-to-the-editor]

The chief intellectual difficulties (in addition to what seems to me the more trivial ones mentioned by "Student") which seem to bar the way to acceptance of the whole Christian faith are: the problem of evil, the problem of justice, the problem of free-will, and the problem of "what on earth (literally) does God do?" (when does He intervene; what is His purpose, &c.?). I cannot discuss these problems here: I can only say that – for my part – all the truly astonishing ingenuity of Mr. C. S. Lewis and many other popular writers on religion has done nothing to dispel my belief that this is a series of problems which not only appear to be insoluble by any but the most elaborate and unconvincing arguments, based on hypotheses which appear to me as wholly unnatural and artificial, but which also are problems solely by virtue of the set of apparently arbitrary postulates which forms the dogmatic theology of the Christian Church. And it is only natural that my reaction, like that of many others, is to escape the problems by denying the postulates.

And so, like "Student," I am left with an admiration for the Christian Ethic but no belief in the theology to which it is married. But, unlike him, I do not believe that it is necessary to think that you are fulfilling the will of a Divine Being or laying up treasure in Heaven before you can follow an ethic which you admire; nor do I believe – what to me seems the most harmful of all the fallacies to which the Church clings – that the value of religious experience is in any way dependent on the metaphysical beliefs of those who have the experiences. But I do believe that the insistence by the Church on the permanence of this marriage between, on the one hand, a system of morals and a belief in the value of religious experience and, on the other, a two thousand years old theology and an outmoded ritual, has already had a disastrous effect, and will, unless a divorce is soon granted, eventually be fatal to the Church and all organised religion. For it is this that keeps us away from the Church, and it is this that causes so many young people, brought up to admire the scientific attitude and encouraged by the Church to equate theology with religion, to come to the disastrous conclusion that religion is all "a lot of superstitious nonsense." – Yours faithfully, C. SCOTT.

8 Warwick Mansions, Cromwell Crescent, S.W.5.

¶ 1945 1228 | C. S. Lewis: "On the Atomic Bomb (Metrical Experiment)" (poem)
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/28th-december-1945/11

¶ 1946 0125 | C. S, Lewis, *The Great Divorce* · review by A. C. Deane
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/25th-january-1946/20

A Nightmare

How easy and pleasant it would be to write a partial, a sugared account of this book! The temptation is strong for a reviewer who has sense enough to know how real are the gifts of Mr. C. S. Lewis, how valuable some of his work has proved to a large public. And the sugared version could be done without violence to veracity. Quite truthfully one could remark that *The Great Divorce* is, in its own way, brilliantly clever, that it provokes thought, that it contains shrewd sayings dexterously phrased – with more to the same effect, until the allotted space was full. Yet to provide such an account would be to keep silence about those other characteristics which make the very cleverness of the thing seem repellent – the metallic hardness of its tone, its air of disdain, untouched by sympathy, for the various weaknesses of human nature, and, beyond all else, its manner of handling that most solemn of all themes, the ultimate fate of man's soul.

The plan of the book is simple. Like Bunyan and other people, the narrator has a dream, a vision of heaven and hell. He is careful to insist that all he describes is mere fantasy, and that he has no wish to encourage what, using a horrid modern adjective, he terms "factual curiosity" about the world to come. Hell, as he sees it, is a vast and dingy city, full of small shops and houses. Its denizens are permitted to make day-excursions by motorbus to the outskirts of heaven. And into heaven itself, if

they pay the price – which may be some change of belief, some ending of a quarrel, some act of renunciation – they are free, if they so choose to enter, and there to remain. But they do not so choose. Some find themselves unable to pay the price; most agree that the attractions of heaven are much overrated, and that they are far more comfortably placed in hell.

The "Ghosts," as the excursionists are called, meet "Spirits " from heaven who argue with them deftly but in vain. The narrator seems, as it were, to place each Ghost in turn on the lecture-table, to exhibit with deliberate skill his special follies and impenitence, and then to drop him back whence he came. Among the many types is an "episcopal Ghost," who has been condemned – or has condemned himself – to hell because he adopted the views of extreme modernism for the sake of gaining "popularity, sales for your books, invitations, and finally a bishopric." After some pages of brisk dialogue, in the Oxford manner, the episcopal Ghost explains that he cannot accompany the Spirit to heaven; he must "be back next Friday to read a paper. We have a little Theological Society down there. Oh yes! there is plenty of intellectual life." So he turns back to hell, "humming softly 'City of God, how broad and far.'"

The taste and quality of this satire may be matter of opinion. But it does not seem possible to doubt that writing of this type, however clever and even brilliant in itself, jars horribly when the theme is the doom of lost souls. This demands all the solemnity, all the awe and compassion of which a writer is capable. Even when he insists on the truth Mr. Lewis wishes to enforce – the inexorable working of the moral law – it should never be without reserve, without tenderness, without consciousness of infinite love and supernatural redemption behind that law. It is hard to find any such feeling in these glittering yet distasteful pages.

It may be urged that the thing is no more than a sketch, and indeed it fills little more than a hundred pages of large print. At a guess, it may have been drafted to provide a theme of debate for one of those many essay-societies or discussion-groups which Mr. Lewis befriends so generously. But it is of real importance that he should not be lured by unwise praise into writing hastily and publishing all he writes. It would be tragic if gifts so remarkable as his were not reserved for purposes worthy of them.

¶ 1947 0516 | C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* · review by C. E. Raven
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/16th-may-1947/22/can-miracles-happen-

Can Miracles Happen?

In this latest book Mr. Lewis returns from the fanciful eschatology of *The Great Divorce* to the theological apologetic of *The Problem of Pain*. Here also he has chosen a subject of crucial importance, one which still constitutes an obvious, perhaps the most obvious, difficulty to the would-be Christian, and has been above all others the theme of long-continued conflict. Probably none of his books so clearly reveals his own religious outlook or gives him so congenial a scope. There are in it passages of great beauty like the description of the Incarnation and of fine insight like the affirmation of the basic actuality of God; there are also passages in which he almost reminds us of the gaiety and vigour of G. K. Chesterton. Moreover, though much of the writing is dramatic and some of the imagery far-fetched, there is less intrusion of his own speculative ideas than in his earlier writings.

It is properly called a preliminary study because, although Mr. Lewis, in his last two chapters, deals in some detail with the congruity of the several miracles of the gospels, he does not attempt to discuss the evidence for them or give any sign of distinguishing between the actuality of the Resurrection and (say) the Miracle at Cana or the walking of St. Peter upon the water. His book is concerned to argue that if the supernatural and the natural are sharply distinguished, and if the operation of the supernatural upon the natural is admitted, then there can be no *a priori* case against any event, however abnormal. "Style," the "hereditary style," as he once calls it, gives a sort of consistency to the miracles of Jesus; but Mr. Lewis nowhere works out the consequences of what he explicitly accepts – that there is a real homogeneity between miracles and natural events. Indeed, in the earlier part of his book he so

violently divides the natural from the supernatural as to make the admission of such homogeneity surprising. On his own confession, he has not made up his mind about Nature, and consequently is inconsistent in his thinking. This is indeed the real weakness of his whole treatment of the subject. Mr. Lewis has a regular technique. He presents a crude and contemptuous picture of what he dislikes, of naturalism (which he identifies with a Cartesian mechanistic materialism) and of pantheism (identified with shallow sentimentality); knocks out his man of straw; then says, "Nevertheless the poor thing is not so silly as it looks"; and yet fails to readjust his own thinking so as to make allowance for its merits. The fact is that here, as in his earlier books, he still clings to a pre-Darwinian concept of Creation as an act, not a process; to a view of the world as merely the scene of the drama of redemption, not as an integral and organic part of that drama; and to a doctrine of the Godhead which has room neither for the Logos nor for the Holy Spirit.

It is a very great pity that he has taken the basic concepts of his cosmology from Genesis and *Paradise Lost* instead of from the great passage in the eighth chapter of the Romans, in which St. Paul expresses his deepest thought upon the purpose of God and the significance of evil; and that he has not yet got free from the form of naturalism which he here condemns, since he still regards Nature "as a vast process going on of its own accord," something which God once made but which has now got almost hopelessly out of hand, something with which God is now at war. The difficulties of such a view for any coherent philosophy are plainly seen when Mr. Lewis deals with "the colonisation of Nature by Reason." The full consequences of it will appear only when he gives us, as he surely will, his book on the Incarnation. By then, perhaps, he will have followed up the clues provided in the best chapters of the present work, in which he approaches the acknowledgement that natural and supernatural are less mutually antithetical than he has hitherto maintained. But, if so, much of the present book will have to be withdrawn.

¶ 1947 0523 | *letters to the editor*
https://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/23rd-may-1947/18

PIGEON-HOLING MR. C. S. LEWIS

SIR – Mr. C. S. Lewis has for some time been a stout defender of the orthodox Christian faith, but in Canon Raven's review of his recent book there is a welcome note of caution; for, though Mr. Lewis is on the side of the angels, there is some doubt as to where he starts as a thinker. That Mr. Lewis has great imaginative and literary gifts is undeniable. Nevertheless, as a thinker, his weakness lies in his proneness to dogmatic assertion, and his habit of introducing fanciful speculation into what claims 1o be a reasoned statement of belief. In *The Problem of Pain*, for example, there are references to a strange creation, primitive man, who is also a primitive saint, and it is difficult to know whether Mr. Lewis intends us to accept this figure as an historical person, or as an imaginative creation of the author. Perhaps Mr. Lewis's true rôle is that of a poet dealing imaginatively with Christian ideas rather than that of a theologian expounding Christian doctrine. – Yours faithfully, W. A. PAYNE.

5 Tennyson Road, Kettering.

SIR, – In deleting the page-references in my review of Mr. C. S. Lewis's book you make me do him an injustice. The words describing Nature "as a vast process going on of its own accord" occur not as would now be supposed in a statement of his own views but in his account of the Naturalism which he is attacking – and from which he does not seem to me to be himself wholly free. – Yours, &c.,

The Lodge, Christ's College, Cambridge. C. E. RAVEN.

¶ 1948 0730 | C. S. Lewis: "Epitaph" (poem)
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/30th-july-1948/14

¶ 1949 0506 | C. S. Lewis: "On a Picture by Chiricho" (poem)
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/6th-may-1949/15

¶ 1951 0427 | David Edwards (Magdalen College, Oxford)
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/27th-april-1951/11

Undergraduate page

Christianity in Oxford

The most popular belief about Oxford is that its causes are lost; this is held to apply to religion no less than to politics or rowing. And the memories crowding St. Mary's or Oriel or Tom Quad do suggest that the heyday of Christianity in Oxford coincided with mediaeval philosophy, the doomed humanism of the Oxford Reformers or the passage of Newman *ex umbris et imaginibus* to the Birmingham Oratory. Like Cranmer, Oxford's religion itself seems to have gone up in smoke long ago.

But the coloured porter who, we are told, affixed "Oxford Group" to the railway-compartment of some of Dr. Buchman's young friends gave Oxford religion a truer label. No doubt he reflected that the Methodist Church in its millions had begun in an undergraduate society in Christ Church; he recalled how bold and profound had been the main tradition of Oxford theology, from Grosseteste to the living, and how Oxford had crowded to such feet as Paris to Abelard's; he considered Oxford still capable of moral rearmament. He instantly guessed whence the young evangelists had derived their ideals. He had seen what Matthew Arnold obscured – that Oxford belongs, not to its ghosts, or even to its dons, but to its young. In such a society discussions about religion are as endemic as pimples.

Unfortunately, religious discussions in Oxford are sometimes regarded as tenderly as pimples. In a sense this has always been so: self-questioning did not begin in 1851. But in that year the Anglican monopoly was broken, and seventy years ago all religious tests were abandoned. The result has been that openly committed Christians have been reduced to a self-conscious, organised minority in an "open" university. And the way in which that minority is organised among undergraduates is strange.

Every three years a mission attempts to strengthen and enlarge the minority. Indeed. William Temple's missions are supposed to have "stopped the rot" after the First World War; and the Bishop of Bristol's mission talks last year were definitely designed to appeal to the bulk of the university – the enquirers. But it may be doubted whether many enquirers have actually attended these missions, and it was complained that, in these circumstances, some missioners should have more clearly reflected the orthodoxy of their audiences. The main opportunity of encounter between the enquirers and organised Christianity at Oxford is through the chapels and societies, which conduct an unending mission. In most colleges that means Victorian Prayer-books on velvet cushions, a handful of communicants and, if we are lucky, candles and music on a Sunday night. Few of the Oxford college chapels can be described as strong forces in evangelism. The life has been drained out of them into the chapels and societies serving the university.

The two most vigorous of these societies have little truck with the university missions or the college chapels. Around the Roman Catholic chaplaincy is the Newman Society, the prominence of whose members in Oxford life is out of proportion to their numbers, large as these are. And non-Romans may well envy the Newman Society its inspiration through the Dominican and Jesuit houses, Blackfriars and Campion Hall. Of more restricted interests, but with an equal loyalty to clear principles and doctrines, is the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, the fundamentalist society. But neither of these societies seems to attract much traffic across the frontiers of Christian belief and modern thought. They make not a few individual conversions, but it seems improbable that the university

as a whole will ever pile upon the intellectual Ossa of Christianity the Pelion of Papal or Scriptural infallibility.

Elsewhere in the university there is at least variety. Incense or the intellect, *Hymns A. & M.*, or the silence of the Friends – all these wants can be supplied every Sunday; and denominational societies continue the supply through the week. Perhaps the only undergraduates who are not satisfied with this fare are those not yet persuaded of the truth of Christianity itself, but unfortunately these do constitute the bulk of the university. Admittedly the Student Christian Movement, centering on St. Mary's, is supposed to provide an appeal to such people; but it is weaker in Oxford than in most of its branches. The difficulty seems to arise from the migration of most of the evangelistically-minded to the narrower O.I.C.C.U., which has a deep suspicion of the S.C.M. and of the intellectual problems with which that society specially deals. As a result the S.C.M. cannot persuade many enquirers to attend its meetings.

Yet there is still wide interest in religious questions. The Socratic Club and Aquinas Society continue to study the relations of religion and philosophy; Christian dons like C. S. Lewis often draw considerable audiences; and this academic year has seen the publication by Basil Blackwell of *University*. a terminal magazine containing open discussion by dons and undergraduates of religions and other fundamental questions. And *University* has not only been inaugurated; it has also been sold.

Indeed there is a general sense that the Faculty of Theology, although dented, has not been decisively worsted in its long battle over the darkling plain with the apostles of scientific materialism. The H bomb and the Z call-up are not incentives to the grosser forms of evolutionary optimism. And in Oxford at least it is realised that only a limited number of human problems can be solved by a subscription to the *New Statesman*. The central challenge to Christian belief from intellectual quarters now seems to originate in the philosophy of logical analysis, a movement which has grown up round the silences of Professor Wittgenstein. The validity of theological language, which is questioned by most of Oxford's philosophers, is being considered – as it should be – on severely philosophical grounds, and a symposium of dons in *University* on the subject has even been promoted to the Third Programme; but the best argument for theology would be if Christians themselves lived in a manner which could not be satisfactorily explained except by talking about God. So once again the enquiry is being directed to the Churches. How do these Christians live?

That seems now the central question, and it must be admitted that much Christian life in Oxford does not satisfy enquiry. Fundamentally, I suppose, it is a matter of common sin; but superficially it is the price paid for Christianity's continued existence in Oxford. The religious societies have kept alive in a university whose official teaching has been almost entirely secularised. But they tend to introspection; their machinery has so developed as to absorb not a few undergraduates who might otherwise make some impression on their agnostic friends in politics, the arts or even the examinations. So wide interest in religion seldom results in conversions to Church membership.

Must this machinery be scrapped before effective communication can be established between the committed Christians and the bulk of the university? That would be the extreme view. But it is usually argued that the need is only for more pastors of devotion and calibre to run the existing machinery. And certainly Christianity is not dead in Oxford, however frustrating the work of the college chaplains must now be. The chapels are there, waiting to be used, preserving at no little expense their heritage in song and stone; the societies are ever burgeoning into fresh committees; the intellectual debate continues; and a new revival, in its interests more catholic than the Oxford Movement and more communal than the Oxford Groups, may be just round the corner.

¶ 1951 0622 | ***letter to the editor***
https://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/22nd-june-1951/16

LEAVEN IN THE SCHOOLS

Sir – 1 read with interest Lord Beveridge's suggestion that if those few children who bring "intellectual interests" with them from home were sent to the same schools as the masses they would act as a "leaven." The troublesome question is why this has not already happened at the English public schools. For there too, of course, the boys with intellectual interests have usually been & minority. But have they acted as a leaven? Did not most of them either learn in their first week to assume the mask which they never laid aside until they reached the university, or else undergo years of such ostracism as turned them into soured intellectuals who are such a feature of our ege? The hope that they would have fared better at State schools would be reasonable if we had evidence that proletarian philistines are less hostile, or less successfully hostile, to distinction than philistines from bourgeois homes. But have we? Is it not more probable that English boys of all classes know equally well how to cope with "leaven"? – Yours, &c., C. S. LEWIS.

Magdalen College, Oxford.

¶ 1951 1123 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/23rd-november-1951/16

A "SPECTATOR" COMPETITION

Sir, – I cannot help feeling that many of your readers must deplore as I do the choice of subject for competition in your last issue,[*] on the grounds of its being in really bad taste. Not a few, I dare say, would join with me in objecting to it for its irreverence. The source of the expression "Pearly Gates" (Revelation xxi 21), in a passage of extreme poetic beauty which has reference to the eternal home of the Saints of God, should have been enough to deter any humorist with a due sense of seemliness from bringing it into such an unsuitable connection. And to those who like myself expect admission to the glories of Heaven only after undergoing the awfulness of the judgement of the Son of Man, the implication of all and sundry casually approaching the "Pearly Gates" with a display of the more superficial of their earthly characteristics is hardly less than appalling.

I do not of course suggest that people with such endearing qualities as those of Alfred Jingle, Mr. Salteena, Sherlock Holmes and the rest would be shut out of Heaven for their mannerisms, or even that they would for ever lose what endears them to us. It is the flippant treatment of a most solemn and sacred moment of human existence that is deprecated.

"Humour is ... the all-consoling, and (mark this) the all-excusing, grace of life." Thus Mr. C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape* in the last paragraph but one of Letter XI, where humour is commended as one effective way of undermining religious foundations. This was worth saying. – Yours faithfully,

374 Woodstock Road, Oxford. ARTHUR E. J. B. BARROW.

(The justice of this comment must be frankly acknowledged. Through an oversight, for which circumstances provided some excuse but no defence, unhappy phrases in some of the entries for this competition unfortunately escaped notice till the paper was in print. – ED., *Spectator*.)

[*] [http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/16th-november-1951/28/spectator-competition-no-89]

¶ 1953 0123 | *letter to the editor*

http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/23rd-january-1953/18

AGNOSTICISM

Sir, – The moving appeal made by Mrs. Doris Hodges[*] on behalf of herself and all agnostics who think like her almost forces one to offer, if a sermon is impossible, at least the notes for one. May I try?

Her primary quest is to discover "the nature of the force that first created the universe." Is there a benevolent planner behind it all? And she thinks man "cannot find an answer that stands up to the scientific scrutiny of his twentieth-century mind." Just now I happen to have read again what I venture to think the most brilliant short answer given in this century. It is the address of Pius XII given on November 22nd, 1951, to the members of the Pontifical Academy of Science. It has recently been republished in English with a commentary under the title *Modern Science and God,* by P. J. McLaughlin, D.és Sc. (Burns Oates). From this the first part of my "notes" is taken. This Academy, which traces its origins from the earliest of modern scientific academies, draws its seventy Fellows from eminent men of science of all nations and religions. An example of the level of its work is the great "Spectral Atlas" of Gatterer and Junkes (1937-1951), published by the astrophysical laboratory of the Vatican observatory. It is clear that the Pope follows the progress of scientific research with intense personal interest and very accurate information. It was in another address to this Academy in 1943 that he gave the first public warning of the atomic bomb.

The opening paragraph addresses the scientists: "By your researches which unlock nature's secrets, and through your teaching, which leads man to direct the forces of nature towards his own welfare, you employ the language of number, formula and discovery to show forth the ineffable harmony of the works of an all-wise God." Since the scientific spirit demands facts, he proposes to re-examine, on the basis of new discoveries, the physical foundations of St. Thomas's famous "five ways" to demonstrate the existence of' God, which are based on concrete realities. He will take especially the "ways" based on change and order in nature.

While modern science has recognised the underlying unity and orderliness of the universe, physics have shown that macrocosm and microcosm are subject to continual intra-atomic changes (which the Pope deals with at length), and thereby the old, over-simplified picture of indivisible atoms, taken as basis by materialistic monism, has been shattered. (And here he mentions the smashing and rebuilding of nuclei as an "achievement which, in so far as it contributes to the cause of peace, is certainly worthy of record among the glories of our century.") Inorganic matter, therefore, is "counter-signed in its inmost being with the stamp of mutability," and consequently, to explain its origin and existence, demands the Eternal and Immutable Being: "I am, Who am." Moreover, the Pope points to the philosophical implications of the Second Law of Thermodynamics (the "Law of Entropy"), i.e. of the degradation of energy, from which, on the basis of present knowledge, there seems no escape. If the universe is running down, it must have had a beginning in time, with vast reserves of energy.

An outline is given of some of the methods used by astronomers and astrophysicists to answer the "extremely fascinating questions": When did the universe begin, and what was its primitive state? The study of the recession of spiral nebulae – the "expanding universe" – of the age of radio-active substances in rocks and in meteorites, and of the limits in the stability of stellar systems, lead to the view that the cosmic processes may be said to have their beginning from five to ten "milliard" years ago – a conclusion in no way contrary to the statement that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." There are various views on the nature of primitive matter, but its density, pressure and temperature must have been utterly beyond anything we know. What went before that? The scientific mind is baffled, but nowadays feels impelled to abandon the notion of self-sufficient matter, and hand over to philosophy and revelation, which provide sure arguments for creation, and, in the case of revelation,

[*] [http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/16th-january-1953/9/an-agnostics-quest]

for creation in time. *Fiat Lux!* Science, then, with the concreteness which belongs to physical proofs, has broadened and deepened the empirical foundations on which rest the arguments for the existence of God.

Here is the extreme limit of human reason. But one may add that, once the honest agnostic gets so far, he should enquire about the truth of revelation, which makes God's presence "immediate, vitalising and loving." He will find that the "wonders" on which the proofs of this revelation are securely based are not the "dreams" which Mrs. Hodges fears, and have survived the most scientific scrutiny. But that needs another sermon!

May I add a little about the problem of evil, which "defeats every personal effort" of many agnostics to believe. It will help to state the problem correctly. It is not: If there is evil, there cannot be a good God. Often we can proceed along two lines of thought to two sure conclusions. It is hard to see how they are both true, but both are certain. In this case, reason can prove that there is a good God, and experience shows that evil (which is not however a positive entity but defect) exists. The problem is how to reconcile these two facts. We do not pretend to have a full answer in this life, but there can be no answer without a future life, which must therefore be allowed as a hypothesis. Only then can suffering which seems "unfair and undeserved" (e.g. in the malformed child) be explained as not being the end but the beginning. The notion of reincarnation is philosophically contradictory, and the data which lead people to postulate it are accounted for in the Christian doctrine of original sin.

These notes are most inadequate (cf. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*), but they may point to the comfort, and still more the truth, waiting to reward the agnostic who is ready to submit to truth when found. RALPH RUSSELL.

Downside Abbey, Nr. Bath.

¶ 1954 0108 | Emanuel Litvinoff · book review
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/8th-january-1954/26

Fashionable Vestments

The Emperor's Clothes. By Kathleen Nott. (Heinemann. 18s.)

Two world wars and the fear that another may mushroom over our cities have engendered a mistrust of science and the liberal humanism that since the seventeenth century has developed side by side with it. There has been an uneasy recognition that our ideas are transient and vulnerable, and this absence of certainty is reflected in the contemporary revival of religious orthodoxy, and the desire to return to a pre-Renaissance view of the world in which metaphysical absolutes are reaffirmed in contrast to the relativities of modern intellectual knowledge and perception. Liberal humanism based on free or scientific enquiry has been fluently, if pejoratively, criticised and discredited by, amongst other eminences, Mr. T. S. Eliot.

This is the concern of Miss Kathleen Nott's book, sub-titled "an attack on the dogmatic orthodoxy of T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, Dorothy Sayers, C. S. Lewis and others": but there is only one emperor and Miss Nott wastes little energy on the satraps: she is mainly concerned to show that it is Mr. Eliot's fashionable vestments that do not exist. Her careful and scholarly study effectively employs semantics and logical positivism, with a certain gentle irony, to this end.

But is she altogether successful? Not quite, I think. Her method is unusually tentative and well-mannered for so polemical a purpose, as if she were making war according to the rules of the M.C.C., and although Mr. Eliot himself may be similarly gentlemanly, his surface manner conceals an inflexibility of opinion where Miss Nott conveys the impression that she may, after all, be wrong. The credit is perhaps Miss Nott's, but the victory? That is another matter. She has established with admirable precision clear evidence in favour of scientific humanism, but to establish one case does not demolish another, and although the foundations of Eliot's "neo-scholasticism," as she calls it, are demonstrably shaken, the structure has not been seriously assailed.

Interior evidence here suggests that Miss Nott was somewhat overawed by the magnitude of her task. There is a good deal of curtseying to Eliot the poet. There is much flexing of muscles in the chapter-headings – "The Landlady's Ornaments," "The Dogma in the Manger," "Mr. Eliot's Liberal Worms. Energetic passes are made at the anti-rationalist, anti-sex, pro-parish pump criticism of literature and society which would replace fallible human judgments by infallible Christian authoritarianism; and Original Sin is, of course, an easy preliminary "kill." Then, when one expects that the *coup de grâce* will be inflicted on the very next page, Miss Nott discreetly retreats and begins her gentle war-dance again.

Over and over she establishes the value of scepticism and disinterested intellectual enquiry and argues ably for a single assessment of truth as against the "two truths" theory of science and religion, with science as inevitably the inferior. But the very reiteration begins to raise doubt. Is there a single truth, or a multiplicity of truths? In fact, these rival interpretations can both be challenged by much modern experience which suggests that truth is relative and often where one chooses to find it. The central issue of Eliot's dislike of humanity, his insistence that society is in error because of its failure to submit to Christian dogma, and the assumption that an ineradicable sinfulness, expressed in liberalism, science and romanticism, lies at the root of the decline of the West, these are contested, not defeated. Perhaps, after all, the reactionary effigy of "neo-scholasticism" must be disrobed not by the philosopher, but by the psychologist.

Nevertheless, Miss Nott has made a valuable beginning and has ventured where other critics, who would be much in agreement with her, might regard it as imprudent to follow.

¶ 1954 0305 | Compton Mackenzie
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/5th-march-1954/18

SIDELIGHT

May I begin by quoting what I did say about the attitude of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to the English Language in the matter of pronunciation? "It will make a desperate effort to preserve the right pronunciation of certain words which are in peril of being destroyed by popular usage. No attempt will be made to restore pronunciations now hopelessly lost."

And of my own attitude:

"Well aware that innumerable inconsistencies in the pronunciation of words derived from Latin and Greek-are firmly established, I have, surrendered to thein like everybody else, and 1 am not advocating a quixotic pedantry at the expense of current usage."

However, it is worth while to have one's attitude misrepresented when the misrepresentation is as gracefully expressed in rhyme as it was by Mr. C. S. Lewis. May 1 ask him a question? If current usage decided to pronounce as it is written the name of the College whose kindly maternity we share, would he, surrendering to the democratic snobbery of the time, abandon Mawdlen'? When I was an undergraduate every Oxford cabby corrected the fare who bade him drive to 'Mawdlen' by repeating, 'To Mag-dalen? Right.' Today under the influence of. what is believed to be standard English 'Cirencester' gets all its syllables and 'Daintry' is forever 'Daventry.' So why should Magdalen be mispronounced 'Mawdlen'? Indeed, if it were a town instead of a college it certainly would be Mag-dalen by now.

Last year the *Daily Express* took the BBC to task for encouraging announcers to use the affected pronunciation 'Cùmpton' for 'Compton,' The fact that for more than a thousand years it has been pronounced in various hamlets all over the West Country as 'Cwm' or 'Coombe' and thus preserved its ancient signification is unimportant if it sounds affected to the corner boys of an outer suburb, who will soon be thinking that 'cumfort,' 'cumpany' and 'cumpass' are equally affected.

The pronunciation of 'er' as 'ar' as in clerk or of 'en' as 'in' as in 'England' may have been mediæval Cockneyisms, but Cockney was then a dialect. Any pronunciation in a dialect which has estab-

lished itself should be respected, but why should we surrender to the synthetic gentility of today which despises dialects and irregular pronunciations because it believes it is thereby demonstrating its own education?

> ‘Lazy, laughing, languid Jenny,
> Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea.’

Today the prevailing fashion is to pronounce ‘Jenny’ to rhyme with ‘penny,’ and I already hear extra-genteel people frightened to say ‘Ingland’ or ‘Inglish’.

The letter from the Department of Phonetics at Glasgow University rejoices that English is not a dead tongue yet. It very soon will be if the steady destruction of dialect continues and if the flat speech of the London suburb sets the standard for the spoken language. Would the Department of Phonetics at Glasgow University accept Kelvinside English as a prophylactic against the ossification it dreads? I suppose that a science like phonetics is superior to the art of poetry and would scoff at any attempt ,to preserve the pronunciation of words for their value in prose or verse.

“Does it matter,” the Department of Phonetics asks, “whether, a word is good Latin, Greek or Sanskrit so long as it is good English?”

Of recent years the word ‘autarky’ has come into vogue to express ‘self-sufficiency’ in a national sense. Owing to the inability of the Southern English to distinguish ‘ck’ from ‘ch’ in their pronunciation, ‘autarky’ is now almost always written ‘autarchy,’ which means ‘absolute government.’ If it seemed necessary to manufacture a word from the Greek (which it was not) why should it be misspelt by people ignorant of Greek but looking for a grand word and their pretentiousness be blessed as good English?

Now I come to Mr. Beeley who, after “waiting in vain for someone to expose” my “fallacies,” selflessly assumes the burden himself. He contends that the quantity of the vowel in the original has nothing to do with the case, and I would accept that on a long view. What I will not accept is that English has any rules of pronunciation; a tendency is not a rule. Therefore, to say that the epsilon in ‘Eros’ must become eta in order to conform with an imaginary English rule is a fallacy. Until the BBC, truckling to this fetish of democracy, declared in favour of ‘Eeros’ people of education were saying ‘Erros.’ In passing, let me congratulate a gallant announcer last week for defying the rule of the BBC and saying ‘Eros.’ It was like a draught of water from the Pierian spring and compensated for the pronunciation of ‘idyll’ as ‘iddul’ by a Third Programme speaker who was introducing some translations of Greek poetry by people who did not know Greek, their ignorance being extolled on the strength of a wandering remark by Coleridge. And I suppose it was an altruistic attempt to prevent ossification of the Italian language that led another Third Programme speaker Who was giving us a little lecture on an Italian composer to pronounce ‘placido’ as ‘placído.’

To return to Mr. Beeley. Having rebuked me for my plea to save what is left of accurate pronunciation, he himself goes on to regret the pronunciation of ‘amēnities’ as ‘amĕnities,’ but is apparently willing to yield to it because it follows this imaginary rule that an antepenultimate vowel in English should be short. However, the BBC recommendation to pronounce ‘conduit’ as ‘kondewit’ is too much even for Mr. Beeley, and we can shake hands over that ‘monstrosity,’ which is his appropriate epithet for an obscene mispronunciation.

Is the Department of Phonetics at Glasgow University pre pared to do its bit to save the English language from ossification by encouraging the students to speak of a ‘vaniller ice’? It must face the fact that this is now the pronunciation of standard English and that the pronunciation as ‘vanilla ice’ sounds to Southern ears either provincial or affected. Is the retention of the aspirate in ‘which’ and ‘what’ a sign that the arteries of the North are hardening? Are we to accept ‘fah’ as the right way to pronounce ‘fire’?

The vanishing of the second person singular from English was a severe loss to the language. I imagine that this was the result of laziness: ‘thou shouldst’ and ‘thou wouldst’ were too much trouble to say. For the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century ‘you was’ endured as a compromise but it came

to seem ungrammatical, and for many years now 'you was' has been held to show lack of education. Yet 'you was' even today is more obstinately preserved in Cockney than any other mix-up of plural and singular. How did 'ain't I' come to seem a vulgarism and 'aren't I' come to be accepted as genteel? And why did the 'amn't I' of the North never make any headway in Southern usage? Whatever the answer may be, I should never dream of advocating any attempt to correct current colloquialisms and I would use those colloquialisms without hesitation in formal language if I believed them to be more effective than a stilted correctness.

What I plead for is a fight against the further debasement of the language because we are afraid of offending the new democracy. I would much rather that the English language were ossified than that it should exist only as a chromium-plated automaton.

¶ 1954 1001 | C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* · review by John Wain
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/1st-october-1954/25

Pleasure, Controversy, Scholarship

This author is of course well known as a controversialist – indeed my view is that the death of George Orwell left Mr. Lewis standing alone as our major controversial author – and while controversialists are common enough in the world of letters, they do not usually get asked to contribute to a 'safe'[*] academic series like the Oxford History of English Literature. So it is important to begin by saying that the controversial nature of the book does not make it any the less helpful as a literary history. The chief functions of a literary history are fulfilled: the names are strung together, the historical and biographical information is given, and the bibliography shows us how to set about more detailed study. What is more, the book is a very pleasurable one to read. Mr. Lewis is today the only major critic of English literature who makes a principle of telling us which authors he thinks we shall *enjoy*: this may not sound much, but most dons have moved a long way from any recognition that literature is something that people used to read for fun. Mr. Lewis, now as always, writes as if inviting us to a feast; not in the take-it-or-leave-it Saintsbury way, but always giving his reasons, and frequently warning us to stay away from this or that boring writer who is only included because the *Oxford History* can't leave him out. He quotes, for instance, a few good things from one William Warner, and adds, 'But no one should be deceived by these quotations into reading Warner.' This is sense; pleasure is a major motive in reading anything, and if the fact is tactfully suppressed by most academics, that is because they don't enjoy their work and ought really to say so. This is all I have to say about the literary qualities of the book, but I assure you that the whole review could easily be given over to praising its wit, its pure and strong prose (what they used to call 'nervous'), and the general high spirits of the performance. Mr. Lewis is the virtuoso of literary history; he is like a violinist who makes up his own cadenzas. I must now turn to the elements in the book that make it controversial. These, as everyone will know, are in the parts which treat of the concept of the 'Renaissance.' Mr. Lewis is, broadly speaking, 'against' the Renaissance, in the sense that he thinks its importance as a factor in causing things has been exaggerated. What he is attacking is the view, common for the last three centuries, that the Renaissance was a great 'liberation' to which we Owe. Everything. Mr. Lewis claims that this estimate of the Renaissance achievement is simply their own valuation of themselves, which we have not yet got rid of, and that in fact the period witnessed (whether or not it 'caused ') as many deaths as it did births. Certainly the Renaissance, on its literary side, stands for the acceleration of classical studies, the rejection of the Middle Ages, the discrediting of scholastic philosophy; and Mr. Lewis, however he looks at these things, cannot see that they did any good to the English literary mind. If 'E.K.' was a typical humanist (and he was), then we can only be glad that Spenser paid no attention to him, because if he had there would have been no *Faerie Queene*. Most good writing in the sixteenth century came

[*] [At some point in 1954 *The Spectator* changed from double to single quotation marks.]

from men who either opposed, or ignored, the doctrines of humanism; whose resuscitation of Ciceronian Latin was an 'archaising movement' which, if it did anything, killed Latin as the vigorous Esperanto of the Western world by making it too high-falutin; whose hatred of the Middle Ages led them to brush aside a profusion of great legend; whose stylistic studies of classical literature put a blight on it for everyone else – a blight we have not removed to this day. The humanists – so runs the argument – can take no credit for the reflorescence of English literature in the Nineties of the century, save that of having failed to prevent it.

I call this view controversial, but I do not think there will be many apoplectic seizures over it; it is unusual in its whole-heartedness rather than in its general drift. After all, nobody, as far as I know, ever did say that the New Learning had an *immediately* good influence on English imaginative literature. J. R. Green in the 1870s said quite bluntly that 'The overpowering influence of the new models both of thought and style … was at first felt only as a fresh check to the dreams of any revival of English poetry or prose,' and seemed to think that the New Learning was a good thing only for politics, not for art. Still, he does go on to say that 'Insensibly … the influences of the Renascence fertilised the intellectual soil of England for the rich harvest that was to come,' and I take it this is what Mr. Lewis is denying. Some will think his position extreme, but after all it would be hard to make out a case that the humanists either talked much sense about literature, or bequeathed a useful tradition to their descendants. If the literary taste, in his own language, of the average classical scholar is anything to go by, it appears very likely that the whole tradition is off the rails. On the whole it is rather a relief not to have to pretend to admire the humanists as men of letters; one is then free to admire them the more, as Mr. Lewis does, for their real achievements, which were technical; they were like electricians wiring the house so that everyone could get a better light, and it is a pity that they were also consulted about the architecture. It was in exploits like Lorenzo Valla's exposure of the donation of Constantine that the humanists really did something to deserve being talked about. And one has a sneaking affection for them, in spite of their frequent pedantries and absurdities, because humanism, like the modern analytical criticism of literature, was a Revolt of the Hacks: the grammarians had always been the least important teachers in the mediaeval universities, and now they suddenly became the most important; a splendid upheaval. Their counterparts today are the teachers of 'English': barely tolerated twenty years ago, and now suddenly carrying the whole central weight.

I have over-simplified, of course, and also left out Mr. Lewis's very interesting treatment of Puritanism and the Reformation. On the side of the book that can more precisely be described as literary criticism, I hardly know where to start: *inopem me copia fecit*. Perhaps the most balanced and just section is that on Elizabethan satire (a good corrective to Allen Tate's essay), the most original – suggesting a new attitude – that on Shakespeare's sonnets, and the most provocative, that on Spenser. I select the last. Mr. Lewis, living through the period which has seen Spenser take his first real toss, has always been very keen on helping him up again; sometimes this has involved him in being less than fair to the very real objections that can be made. In this book he does not launch any broadsides, probably not having space for them, but gives the *Faerie Queene* the best possible hand-up by explaining its essential structure and showing us what to look for. These pages sent me back to the poem, and certainly it is by no means bad, but I felt Mr. Lewis was going a little far in claiming that Spenser is bound to be popular with anyone who has any feeling for the English tradition. Among those who shared, or still share, the culture for which he wrote, and which he helped to create, there is no dispute about his greatness. But now 'His world has ended and his fame may end with it.' So if you don't like him you must be one of the modern barbarians. But come now, there must always have been readers who found the dreadful silliness and perfunctoriness of parts of the *Faerie Queene* a barrier to their enjoyment. Ben Jonson's comment that Spenser writ no language' was very fair; a poet who deafens himself to the actual phrasing and cadence of the living tongue, as it is spoken round him. has put himself right back on scratch. Again, the modern Spenserian is in a paradoxical position; Spenser owed his first great vogue to the 'romantic' taste of the mid-eighteenth century, and then to the rather swooning admiration of the early nineteenth, and the reasons for which they liked him are now re-

garded by Spenser's defenders as inadmissible. He was not included in William London's *Catalogue of the Most Vendible Books in England* (1658), and the first eighteenth-century edition, that of Hughes in 1715, took thirty-five years to reach a second edition. After that, admittedly, the thing got going, but it is always worth remembering that Spenser owed his boost to the people who thought that, for instance, Ossian was as good as Homer. Even Macaulay, at the height of the boom, remarked, 'Few and weary are the readers who are in at the death of the Blatant Beast,' thus revealing that he personally hadn't got as far as finding out that the Blatant Beast does not die. Altogether, this view of Spenser is one that no one would think of in relation to an author who really had worn well, such as Shakespeare.

But speaking of wearing well, I for one feel quite positive that this book will be read, and will deserve to be read, by a lot of people for a long time.

¶ 1955 0121 | C. S. Lewis: 'Prudery and Philology'
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/21st-january-1955/9

¶ 1955 0506 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/6th-may-1955/20

CHRISTIANS AND HUMANISTS

Sir, – Mr. A. N. M. Jenkins, in your issue of April 29,[*] claims that the religious revival in Cambridge represents a reawakening of the social conscience and of reforming zeal. If this were so, few people would quarrel with it. The burden of the humanists' complaint is that the new believers are withdrawing themselves from everyday issues, that they stress man's sinfulness as opposed to his potentialities, and are pessimistic about the value of potential and social action.

The heroes of the revival give little guidance in the field which Mr. Jenkins considers the vital one: What has Billy Graham to say about race relations, or Mr. C. S. Lewis about the hydrogen bomb? Mr. John Vaizey is much nearer the truth when he says that 'Christianity has almost always identified itself with the forces of reaction' and that 'much of the good in modern life has been achieved in the teeth of the Church's opposition.'

Of course there is a minority of devoted Christians, like Canon Collins or Dr. Soper, who satisfy Mr. Jenkins's claims, but it is they who are most sceptical of the value of the present revival, and they know that their true allies are equally devoted agnostic humanists.

Does Mr. Jenkins really believe that one has to be either Ivan Karamazov or Peter Venkhovensky? Has he never talked to any 'Liberal Humanists'? There are plenty in his college. – Yours faithfully,

King's College, Cambridge P. G. J. PULZER

¶ 1955 0513 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/13th-may-1955/18

CHRISTIANS AND HUMANISTS

Sir, – As a Cambridge graduate and a Christian I was delighted by the series of articles you recently offered us.[†] Mr. P. G. J. Pulzer, to judge from his letter, was not so pleased. He couples the names of Billy Graham and C. S. Lewis, and condemns them for lacking a social gospel.

[*] ["Humanism, Christianity, and History"; this is the last article in the series mentioned in the next footnote. See also the introductory note on Lewis's 1955 essay "Lilies that Fester" at www.lewisiana.nl/essayquotes#lilies]

[†] ["Cambridge Christians", a series of articles in *The Specator*, 29 April 1955, pp. 21-34, introduced by the Archbishop of York, Cyril Ebor; http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/29th-april-1955/21 ff.]

Billy Graham comes from the 'Bible Belt' of America, and many Christians, in England and America, would regard his presentation of the Gospel as deficient in various respects. But it is only fair to point out that his widely circulated confessio fidei, *Peace with God,* contains a chapter on 'Social Obligations of the Christian' in which Graham says: 'Christians, above all others, should be concerned with social problems and social injustices.'

Dr. C. S. Lewis, need one say, is quite a different sort of person. Indeed he now qualifies as a 'Cambridge Christian,' and there are other reasons for defending him. Many in the war-time generation of undergraduates, to which I belonged, owe an immeasurable debt to Dr. Lewis's writings. In them we found a rational approach to the Faith, a clear ideal of Christian conduct, and some useful hints on devotional discipline. These greatly encouraged us and gave us more stability than we might otherwise have achieved.

Of course, I do not know what Dr. Lewis has to say about the hydrogen bomb. One wonders what Mr. Pulzer has to say about this latest manifestation of man's 'potentialities.' After glancing again at your series of articles on the bomb published in February, I can only say: 'Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to do Thy will.' – Yours faithfully, PETER BARRACLOUGH.

Cranford, 26 Park Road, Ipswich, Suffolk.

¶ 1955 0520 | *letters to the editor*

http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/20th-may-1955/19

CHRISTIANS AND HUMANISTS

Sir – Mr. Pulzer asks, implying the unpractical outlook of Christianity, what Billy Graham or C. S. Lewis has to say about the hydrogen bomb or race relations.

Although the primary and initial concern of the Christian faith is man's relation to God (and is in this sense introverted), the result of this relation should be extroverted, practical. This is clearly shown in any of St. Paul's epistles, where the latter half is devoted to practical 'do's' and 'don'ts,' and when St. John writes that 'he who says he abides in Christ ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.' The relations of man to man are treated in a timeless, fundamental way, just as Billy Graham and C. S. Lewis treat them. Once this basis is truly established, a contemporary attitude towards the events around one can be founded on it: whether it is trading relations with the Saracens in 1179 or the hydrogen bomb in 1955.

One other point in Mr. Pulzer's letter calls for comment. To say that Christianity is often identified with forces of reaction is inaccurate: what about the eighteenth-century evangelical revival and its connection with philanthropy? John Wesley, for example, wrote on one occasion: 'Of all the seats of woe on this side of Hell, few, I suppose, exceed or even equal Newgate.' William Wilberforce and slavery, and Hannah More and day and Sunday schools for poor children, are other examples that could be cited. – Yours faithfully, DAVID G. IRWIN.

The Queen's College, Oxford

Sir – In the letters to you published on May 6 there seems to be some misinterpretation of the interest taken in religion in Cambridge at present. I would be surprised – but I am admittedly without a finger on any Cantab's pulse – if C. S. Lewis and Billy Graham are the heroes of this revival any more than Canon Collins or Dr. Soper; and social work is a predominant interest of the recent graduates of Cambridge I know whose names might be connected with this revival. By 'social work' I mean an interpretation of a personal developing relationship with God into social terms, the terms of the society of Negro Jersey City, of a working-class or a suburban parish or of undergraduate societies at King's College. I could name such social workers in each of these places.

This interest in social work is not nowadays so much the result of Christian emphasis on man's sinfulness as of the Christian's recognition in himself of the sources which bring forth what he sees as unrighteousness in others. This should make him charitable without limit.

As to some people in general, so to some Christians, this awareness of the sources of wrong-doing can lead to a diffidence – though, I hope, never to a cynicism – about the chances of building a paradise on earth; but it should also give to all Christians a resilience in the face of any disappointments that occur, that may eventuate more fruitfully in them than in those who cannot resist the natural impulse to harden where wounded and always to wear the Purple Heart to commemorate one scar.

The humanist's not common complaint is the Christian's chief joy: that this process of growing self-awareness, with charity dependent on it, is slow. We are fortunate if we catch even a glimpse of the end of it before we die. The segments of this concentric growth which strike upon rocks and are delayed are obvious to the outsider, yet too often too tardily recognised by the Christian.

Yet the slowness of this circular process, incomplete at the end, surely has something the humanist will envy, for the wavelength of its ripples is inquiry; and it is not only Christians, *pace* your correspondent Mr. Lacey,[*] who are encroaching upon the freedom of inquiry today. – Yours faithfully,

34 East 68th Street, New York 21, NY ANTHONY BARNES

¶ 1955 0708 | C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* · review by Amabel Williams-Ellis
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/8th-july-1955/51

Traditional Tales

Welsh Legends and Folk Tales. By Gwyn Jones. Pictures by Joan Kidell-Monroe. (O.U.P., 12s. 6d.)
Stories of King Arthur and His Knights. By Barbara Leonie Picard. Pictures by Roy Morgan. (O.U.P., 12s. 6d.)
The Wonderful Lamp. By Max Voegeli. Translator E. M. prince. Pictures by Felix Hoffman. (O.U.P., 10s. 6d.)
The Magician's Nephew. By C. S. Lewis. Pictures by Pauline Baynes. (The Bodley Head, 8s. 6d.)

After what amounted to a famine, traditional tales for children have begun to appear again and three new-old difficulties have again become apparent. These legends and tales were once the 'Romance' and 'Science Fiction' of grown-up people; the language in which they have been passed down is now unfamiliar to children; there is a gap in traditional comparisons. Even the country child today may never have seen a farm-wagon, a log-fire or water drawn from a well in a bucket, while the magic alternative, a sieve, is no longer a familiar kitchen tool. Illustrators could often give more help over the last type of difficulty, but even so, the problems are quite real, for it is the child between six and nine for whom fairy-tales fulfil a need, so that clarity and narrative speed are essential. Thus today, one teller with young listeners in mind may make a traditional tale namby-pamby (which is a sin), while another – having very rightly gone back to original sources – sometimes forgets both the need for pace and the fact that things once familiar may now be as strange as the magic. However, such difficulties are a challenge and no reason for not still giving children this essential and delightful part of our literary heritage.

The two collections of traditional tales under review come down on the better, or learned, side. Mr. Gwyn Jones's Welsh legends are, as we should expect, admirably told, but may occasionally confound a young listener. Why has he not solaced the reader-aloud with a few notes at the end in the manner of J. J. Jacobs, that prince of the art? The Stories of King Arthur and his Knights are also difficult but good, while, again, notes would have helped the reader-aloud with 'questions arising'.

The Wonderful Lamp (a non-traditional tale by a Swiss author) is a good story of a little boy of the time of Haroun al Raschid who sails with Sinbad and becomes a prince. *The Magician's Nephew* has Mr. C. S. Lewis's usual virtues – admirable English, movement, moral, and enough but not too much description. But the present reviewer still cannot swallow Aslan, the *deus ex machina* of all his fairy tales. This personage is a highly moral and decorative lion who not only talks, admonishes and pro-

[*] [A letter from A. R. Lacey in the same issue and on the same page as the one from P. G. J. Pulzer.]

phesies, but also sings. Surely Mr. Lewis should, all along, have had the courage of his convictions, and given Aslan the shape as well as the nature and functions of an archangel.

AMABEL WILLIAMS-ELLIS

¶ 1955 0722 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/22nd-july-1955/17

CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

Sir, – May I say, with reference to Mrs. Williams-Ellis's review (July 8, page 52), that the Lion Aslan in Professor C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* has most emphatically not the 'nature and functions' of an archangel, and for that reason has not been given the form of one? In these tales of the Absolutely Elsewhere, Aslan is shown as creating the worlds (*The Magician's Nephew*), slain and risen again for the redemption of sin (*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*), incarnate as a Talking Beast among Talking Beasts (*passim*), and obedient to the laws he has made for his own creation (*The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, page 146). His august Archetype – higher than the angels and 'made a little lower' than they – is thus readily identified as the 'Lion of the Tribe of Judah.' Apart from a certain disturbance of the natural hierarchies occasioned by the presence in the story of actual human beings, Professor Lewis's theology and pneumatology are as accurate and logical here as in his other writings.

To introduce the historical 'form' of the Incarnate into a work of pure fantasy would, for various reasons, be unsuitable. Whether, on the other hand, a Talking Beast should be credited with the power of song is a matter for the æsthetics of Fairyland, where cats play the fiddle, horses have the gift of prophecy, and little pigs build houses and boil the pot for dinner. There would seem to be no very valid objection to it. – Yours faithfully,

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

24 Newland Street, Witham, Essex

¶ 1955 1007 | John Wain · book review
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/7th-october-1955/27/leavis-on-lawrence

Leavis on Lawrence

It is my considered, opinion that only two of our academic literary critics have produced, in the past twenty years, books that could be called great; and both have appeared in the past twelve months. One was Mr. C. S. Lewis's *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*; the other is Dr. Leavis's new book.[*] (Professor Empson's *The Structure of Complex Words* runs them both very close, but it does not quite stay the distance.) To compare Lewis and Leavis is to realise the truth of the old academic maxim that there is more variation within the first class than within any other. The men, the styles, the preoccupations, are utterly different. Mr. Lewis takes us back into a period we can barely imagine; with superb and sustained organising power, he conducts us through a forest of books which, without his help, we should hardly understand; and he illuminates each one until we seem to stand at the author's elbow. Since I reviewed his book in the *Spectator* a year ago, I have read it a dozen times, and always with the same astonishment that 'one small head could carry all he knew,' and that he should have found something original and enlightening, something always sustained by a directing purpose, to say about so many authors. Turning to Dr. Leavis, I feel the same admiration, amounting to awe, but for qualities exactly the opposite. Here it is the very narrowness that is striking: the utterly serious and scrupulous concentration on what immediately matters. Lawrence is, in the literary sense, a contemporary; had he lived till today he would only have been ten years older than Dr. Leavis himself. It was Lawrence's great gift that he isolated exactly those problems which lie at the heart of

[*] *D. H. Lawrence, Novelist.* By F. R. Leavis. (Chatto and Windus, 21s.)

modern Western life; it is Leavis's great gift that he isolates exactly those preoccupations which lie at the heart of Lawrence's work. What the novelist was concerned about, the critic is concerned about; the answers given by the novelist are reaffirmed by the critic, and shown to be invested with all the force and authority of imaginative literature. It is rarely that one sees a work of criticism fit to stand beside the best work of the author in question, but I think this is one.

Criticism, to Dr. Leavis, is a moral activity. Everyone who seriously tries to comment on great literature knows that sooner or later – and probably sooner – he reaches a point where the merely technical analysis is not enough. When you have said that this book is soundly constructed, as compared with that one; that its language is clearer, or richer, or more subtle; that its humour and pathos are better balanced; you are left with the consciousness of having said nothing that really matters. *War and Peace*, for example, is not a very well constructed book; technically it is inferior to the latest novel by this or that expert hack; we all feel this, but to show why it is so we have to go beyond the domain of merely technical criticism and look for the answer somewhere else. Dr. Leavis is in no doubt as to where he looks for the answer. After pointing out some of Lawrence's technical blemishes, he goes on:

> But how little the things that call for such criticisms count for in the whole body of Lawrence's work. It is an immense body of living creation in which a supreme vital intelligence is the creative spirit – a spirit informed by an almost infallible sense for health and sanity. Itself it educates for the kind of criticism that here and there it challenges – it provides the incitement and the criteria.

Notice these terms. The *vital* intelligence, *health, sanity, educates*. And again:

> There is no profound emotional disorder in Lawrence, no obdurate major disharmony; intelligence in him can be, as it is, the servant of the whole integrated psyche.

If you are tempted to dismiss this 'integrated psyche' stuff as a bit of jargon picked up from psychoanalysis, read the clarifying next sentence:

> It is the representative in consciousness of the complex need of the whole being, and is not thwarted or disabled by inner contradictions in him, whether we have him as artist, critic or expositor.

This is the essence of Dr. Leavis's criticism. People who do not accept it should at least recognise their responsibility to meet this sort of thing head on. Attempts to dismiss and discount Leavis's criticism are seldom effective because they are usually directed towards irrelevant side issues. For instance, a correspondent in the current issue of the *London Magazine*, stepping forward with a fine show of being about to cut through the tangle, tells us that the whole issue is one of social class:

> Dr. Leavis's adherents are largely state-aided young men who cannot afford a claret and Peacock approach to literature. They come from poor homes where books are luxury and must be taken seriously. They come from a naturally Puritan caste; they cannot accept pleasure without first justifying themselves, etc. etc.

If I were to write down my candid opinion of this line of argument, no compositor would set it up, for compositors come from a naturally Puritan caste. What has to be said, however, if literary criticism is to have any future among us, is that Dr. Leavis is surely an opponent worth meeting squarely. If the justification of great literature is not, in the end, a moral justification, then what is it? And if it is moral, then where has Leavis gone wrong? That is the issue, and no amount of whiffling about claret can obscure it, except for readers who want it obscured.

It will be seen that I regard Dr. Leavis as one of those critics whose assumptions and procedure are sufficient to give them classical status, whether or not we agree with them in detail. I might as well add that he has not always, in my eyes, been such a critic. His work on poetry is nothing like as good

as his work on the novel, and, indeed, there is a kind of oblique admission of this in the ferocity with which he has now turned on Mr. Eliot, whose attitudes in those days he so largely adopted. I cannot, in the space I have left, come 'between the fell opposed points of mighty opposites,' but surely everyone must feel sorry that Dr. Leavis has, even for high motives, battered Mr. Eliot so violently in this book. To him, Lawrence's true fame has been withheld from him by what amounts to a dark conspiracy. The pages he devotes to sketching this conspiracy are, in my opinion, largely wasted. It does not matter how stupidly an author is criticised as long as he is read, and Lawrence has always been read. It is true that Mr. Eliot is not exactly a generous critic of Lawrence – and Dr. Leavis, who appears to have read every scrap of print in which Lawrence's name is mentioned, has dug out some pretty bad stuff – but it is also true that the best single sentence ever uttered in praise of Lawrence was, in fact, uttered by Eliot. I do not think Dr. Leavis quotes it, unless it is lying about somewhere in tiny print, but he has quoted it elsewhere. It is from *After Strange Gods*:

> Against the living death of modern material civilization [says Eliot of Lawrence] he spoke again and again; and even if these dead could speak, what he said is unanswerable.

It would be hard to praise Lawrence more justly in one sentence.

¶ 1955 1209 | C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* · review by Lord Hailsham
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/9th-december-1955/27

Dr. Lewis's Pilgrimage

When I came back from the Middle East at the end of 1942 1 had never, I think, heard the name of Dr. C. S. Lewis. On the whole, I find this surprising. Oxford is a small place, and I had been more or less continuously connected with it since 1926, only four years after Dr. Lewis had graduated.

Shortly after my return to this country, someone pressed me to read *The Screwtape Letters*. I did so, with some reluctance, since from my friend's description the subject seemed threadbare and the letter convention equally unoriginal. Since then, I have greedily snatched every opportunity that has come my way to read anything Dr. Lewis has written, and in the intervals of other occupations I think I have read nearly all: *Screwtape*, *The Problem of Pain*, *Miracles*, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, *The Great Divorce*, *Perelandra* and all that, and most of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In the result I think I can claim to be a fairly consistent admirer. For, whether the particular work comes off or not – and there are quite a number which do not – it has always seemed to me that in Dr. Lewis we possess an author writing about religion with a perception and a freshness not equalled in our generation.

Whatever may be true of some of the romances, *Surprised by Joy* comes off. Tales of religious conversion fall into two main categories – the apologetic and the narrative. Despite some philosophical passages, *Surprised by Joy* belongs to the second, the incomparably better, of the two. For no one who has really been through the whole gamut of experience from simple faith to infidelity and apostasy and back again can tell the story of what has happened to himself as one of his own rediscovery of the truth. At the same time he cannot demonstrate, he hardly dares assert, what he really believes about it. For, so far from his being the chief actor, it must seem to him that, at the critical parts of the story, he has scarcely been an agent at all. A series of gentle compulsions has brought him where he now is, as the result of a chain of incidents apparently unrelated, but none the less forming, as he is humbly convinced, a whole connected skein of designed and supernatural operations of the Divine Love. To each his own experience is sufficient but indemonstrable, all but incommunicable to others. Dr. Lewis makes no bones about this, and his writing is the more convincing for it. No one can pretend that he is able to demonstrate that the strange spiritual experience of longing he calls (perhaps a little mysteriously) joy, is really the unconscious realisation by fallen man that only heaven is his home. Still less can a man prove that he has been offered a choice between heaven and hell as he rides on the top of a bus up Headington Hill, or that the reasons, incapable of being precisely stated, which led him to be-

lieve in the Incarnation between Oxford and Whipsnade Zoo, were really logically cogent. Conversion is not really a function of the discursive reason like apologetic. In the end there is no argument about things of this kind, and Dr. Lewis does not attempt to argue. He simply describes – and his powers of description and acute self-analysis well qualify him to do so.

But Dr. Lewis's book is a great deal more than a spiritual autobiography. He had the misfortune to go to two of the nastiest schools it is possible to imagine, a private school he calls simply 'Belsen,' dominated by a Squeers-like character in Holy Orders known as 'Oldie,' and 'Wyvern,' a public school, entirely, he would have us believe – I use his own expressions – dominated by 'bloods' and hagridden by 'tarts.' The description of Belsen seemed to me entirely convincing, but, without in the least questioning Dr. Lewis's sincerity, I confess I began to have a few mental reservations about Wyvern. Can Wyvern really have been so beastly as Dr. Lewis paints it? I confess I rather doubt it. Having been six years at a (quite different) public school myself without having been either the author or the victim of a homosexual episode, I rather wonder whether anything quite as corrupt as the society he paints can really have existed in Edwardian England. I could not help noticing he kept his own virtue, and relied mainly on hearsay and talk, and one rather gathers that a dearly loved, and highly reputable, brother actually enjoyed the school. Can it be that Dr. Lewis attached too much importance to the pockets of vice and uninhibited smutty talk of the male adolescent?

At Oxford, Dr. Lewis must have read Greats rather less than ten years before me. I must say that I was surprised to learn that so great a difference of atmosphere separated us. After all, both of us studied before the doctrines of Wittgenstein caught the dry stubble of the senior common rooms like a prairie fire, and passed almost as quickly, leaving the surface strangely altered, but not permanently impressed. But, it seems, in Dr. Lewis's day the objective idealists still reigned supreme: Green, Bosanquet and Bradley remained the unshaken oracles of truth. Before a decade had passed, all this had fallen into decay, even disrepute. In my day, among the regular Greats lecturers, only Joachim still testified to the Absolute in a mellifluous but unintelligible flow of beautiful language spoken too rapidly to be carefully noted, or even followed by a philosophical novice. So completely had the objective idealists fallen into oblivion, although they were still obligatory reading, that it was not until my third year that I succeeded in discovering from a new and kindly tutor, and from Professor Kemp Smith's book on Kant, what objective idealism had really been about. This makes Dr. Lewis's particular pilgrimage by way of the Absolute somewhat strange reading even to one so close to him in point of time. In my day all the younger dons were realists, and almost the only easy contact with intelligent Christianity was through Father D'Arcy and Campion Hall. It is in many ways odd that a philosophical training so wholly different should have yielded me a religious experience in some ways closely analogous, but, as Dr. Lewis observes, a young atheist cannot guard his faith too carefully. A whimsical examiner included in his logic paper a question on mysticism, a subject of which I was so wholly ignorant as to think it meant the same as religious faith. My inveterate desire to experiment with the unknown and gamble with strange philosophical equations then led me by a curious series of chances and quite a different route to make the same journey and reach the same destination which Dr. Lewis attained when he stepped out of the car at Whipsnade. Like him, I knew it was journey's end, and the beginning of pilgrimage, and, like him, I felt certain in my own mind that what I had undergone was something which I had suffered, and not something which I had done for myself.

On one point I find it difficult to forgive Dr. Lewis, much as I admire him in almost all else, and that is his habit of sneering repeatedly, and, at least in my opinion, always cheaply, at public life. This characteristic, which I can only describe as a pose, recurs in this book, but not for the first time in his writing. I give two examples, both from the account of Wyvern. When he wishes to describe the characteristic influence of the 'tarts' he says : 'That was where the preparation for Public Life came in,' and in concluding his account of a particularly loathsome 'blood,' also a prefect, who habitually looted the village shops, embezzled his schoolfellows' funds, and banged his juniors' heads against a door jamb, Dr. Lewis clinches the matter with the strange sentence: 'But you will remember that this happened in the Marconi period and to be a Prefect is a Preparation for Public Life.' Embarrassed as I am

to differ from one of my idols, I must at this point beg leave to suggest that if Dr. Lewis studies our public men at first hand more objectively, he will, I hope, be surprised by the joy of finding them quite different from his picture of them, and even some of them Christians. At all events as an old boy, not of Wyvern, but of the House of Commons, who has left the school without being actually either a prefect, a blood, or, I trust, a tart, I commend to Dr. Lewis the removal in future editions of the only serious blot on an otherwise quite admirable book.

¶ 1956 0217 | Oxonian
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/17th-february-1956/10

The Chair of Poetry

Few recent events in Oxford – not excluding even the great road question – have made more of a splash in the outside world than the closely contested election on February 9 of Mr. Auden to the professorship of poetry. In Oxford itself, of course, the hum of intrigue in every common room has long been like that of a dynamo.

The principal boss, the Kingmaker in the post-war period, has been Dr. Enid Starkie, Fellow of Somerville and Reader in French Literature, a person of electric energy who smokes cigars and who has 'managed' Mr. Auden. This is her second great triumph. The first is worth recalling. Five years ago in 1951 Dr. Starkie managed with equal success the electoral fortunes of Mr. Cecil Day Lewis, the now retiring professor. Like the present election this too was an ideological battle – not merely a contest between personalities. For the other candidate, who was first in the field and backed by a long and imposing list of sponsors, including many heads of colleges and leading members of the English faculty, was none other than Mr. C. S. Lewis. In these elections there are always two important blocs to consider – the English faculty because its members, being interested, bother to vote, and the clergy because they usually take their MAs. As a famous expositor of popular Christianity Mr. C. S. Lewis naturally had the latter as well as the former on his side.

Moreover he was a fellow of Magdalen and could rely on a good deal of support from the members of that great, if at times somewhat turbulent, college. The Magdalen voters have often been an important factor in elections to the chair of poetry. It was held by two successive Presidents, Sir Herbert Warren and Mr. George Gordon. When the latter's tenure ended in 1938, the college, by what can only be described as a triumph of machine and clerical politics, secured the election – on a split vote – of its Chaplain, the Rev. Adam Fox (now a Canon of Westminster) against the English faculty's two candidates, Sir E. K. Chambers and Lord David Cecil.

Undeterred by these obstacles Dr. Starkie threw herself into the fray with indefatigable energy. She wrote hundreds of letters, canvassed unceasingly and produced a large number of supporters drawn on the whole – though by no means exclusively – from the more radical elements in the University. Perhaps Mr. C. S. Lewis's list of sponsors was slightly too awe-inspiring, and there will long be dispute as to who gained by the understandable confusion of names. At all events Mr. Cecil Day Lewis won by a short head, and has been a most successful professor.

Flushed with victory Dr. Starkie once again resolved to manage a victorious 'progressive' candidate. Once again she resolved to fight the battle of the somewhat faded avant-garde world of the Thirties, and, in order to be first in the field, at an early stage selected Mr. Auden as the next professor. There was, it is true, a legal difficulty. To be eligible the candidate must be an Oxford MA – a technicality which had dished the hypothetical chances of Mr. T. S. Eliot some years ago – and Mr. Auden, though qualified (he took a 3rd in English), had not gone through this formality. Moreover, when approached he showed no inclination to comply. Dr. Starkie wisely did not press the matter. A few weeks later, to the perhaps naive surprise of some of its members, Mr. Auden applied to his old college, Christ Church, to take his MA *in absentia*.

Dr. Starkie meanwhile had been canvassing with vigour and success in the modern language faculties (where she wields much influence), among progressives, radicals, and the 'left' of every denomination political or literary – and not only in that field. She also secured the unexpected support of such pillars of conservatism as Lord David Cecil. Naturally these activities did not go unremarked. Not everyone shared Dr. Enid Starkie's penchant for the pink bohemianism of a quarter of a century ago, and it was agreed that in this respect Mr. Auden was a good deal more so than Mr. Cecil Day Lewis. Then there was the fact that Mr. Auden had taken American Citizenship in 1938, and some – no doubt reactionary – persons mumbled inarticulately about the war and also about Mr. Guy Burgess. There was too a certain feeling that Dr. Starkie had got away with quite enough already. 'Are we to be governed by a one-woman electoral board?' an elderly, and distinguished personage was heard to mutter. The English faculty was lukewarm, and the clerical vote too was against Mr. Auden, for reasons into which we need not enter and which are not confined to scepticism about his ability to judge a poem on a sacred subject. Nor could Mr. Auden rely on any substantial support from his own college. A right-wing resistance movement soon began to form.

But who was to be the anti-Auden candidate? The Right is always worse at political organisations than the Left, and here a disastrous error occurred, responsibility for which cannot be determined. First in the field was Mr. Wilson Knight of Leeds University, a distinguished Shakespearian scholar. His candidature was largely sponsored by a young Fellow of Merton who, having recently liberated himself from the shackles of the Law, for which austere subject he had originally been elected as college tutor, and floated up into the airy world of English Literature, may pardonably have felt that sense of exuberance which occasionally goes to the head.

At this stage a far more powerful person intervened. The Warden of All Souls, Mr. John Sparrow, had long regarded the works of Mr. Auden with distaste. Reviewing, some twenty Years ago, *The Orators*, Mr. Sparrow described it as 'a work in which no single intelligible purpose is to be discerned – a jumble of images and jottings'. He is by no means alone in this view, and had soon rallied a formidable *bloc* of supporters in favour of a far more convincing 'right-wing' candidate – Sir Harold Nicolson. Sir Harold is not a poet, but why should a professor of poetry be one? They usually are not, and it is certain that Sir Harold would have lectured on poetry with the same witty and feline urbanity which he brings to every other subject. Moreover had he not recently written a book entitled *Good Behaviour*, thereby assuring for himself the major share of the Wykehamist vote – always a useful support in these elections? There was a further asset on Sir Harold's side. He was sponsored by Sir Maurice Bowra, the Warden of Wadham, ex-Vice-Chancellor and a University politician of consummate skill. Sir Maurice had in the past himself secured the chair and – what was more – secured it unopposed.

By now Dr. Starkie had collected no less than 100 signatures for Mr. Auden. It should be explained that names of candidates and their nominators appear in the University Gazette a week before polling day, and much turns upon producing a long and reputable list in order to sway the floating vote. It should not, however, be too long and reputable or it may produce the opposite effect to that intended. Mr. Sparrow and his friends had no hope of rivalling Dr. Starkie's list in quantity, but they were determined to do so in quality. But, as Dr. Starkie told a newspaper, even if Sir Harold's side had more heads it had not nearly so many professors. She declared that she was reasonably sure of victory, but, as she admitted, the mere fact of having 100 names did not necessarily mean that they would all vote. As an opponent of Mr. Auden observed, some dons would sign their own death warrants for the sake of peace and quiet, and a rumour began to circulate that many of Mr. Auden's nominators, who had signed long before they knew that Sir Harold was in the field, might change their allegiance. Dr. Starkie in her newspaper interview put the matter pithily. 'The great trouble with this kind of brouhaha,' she said, 'is that Oxford is packed with the kind of people I call "hedgers and ditchers". They hum and they haw, they hedge and sometimes they ditch you – you never know where you are.'

However Dr. Starkie's apprehensions were not justified. The poll was, despite icy weather, one of record size – nearly 500. Mr. Auden obtained 216 votes, Sir Harold Nicolson 192 and Mr. Knight only 91. Dr. Starkie has thus gained a notable triumph in what was in many ways an ideological battle –

although it was fought with a good humour unusual in such struggles. All Oxford is now speculating as to whether in five years' time the Kingmaker will herself be a candidate at the next election. One thing seems reasonably certain: she is unlikely to emulate Sir Maurice Bowra, and be elected unopposed, but in view of her own past record in these elections she would be the last to complain at this.

¶ 1956 0504 | John Betjeman
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/4th-may-1956/15

City and Suburban

I attended one day of the inquiry held last week by the Ministry of Fuel and Power at Maldon, in Essex, about the atomic power station the Central Electricity Board has decided to erect on the Blackwater Estuary at Bradwell. It seems odd that the Minister should be the judge of the activities of one of his own departments, and that Ministries like Agriculture and Fisheries and Housing and Local Government should not be the judges. At this inquiry I should have thought either of them would have been entitled to that position. But that is something to do with law and I realise my ignorance of it when I attend an inquiry like this. The skill of the lawyers is amazing, particularly the way they lead a witness into a trap and pounce. The Central Electricity Board, of course, has its professional witnesses, but for us members of the public the ordeal is terrifying.

You must imagine the crowded hall beside the Congregational Church in Maldon, the amiable inspector and his two assistants on the platform. Below him on his right, the men from the Central Electricity Board; there seemed to be about twenty-five of them in dark, neat suits, hard collars and horn-rimmed spectacles, with files and papers (first-class fares and time paid). They reminded me of men from *1984*, or the novel by C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*. On the other side were we, the mad-eyed preservationists, the shrewd farmers and representatives of the fishing and oyster interests, all giving up time and money voluntarily to save the Dengie Peninsula. I hope this does not sound smug, but it is the truth, and it is worth noting that counsel appearing on behalf of objectors to Government schemes generally do so free or for very low fees. Between us sat the Essex country people, some thinking the atomic station would bring them riches, others wanting to continue the way of life their fathers lived before them.

My own passion for the Dengie Peninsula is of long standing. It is a place of narrow lanes which take sudden right-angle bends revealing rows of weather-boarded cottages, small hills with elms on them, and finally the great salt marshes, with their birds and sea lavender, so superbly described by Baring Gould in his novel *Mehala*. It is the remotest possible country, and the only sea coast near London which has not been exploited. I went there first by bicycle years ago to attend the chapels of the Peculiar People, that Essex sect which goes in for healing, whose women wear black bonnets and whose hymn book, I recollect, has the delightful couplet

> Shall chapel doors rattle and umbrellas move
> To show how you the service disapprove?

And I went more recently to make a television film of the little Adam-style gem, Bradwell Lodge (1781-86, architect John Johnson), which is open to the public. The lawyer for the Electricity Board tried to imply that I had made this film knowing that this inquiry was to be held. I wish that had been true, for I could have got a remark or two into the script. In the luncheon interval I stood on the top of the tower of Maldon's Moot Hal1, looking over the tiled roofs and elegant Georgian houses of that extremely attractive hilltop town – a sort of Rye in Essex – and saw the great sweep of mild pastoral landscape and the gleaming water. It seemed impossible to me there that these electricity officials, with their technical jargon, their implements, 'in principles' and their evasive answers to direct questions, should really be indifferent to the beauty of the place. Yet to mention beauty at that inquiry seemed rather like talking about religion at a canasta party, essentially bad form.

¶ 1956 0921 | Spectator Competition · Report by Pharos
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/21st-september-1956/31

The Brains Trust

SPECTATOR COMPETITION No. 342

Competitors were asked to list the five best brains in Britain

The first three were never in doubt. From the moment that the counting began, Sir Winston went into the lead, with Lord Russell a close, but never dangerous, second; and Gilbert Murray a distant third. All three were far ahead of the other starters: competition was intense only for fourth place. A great number of competitors listed Churchill, Russell and Murray: the last two names were undecided almost until the count was complete. Only one competitor, I. B. Allan, guessed all five; he even had them in the right order, except that he put Julian Huxley above T. S. Eliot. For this he will receive four guineas. The competitors who guessed the first four (Mary Pechey, R. T. Winton, Lettice Miller, Morwyth Rees) will have half a guinea each. It is only fair to add that Professor Huxley came into the first five by the narrowest of margins, after a recount, from Sir John Cockcroft; and that Sir William Penney, Dr. Bronowski, G. M. Trevelyan and Arnold Toynbee were close behind.

The final placings were:

Sir Winston Churchill	365
Lord Russell	307
Gilbert Murray	147
T. S. Eliot	69
Julian Huxley	61

All these, except Mr. Eliot, had been among those who had featured in the *Spectator* competition twenty-six years ago. The only other two distinguished Britons who were in the lists then did less well today: Professor Haldane's vote sank from 23 to 18; and I am sorry to say that support for the Poet Laureate vanished completely.

Politicians, apart from Sir Winston and Lord Samuel, did badly. The most popular of them were Hugh Gaitskell and Sir Hartley Shawcross, with 16 apiece – one more than Aneurin Bevan. Of Conservatives Lord Hailsham came out best with 14, a happy augury for his new duties: R. A. Butler secured a round dozen and the Prime Minister only 11.

Churchmen, surprisingly, did even worse; the Archbishop of Canterbury, with 13, narrowly defeated Monsignor Ronnie Knox, with 12. But at least they did better than authors, who put up a very poor showing, apart from C. S. Lewis, who scored 20. Graham Greene, Sir Harold Nicolson, Aldous Huxley, J. B. Priestley and Edith Sitwell could only muster that number of votes between them. It was curious how many authors received one, but only one, nomination: Agatha Christie, G. D. H. Cole, E. M. Forster, Christopher Fry, Rose Macaulay, Somerset Maugham, Beverley Nichols, Rebecca West.

I am sorry to say, though, that the institution which came worst out of the affair appears to have been the press. Three journalists managed to get one vote each: Hannen Swaffer, Lord Beaverbrook (not, incidentally, his own vote), and Donald Soper. Nobody else from EC4 – not even Oliver Edwards – could obtain a single supporter.

¶ 1957 1220 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/20th-december-1957/17

THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Sir, – In the current discussion about the public schools there is one thing that strikes me in the same way as the failure to bark on the part of a certain house-dog struck Mr. Sherlock Holmes. I mean the total absence of any real argument about the educational merits of these institutions. Both sides, it seems, take it for granted that, educationally, and not merely with a view to getting on in the world,

they are admirable. All the talk centres on this question: should they or should they not be made available to more children than at present? But is it quite beyond dispute that to spread the influence of establishments in which adolescents of one sex live together – which place great emphasis on competitiveness, on compulsory and organised games, on church-going (also compulsory), on uniforms, on pseudo-military corps, and which undeniably produce, among their alumni, that well-known figure confined to English society, the Old Boy For Life – *would* be beneficial to the nation? Are we all quite confident that the kind of abomination which Professor C. S. Lewis, in his autobiography, describes of the school he knew is everywhere and for ever extinct? Has the Labour Party completely abandoned even that tenuous link with 'progressive' educational thinking which some of its members used, I believe, to maintain?

I don't know, myself, the answers to these questions. But I do find it odd that in a debate about educational institutions, nobody should be talking about education. – Yours faithfully,

University of Exeter PATRICK CRUTTWELL

¶ 1958 0314 | John Betjeman
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/14th-march-1958/8

John Bull's Schooldays

Dead from the Waist Down

Dear Mr. Atkins, I am glad to have this opportunity, after about forty years of nursing a grievance, to tell the public how deeply I resented your treatment of me at school. You seemed to me a very old man when I suffered hours of boredom from your teaching. You must be nearly a hundred now – but it is only those whom the gods love who die young. I make no apology for addressing you in the public prints, for even in your old age you must be too smug and complacent to be aware that what I have to say is addressed to you. And no one who recognises this easily identifiable portrait will dare to tell you; you are quite unapproachable.

There have been more obviously repulsive schoolmasters than you in my life. There was —— who stood us in a ring and asked us questions in mental arithmetic. When we could not answer he used to shake us by the shoulders until we cried (he had his favourites, of course, who were not shaken and did not cry). There was —— who used to beat us with the handle of a canoe paddle, taking the faintest excuse to indulge himself in this pleasure. Both those men were jolly old sadists; you, were a sadist of a different sort. I have been a schoolmaster myself and, despite a very bad reference from my tutor at Oxford, Mr. C. S. Lewis, managed to secure posts at two different schools. I know how irritating boys can be and how inevitable it is that some are less sympathetic to one than others. But I do not think even under the greatest provocation I was ever the mental sadist that you are. Perhaps that is because I am a masochist.

You thought of yourself, and, I dare say still think of yourself, as a sort of ancient Greek – a Spartan rather than an Athenian – who had embraced a cold-bath Christianity, if the particular form of puritanism which you follow can be called Christianity. I heard a tale that when you were at the university you were given to loose living and that once when you were tempted to drink an extra half-pint of bitter, an angel appeared to you and said, 'Chuck it, Atkins'; from that day you never looked back.

No words can express your arrogance and self-satisfaction as a teacher. You were, I suppose, one of that worst type of schoolmaster: the sort who thinks he ought really to have been a don at Oxford or Cambridge – the type who bores his pupils with the *minutiæ* of subtle textual criticism. And of course those boys who knew how to flatter your arrogance earned your attention. Some have since done well in the Treasury; others are your counterpart at various schools. But I, as a then unsophisticated exhibitionist, could never draw your attention to myself. I tried every sort of irritating device, but you became more and more Spartan and pure. You never even asked me to tea, as you did the more favoured boys. One word of kindness in those tedious hours would have won my heart. Such a word was never

uttered. When the time for English essays came round, the only time that I thought I had a chance of standing on an equal footing with those future Treasury officials and dons *manqués*, you dismissed the great efforts I made either by completely ignoring my essays or once by saying, 'Betjeman, you're showing off.'

You had pretensions to literary taste and now and then would break off to read us two or three stanzas from your favourite poet. It never occurred to you to vary our diet. As an example of your crass insensibility you made us wade through a late nineteenth-century epic about ancient Greece, reading it out by turns, at a time when we were doing Homer in the original Greek. We did Homer with the aid of a standard English translation, which, though arty and crafty enough, at any rate conveyed something of the quality of Homer's high-sounding epic. How you could have thought that the bogus mediævalism of the churned-out couplets could have had any bearing on the Greek we were reading I have often wondered. At the time, I thought that this dreary stuff was merely another form of penal servitude you had invented and did not associate it with Homer at all. Nor do I now. The results of the years of boredom punctured by acute moments of humiliation I suffered under your arid guidance have been that I cannot remember a line of Greek today, and what little liking I have for Latin comes from other masters who tutored me.

I have been told that you are a most terrific snob, not in the sense of one who likes dissolute peers and the forgotten offspring of ruling houses (which is the sort of snob I am), but in the sense of one who reveres descendants of Thrings, Littletons, Arnolds and other survivals of the educational Junkers of the nineteenth century. This may have accounted for your antipathy to boys like myself who were not quite gentlemen, but who found themselves in the school.

If this is so, it is a faint excuse for your abominable behaviour, but it is no explanation of your parade of asceticism which had the happy effect on me of inculcating a revolt in favour of Oscar Wilde and the most sensual poems of the Nineties I could lay my hands on. If you had been an atheist you would have been bearable; but the fact that you took your *mens sana in corpore sano* into chapel with you put me off religion for all my later school years. Your lack of any humour goes without saying.

Trying to think that Our Lord is God – that is to say, being a Christian – is neither reasonable nor convenient. But for me it is essential. Because this is so, I often find myself saying the Lord's Prayer.

But there is one part of it I can never say wholeheartedly: 'as we forgive them that trespass against us.' I always remember you then; possibly it is this prayer which keeps you daily so present in my mind. After this letter I may be able to say it with more sincerity.

I am,

Yours truly,

J. BETJEMAN

¶ 1958 0314 | Isabel Quigly · film review
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/14th-march-1958/14

Cardboard Pastoral

The Seventh Seal. (Academy.)
'Cold, spacious, severe, pale, and remote … a vision of huge clear spaces hanging above the Atlantic in the endless twilight of the Northern summer': this might have been written about Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*. But it wasn't: it is C. S. Lewis's way of describing, in his autobiography, a powerful feeling that exercised his imagination as a child, one he called 'Northernness.' We all of us have these private mental countries we have never visited; and a film can conjure them, can give us a sympathy, a general diffused nostalgia for something or somewhere, some legend or place we have never seen, that perhaps never existed; and for the moment make it hypnotically solid. Being a selector and pruner, it is necessarily a concentrator of life; and so of atmosphere. Present-day Scandinavia's rather obtrusive

modernity tends to overlay its 'Northernness'; but its films distil it, and present it to us net and unmistakable.

Ingmar Bergman is a director whose visual sense (as anyone who saw his *Smiles of a Summer Night* in 1956 will remember) is exquisite and calculated, and with a kind of visionary shimmer to it that reminds one of an extremely precise and tidy dream. While he sticks to tidy dreams, and human fantasies involving puppets, not people, things are all very well, for the formal beauty of his groups and landscapes is breathtaking; but when he tries to get to grips with the real world, however allegorically, and to ask questions about the human condition, he seems bankrupt. *The Seventh Seal* is an immensely ambitious film, its theme being God, Man, and the Universe, no less; it asks the timeless questions about the reasons for our living and the outcome of our dying, using a mediæval pattern of society with clear modern applications, and a number of recognisable and valid symbols to do so. It has haunting faces in it, magnificent set-pieces, great sweeps of sea or landscape, horrors given the agitated poetry of a medimval hell-scene. And the result, I find, is merely tawdry and glum. One does not expect clear answers, or even answers at all, to all the sad knight's questions; but Ingmar Bergman has used his symbols spuriously, and for all his firm technical grasp of his material there is such inadequacy, such moral poverty beside visual richness, that one comes out with a feeling of blank disappointment and gloom, having expected bread and being given a mouthful of diamonds – priceless things in their place, but not to satisfy hunger. The characters in this shiny morality play are a knight coming home from the Crusades, a man with a splendid ruined face that seems to have seen through hell and out at the other side, and his Sancho Panza of a bawdy squire; a pair of strolling players, he a simple visionary, she a simple non-visionary, and their baby; a witch on her way to the stake, with cropped head and a face that, as the knight's seems to show all mental torment, seems to have suffered physically beyond imagination; three fat groundlings, a blacksmith, his wife, and her lover; and a chorus of flagellant penitents fleeing the plague that to them means the end of the world. And there is Death, a hooded but not too sinister figure who plays a game of chess for the knight's life.

All these figures, and the full background of life – both mediaeval and modern – they represent, add up to very little beyond a picturesque ballet. The lessons they are made to point are facile and sensational, and one has the feeling of listening to an adult fairy-story whose teller, and whose audience, no longer believes in fairies. When I saw *Smiles of a Summer Night* I called it 'pedantically sophisticated'; and, even allowing for its greater sweep and power, I think the words apply to *The Seventh Seal* as well. Happiness, as nobody will deny, and perhaps the meaning of life, can be found in simplicity – a family group, a plate of strawberries, a bowl of milk, as the knight finds – but the simplicity of this film has a forced air about it, like the court at Versailles playing at milkmaids. To pit a piece of cardboard pastoral against all the ills of the world and the complexity of man seems inadequate, not because it is pastoral but because the whole thing – the framework of the entire film – is cardboard.

¶ 1958 0912 | C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* · review by Stevie Smith
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/12th-september-1958/28

The Simple Psalms

Reflections on the Psalms. By C. S. Lewis. (Bles, 12s.6d.)

Professor Lewis uses Coverdale's translation of the Psalms, the one we have in the Prayer Book, because it is so beautiful. But, rightly, he does not put beauty first, it is the meaning he is after, as everybody should be. The Psalms are a document in human feelings, especially in the feelings of the heart that is oppressed from outside by the behaviour of the heathen and from inside by not being at home in the world and by sin. There are the gay ones, too, that sing the gaiety the soul feels in relation to the natural world of fish, seas, trees, animals and earthquakes, and in relation to the Being the soul looks towards. Even if this Being is an emanation, a creature of the leaping soul (as some people think, but not Professor Lewis), still the leaping feelings are true and in the Psalms most truly cried. The vindic-

tive and self-righteous Psalms, in which the psalmist requires the Lord to slay his enemies and make their food as poison to them, to bless those who dash out the brains of the Babylonish children and to remember how righteous, though lacking encouragement, the psalmist himself is, have always been a stumbling-block to kindly singers. Professor Lewis's reading of these passages is interesting. May they not show, he asks – and one thinks they may – that there was among the Jews a depth of feeling about important things, a caring for God and goodness, that, though running here to excess, is a good thing to have? (He gives a modern instance of not caring at all, of being both morally and emotionally moronic that is very telling.) His comments on the psalmist's mania for being 'judged' is sharp. He reminds us that the Jews, unlike the Christians, expected to come off well at the Day of Judgment. They saw themselves as plaintiffs with a likely case, if only it could be heard, and not as prisoners. At the earthly bar, in those days, it was not easy to get your case heard unless you had money. The author is not so convincing when he speaks of pre-Christian hints in classical and Jewish writings and of the writers writing 'more than they knew.' Just as Christians, he reminds us, appropriated Virgil's passage about the Virgin returning and the child being sent from heaven, so Christ appropriated the Suffering Servant text from Isaiah, and many other texts, from the Psalms and elsewhere, of obscure import. And this, he thinks, was the right thing to do, even if the writers when they wrote had something else in mind. Not all Christians will find this argument either edifying or useful. What Professor Lewis chiefly says and few will quarrel with seems to me to be this: seldom have agitated souls cried out more truly than in the Psalms; and souls ought, in a holy way, to be agitated, especially modern souls.

¶ 1960 0401 | C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* · review by Bernard Williams
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/1st-april-1960/23

'That Our Affections Kill Us Not'

The Four Loves are Affection, Friendship, Eros and Charity. In this brief book Professor Lewis discusses each, its difficulties, dangers and rewards. He starts off with an introductory chapter in which he principally distinguishes between what he calls Gift-loves and Need-loves – a distinction of some importance to his later thoughts, although he rightly admits its limitations, since there are many whose need it is to make a gift of their love. He also has a chapter on, as he puts it, our 'liking and loves for the sub-human,' and there speaks of such things as patriotism and the love for animals. On his title-page are the words of Donne : 'that our affections kill us not, nor dye'; his aim is to show us a life full of, but not torn apart by, love, something only possible in his view if the love that crowns it is the love of God.

Perhaps we should not say that the author of this book is *Professor* Lewis. This is a work of the C. S. Lewis who wrote *The Screwtape Letters*, and it is appropriate (even if only a publisher's convention) that the list of the author's works on the fly-leaf does not include the history of sixteenth-century English literature, nor *The Allegory of Love*. It is not just that in books like this Lewis writes without professorial solemnity – that, indeed, is true of his critical works as well. It is rather that in approaching his present subject he jettisons that state of mind in which alone one could hope to learn from the literature of love, a state of mind that involves the suspension of assertion and a readiness for any degree of complexity. He starts afresh, with lots of good sense and a genuine humility, to put together some thoughts about his own and the general experience. This gives his work a first-handness not to be despised: it is not derivative or 'literary' in the bad sense.

Yet the price is high. By banishing from his mind that less general experience, those warnings of complexity, that the literature of love offers he hands himself over to his own particular demon – a kind of clubman's crassness which can be heard over and over again in these pages striking a false note. Sometimes he merely expresses himself in a way that makes it hard to believe he can enjoy good writing: 'If we were short of matter on this theme we could turn on the tap by opening the works of the Stoics and it would run till we had a bathful.' Sometimes, particularly in religious matters, he uses

some jarringly hearty analogy. Sometimes he throws up the discussion of a serious question with what seems almost a willed superficiality. Having raised the question of the connections, if any, between male friendship and what he calls 'abnormal Eros,' he ends a brief and combative discussion : '… and all those hairy old toughs of centurions in Tacitus, clinging to one another and begging for last kisses when the legion was broken up – all pansies? If you can believe that you can believe anything.'

These outbreaks of padre talk make for painful reading. The odd thing about the book, however, is that this is obviously not a padre talking. Now and again, a deeper insight and a freer sensibility are allowed to emerge. There are one or two memorable images : '… we picture lovers face to face but Friends side by side; their eyes look ahead.' In this book Lewis is rather like a porpoise; we see its jolly sportings on the surface, and when it goes deeper it disappears from view, but we know that it does have a submarine life.

What is obscure is why Lewis behaves like a porpoise. Partly, perhaps, from a fear of what he sees as spiritual or emotional pretentiousness; partly, I think, with the aim of popularisation. Wishing to put before a wide public his own way to God, he seizes on the robustly commonplace as that in which most may share. Because he is free of contempt for the robustly commonplace, this is in no way dishonest or condescending; but because there is something in him that sees below it, it is quite often uncomfortable. This uncomfortableness, moreover, must tend to defeat his purpose, since on love, of all subjects, writing can carry conviction only if it is born of everything that a man has in him to say about it.

¶ 1960 1014 | C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Words* · review by Stephen Potter
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/14th-october-1960/27

? Hoc [Donum] Anno Novo*

In the days of Henry Sweet, the original of Bernard Shaw's Professor Higgins, the subject of English Philology was put grimly on one side and marked For Specialists Only. Now word-watching seems to be becoming almost as popular as the not incomparable pursuit of bird-watching. Sometimes, flushed with his discovery, the new convert feels impelled to write a book about it. This is a dangerous feeling, because original philological writing can only come out of studies planned on a spacious scale. 'There is net time enough,' says Eric Partridge in his new collection of essays, *A Charm Of Words*. Mr. Partridge is in a perpetual state of philological emanation. Even the Christmas cards he sends are a kind of etymological round robin, the story of a word hunt 'in which he asks his willing friends to join. And some of the meatier scraps of this book include the absorbing exploration of such ancient words as 'elephant'; or 'water,' so unexpectedly and deviously related to *unda* and *hudor*, with *aqua* somewhere in the background as a sort of bastard half-cousin: or such much-discussed etymons as that of Hogmanay (? *Hoc* [*donum*] *anno novo*). The rest of the book is in the nature of notes. Occasionally he condenses too tantalisingly. To write an article on our great dictionaries and leave out his expert considered estimate and detailed criticism of our great OED is almost irritating. But the last essay, on some techniques and some principles of etymology, is a fine example of what might truly be called, if there is any meaning left in this poor overworked adjective, dedicated scholarship.

Professor Lewis's book is scholarship in a different tradition. The coverage is not wide but the verbal agriculture is intensive. He takes a few words – nature, sad, wit, free, sense, simple, conscious, conscience – and tends them carefully nog only from the root but through all the stages of their growth. Amateurs of words soon realise that the thrill of learning an etymology is soon eclipsed by the greater excitement of following the subsequent evolution of the word. 'Wit' is the hero of one of Professor Lewis's chapters, and the chameleon-story of this word has never been so clearly and completely told. The chapter on 'Sad' shows perfectly how the meaning developed from its original

* [Potter reviews *A Charm of Words* by Eric Partridge as well as Lewis's *Studies in Words.*]

connection with *satis* – 'replete' – through the sense of 'heavy' to its modern meaning: and teaches us how much more apt the word will appear in Chaucer, for instance, if we understand the sense it was passing through when it came into his hands.

This theme, of word evolution, leads to a still wider subject, relating to the habits of human thought and the machinery of the mind. No one can read a dictionary long without noticing that words of different languages sometimes tend to follow parallel lines of development. 'Heath' gives birth to 'heathen,' the remote wasteland dwellers. 'Pagan' has a similar origin in a word which originally signified the uncouth countryman. Professor Lewis rides his chosen words abreast, as he says, and sees them taking the same course even when they are not etymologically cognate.

The great merit of this book is that it quickens our perceptions of word sense. Use the lexicon as a check only, says the author. Learn the meaning of the word from its use, from its place in the context. This has been his own method, in his study and teaching of mediæval and classical writing. Be conscious of the ramifications of the word you are using: in other words acknowledge the trunk of the tree when you are trying to perch on the twig. This is a counsel of perfection. In the second sentence of his book Professor Lewis talks of the days when he used to 'take his pupils through Middle English texts.' Perhaps he would not have used that metaphor if he had been conscious at the moment of writing that 'text' comes from a past participle of the Latin verb meaning 'to weave.'

¶ 1960 1216 | *letter to the editor*

http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/16th-december-1960/11

LITERATURE INTO LIFE

Sir, – Dr. Davie[*] told your readers about certain 'misconceptions' betrayed by a number of the Cambridge 'undergraduate magazine *Delta*' and he set forth certain 'truisms' which 'the student writers never considered.' The great majority of the *Spectator's* readers will, naturally, not have read 'the undergraduate magazine,' and all of them will not have seen even the discussion of it in the *TLS* and *Listener*, which didn't in any case include any full report of what the writers in *Delta* had written. Yet Dr. Davie told them nothing at all of what the articles in *Delta* were about and what points they were trying to argue, or of quite how Dr. Davie thought the 'misconceptions' showed themselves there. The only further 'information' he gave your readers was the fairly plain suggestion that the writers in *Delta* were among 'our less intelligent students.' When Dr. Davie suggested that these students' 'misconceptions' had been encouraged by certain weaknesses inherent in the study of English, how many of your readers can have gathered that the main article in that *Delta* concerned serious weaknesses that the writers thought they saw not in the idea of the study of English, but in the practice of the study by the particular body of lecturers and examiners of whom Dr. Davie himself is one? When that number of the magazine came out, Dr. Davie resigned his position as senior treasurer of *Delta*, and in Cambridge we were half expecting that he would, very properly, want to explain in public his reasons for disliking what the magazine had become. But this was surely not the way to do it?

Your readers may be interested to learn that the writers of that main article in *Delta* criticised the tone of certain published remarks by a senior don – Professor C. S. Lewis – on the subject of Cambridge English undergraduates as being 'distasteful in its arrogance, distasteful in its authoritarian self-righteousness, distasteful finally in the contempt for the undergraduate that it suggests,' and that they asked to what extent this spirit was shared by other dons in the Cambridge English Faculty.

For the argument of Dr. Davie's whole article. A certain wrong moral and emotional interference by the teacher with his pupils' lives is always a danger (and not only in the teaching of English in a university); and, also, the missionary spirit of teachers of humanities subjects is, like that of priests or of politicians, always liable to become a heady thing. We may well feel – what Dr. Davie put in a

[*] [Donald Davie "Literature into Life", *The Spectator*, 9 December 1960.]

previous letter to the *Spectator* – some doubt about articles by Mr. David Holbrook recently published in the *Spectator*, the *Guardian* and the *Cambridge Review* (though not in *Delta*). But Dr. Davie should frankly have taken on Socrates and Plato – and frankly have taken on Dr. Leavis – if he wanted to make a general case against teachers in the humanities who might be described (by their enemies) as regarding themselves as 'sages at liberty (no, in duty bound – for to this way of thinking presumption masquerades as "responsibility") to lay down the law on all aspects of social and personal life' and who are muddled and impertinent enough to suppose that their teaching of their pupils is in effect a 'teaching them how to live.' What serious function can a humanities study have if it is not ultimately the study of 'how to live'? – Yours faithfully, J. M. NEWTON

10 Hinton Avenue, Cambridge

¶ 1961 0210 | Katharine Whitehorn · Roundabout [column]
https://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/10th-february-1961/36/roundabout

I Know a Bank …

I THINK it was Ogden Nash who said that marriage was a serious religious and civil alliance between a man who can't sleep with the window shut and a woman who can't sleep with the window open. He might have added that it was also usually contracted between a man who thinks it is immoral to worry about money and a woman who thinks nothing but cash stands between the home and the workhouse; or between two people who both assume that the other will have remembered to go to the bank. It is obvious that an enormous number of the troubles brought to them must have something to do with money from the three pamphlets issued (or reissued, as the case may be) last week by the Marriage Guidance Council: *All About Your Wedding*, *Starting Your Family* and *The LSD of Marriage*. Not only the last one, but all three of these incredibly sensible pamphlets deal firmly and factually with money. The colourful cover of each 2s. 6d. pamphlet is adorned with the glossy, bony-faced couple in advertisements and magazines (the family one gives an obscure impression that the happy couple have been blessed with a panda), but the information inside starts with the fundamental assumption that most couples are and all couples think they are hard up.

The LSD of Marriage tells you such things as the amount you need as a minimum for furnishing a house (about £160), the right proportion of your income to spend on rent (never more than 25 per cent.), the cheapest ways of getting a holiday (Youth Hostels, Holiday Fellowship and Workers Travel Association are three) and the relative costs of heating and lighting. It is interesting to know that a penny will work an electric iron for two hours or a 100-watt bulb for ten, though I wonder how often one actually stands there, penny in hand, wondering whether to have a hot bath or operate the vacuum cleaner for five hours. The only things the pamphlet does not mention, as far as I can see, are the secondary costs of setting up house: the constant trickle of money after moving in that goes on small but necessary things like waste-paper baskets and shelf paper and cuphooks – none in the least expensive but collectively accounting for pounds. (And I could add another word of advice to newly married couples: spend the wedding present cheques on furniture right away, or all you will be sitting on is crates of empty bottles. Believe me.) *The LSD of Marriage* does not actually recommend any particular system for dividing the alleged bank balance: it is admirably anxious not to lay down any rules which could in their turn become scourges. When we got married we wrote down all the systems our friends used: joint account, two accounts, allowances and so on; the best one, I remember, read: 'Borrow a fiver off your mother and I'll take you out to dinner.' But although it recommends a systematic approach, a budget and at least some record kept of how the money drains away, it says that the dangers of too strict a budget are that it hardly allows you to be really human.

They do not, I noticed with surprise, specifically mention the piggy-bank, though they do allow for keeping allotted sums in teapots: I would have thought these animals almost indispensable. If you think of your finances as a leaky tank (and who does not?) into which money flows at the top, and

instantly out again through a series of holes at the bottom (labelled rent, food, beer and so on), it is immediately evident that any attempt to save money by removing, from the top, what is left at the end of the month is hopeless: there won't be anything left. The only hope is to bore another hole in the tank and put a can under it: to let coins dribble into it as casually and unnoticeably as they do into cigarette machines, Woolworth's or the bartender's palm. And the same goes for paying off loans: you have to feel like a millionaire before you actually write a cheque for £100 to your own father, but a spattering of cheques for £10 and £15 are almost painless.

There is a basic contradiction in all matters involving money. It is perfectly clear on paper that money is not, like love or religion or the *Spectator*'s idea of illness, a shifting, mystical thing: it is a matter of hard, cold, unalterable facts. Or so one can, intellectually, perceive. But in reality this is just not so. Reality is a tricky word – C. S. Lewis said you could use it in two ways: either by saying that all that's really happening when people are in love is that two animals are obeying the mating urge, or by saying, of being trapped in a burning aeroplane, 'You don't know what it's really like till you've been through it.' It is in the second sense that I use it. Do people with two thousand a year feel richer than people with one thousand? No. Does a cheap snack of whisky and sandwiches cost less than a proper meal of meat and two veg in the same pub? No. If you decide not to pay twenty pounds for something, do you have that twenty pounds at the end of the year? No. Does anybody who gave up smoking to save a pound a week have a pound at the end of the week? Not on your life. In the course of our married life, for instance, we have had well-paid jobs and badly-paid jobs; sometimes one of us has been in work, sometimes the other; once we were both out of work together. And five times a year, come rain, come shine, come red, come black, we have had an identical hysterical reappraisal of our financial situation, visions of riches alternating with visions of bailiffs until the mood has worn off: our financial state depending not at all on the balance (if any) in the bank, but almost entirely on things like the weather and lack of sleep.

I imagine the Marriage Guidance Council are perfectly aware of this sort of thing; and that they would say that it might be better if we did manage to keep accounts – defining 'accounts' as any sort of record of what is spent. But I cannot help feeling that they probably realise, too, that the keeping of accounts, the discussing of finance in broad daylight, is not only a matter of keeping expenses under control. Like a peasant's ikons in the kitchen, like throwing salt over your shoulder, like the jokes religious people make about the devil, the minutiae of accounting are there to take the spookiness out of money as the spookiness is mainly gone from twentieth-century sex and religion. They are a device for cutting the bogey down to size. It may be the council even have a further pamphlet for the subsolvent couple: how to be happily married without keeping accounts at all.

¶ 1961 0317 | *letter to the editor*

http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/17th-march-1961/13

MILTON

Sir, – Myths are often an unconscionable time dying, and in the field of English studies none have proved so intolerably hardy as those associated with Milton. It is therefore a great pity that Professor Kermode, having brought forth the weary old myth that Milton was 'savagely excluded from [young people's] permitted reading' twenty years ago, should have been so angry at Dr. Leavis's letter that he failed to explain whom he had in mind. All he has told us is that he didn't have Dr. Leavis in mind (which is as well; for, as one of Dr. Leavis's pupils during the latter Thirties, I can testify that Milton was not only permitted, but *required,* reading).

None the less, if Dr. Leavis was not in Professor Kermode's mind (however much his remark must have put him into other people's minds), to whom, then, was he referring? Who was this 'savage excluder' twenty years ago? Dr. Tillyard, perhaps? Or maybe Professor C. S. Lewis? Or that savage, T. S. Eliot? And where, come to that, was he practising his primitive rites? I ask the question with

interest, because in 1939 I had a hand in organising a student conference on English studies in the universities, and in the course of preparing and running this conference we assembled a pretty comprehensive picture of university English syllabuses and teaching. If, as I recollect it, the assembled students from virtually all the universities of England were not visibly 'prone to Milton-intoxication' (to adapt Professor Kermode's odd phrase), that was assuredly not due to Milton's exclusion from their lectures and reading-lists. Quite the opposite!

The question which Professor Kermode raised in his review is, I should have thought, a complex of (*a*) the quite natural affinities of young people while they are still young and passionate (thus, even in Manchester University, where Milton's exclusion from permitted reading lists is probably not carried to excessively savage lengths, to whom do young people, when free from examination cares, turn with the greater excitement and spontaneity, to Donne or to Milton – if one must discuss the matter in terms of a knockout competition?); (*b*) the largely incalculable ebb and flow of mood, on the one hand (Thomas day-before-yesterday, Angries yesterday, neo-Becketts today), and of fashion, on the other hand (thus, to judge from publishers' lists, it may well be that Milton is 'in' or 'up' at the moment); and (*c*) the cogency of other people's, and ultimately of one's own, critical reading and judgment (thus, how far is one's own sense of the living as opposed to the 'mummified' Milton aided by the critical writings of, say, Dr. Leavis or Professor Kermode or, since his book began it all, Mr. Alvarez?). This kind of total evaluation is a delicate and tricky process which is not worthily discussed (even in a weekend book review) in terms of individual malevolence and censorship. I think Professor Kermode still owes it to his readers and indeed to 'young people' (if not, one must accept, to Dr. Leavis) to substantiate his reference to the savage excluder of 1941. – Yours faithfully, BORIS FORD

The University, Sheffield

¶ 1961 1117 | C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* · review by Bernard Bergonzi
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/17th-november-1961/26 etc.

Open to Books

An Experiment in Criticism. By C. S. Lewis. (C.U.P., 15s.)
Regular readers of C. S. Lewis will be familiar with the more irritating aspects of his literary persona; the avuncular chattiness, the arch references to books that everyone has heard of but only Professor Lewis has read, the implication that not only is literature fun but that it should, ideally, be accompanied by the cracking of nuts and the imbibing of port wine, while the firelight flickers cosily upon the finely tooled backs of rows of well-loved volumes. This kind of thing is a nuisance, but it oughtn't to detract from the fact that Professor Lewis is one of the most intelligent and learned, if not one of the most invariably sensible, figures now operating in the Eng. Lit. field.

His new book is brief and polemical, though urbane; it is, in essentials, an all-out attack on the presuppositions and methods of the Leavisian critical establishment. The Doctor is nowhere mentioned, but his presence is everywhere felt; he seems even to have seized Professor Lewis's pen for one astonishing moment, in order to write the following sentence: 'You don't lay yourself open to what it, by being in its totality precisely the thing it is, can do to you,' which is a gem of late-leavite syntax if ever I saw one. Professor Lewis argues that we should assess books, not by what they are, but by the way they are read: a 'good' book is one which can be read, no matter by whom, in an intelligent, absorbed, dedicated fashion, and for its own sake; while a 'bad' book is one which can *only* be read in a superficial, inattentive fashion, and which is used as a trigger to set off in the reader daydreams, erotic reveries, or other types of vicarious living. We *receive* good books, says Professor Lewis, but *use* bad ones.

One difficulty about this approach is that any book in the world, even the most apparently trashy, might get by on the 'good' ticket if one could only produce a single truly dedicated reader. And the machinery of interrogation required before one could make any literary decisions with certainty would

be impossibly elaborate. This theory has its attractive aspects, but it seems to me logically and practically difficult to establish. Professor Lewis's motive is admirable, since he would like all books to have a chance, and he is right to oppose the kind of criticism which regards a work with the air of a suspicious frontier guard examining the passport of an unfriendly alien. I am all *for* Professor Lewis's desire to introduce a greater degree of catholicity and generosity into contemporary criticism; but it is one thing to react against the excesses of certain kinds of evaluative criticism and another to reject evaluation altogether, as Professor Lewis seems, in places, inclined to do. A world where every book was potentially as good as every other book would present a singularly bizarre appearance.

In fact, Professor Lewis seems to have an odd idea of what literary evaluation consists of. I have never found it to involve briskly ringing up 'good' or 'bad' on a kind of mental cash-register when one had finished reading a book (though reviewers, in their harassed fashion, may occasionally talk as if it did). A judgment should form gradually and even imperceptibly, sometimes against one's inclinations; we must have all had the experience of *wanting* to like a book which has been well spoken of, and approaching it with immense good will, only to find, to our disappointment, that the good will ebbs steadily away when we discover what it's like. Professor Lewis argues that we should surrender to a book and suspend our critical powers whilst reading it for the first time; we should, he says, 'get ourselves out of the way.' This sounds splendidly generous, but I doubt if it's possible: the analogy between reading and perception is fairly close, I would have thought, and no epistemologist would now support the view that we acquire knowledge by passively presenting a Lockean *tabula rasa* to the facts of experience. There is certainly an open and fair-minded way of reading, which should be cultivated, but the encounter with a book is necessarily a more active business than Professor Lewis allows for: a dialogue, rather than a surrender.

Although I reject, or have great difficulty in accepting, the core of Professor Lewis's argument, there are still plenty of valuable things in his book; as, for example, his remarks about sub-literary modes of reading. And I enthusiastically endorse his conclusion, that reading is 'an enlargement of our being,' and that literary experience, as he finely says, 'heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality.' One would, I think, be foolish to swallow all of this vigorous, unfair, provocative book; but one would be more foolish to ignore it.

¶ 1962 1130 | *letter to the editor*

http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/30th-november-1962/12

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Sir, – Reviewing children's books is – or should be – a rather specialised job. Even the selection of those to be reviewed calls for a wide knowledge of what is and has been written for children. It is curious, therefore, to find the author of your main article on children's books, 'Around the Age Groups,'* confessing her ignorance by stating that 'not long ago, I believed that the most constantly recurring themes for writers of children's books could be enumerated as follows: Theme one, the typical British family adventure, with no single hero. Theme two, the boarding school, with one outstanding, parentless character doing thrilling things on a guardian's cheque in the hols. Theme three, the Horse. … Theme four, the minuscule escapades of small mammals.' Miss Tisdall is out of touch with children's books of the last ten or even fifteen years. She has not, perhaps, heard of William Mayne, Philippa Pearce, C. S. Lewis, Catherine Storr, Hester Burton or Elizabeth Stucley. Children's author's take their work seriously. So do their publishers and their readers. To display such facetious ignorance is insulting. Would you give space to a reviewer of adult fiction who stated that she had always categorised it into Theme one: romantic slush; theme two: thrillers; theme three: sadism and

* [By Bridget Tisdall in the 9 November 1962 issue, http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/9th-november-1962/28.]

sex; but ‘after working my way with mole-like diligence’ through some recent books, had discovered some new authors called Angus Wilson, Doris Lessing and Patrick White? ROSEMARY MANNING

20 Lyndhurst Gardens, NW3

¶ 1963 1101 | Alan Brien

http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/1st-november-1963/33

Afterthought

Scrutiny has not yet reached the famine price of *Astounding Science Fiction* (complete sets of which are now bargains at $600) but £45 for a photographic reprint of nineteen volumes suggests that the notorious Metropolitan Literary Gang are at last realising what they missed throughout the years of its publication. Even the embalmed *corpus* of Leavism is approached with edgy circumspection – both our literary weeklies employing two coroners each for the autopsy as if afraid that the body might later revive, and denounce them for unprofessional conduct, if they attempted to undress it without a witness present. Despite all the tributes and wreaths piled on the magazine’s grave by these and other reviewers, I was left with a feeling of niggling reluctance to make a warm, generous gesture of gratitude. Between the lines of many of these lengthy epitaphs, I could savour something of the Old Boy’s revenge on the pensioned-off tyrant of a schoolmaster, a last chance to chalk up ‘Kick Me’ on the back of his gown.

As an unqualified practitioner in this discipline.... – neither a don, nor a critic, nor an author of literature – who has never met Dr. Leavis, I would prefer to remember the feeling of release I experienced when I first met *Scrutiny*. It was like the first time you discover you can swim without water-wings, or ride a bicycle without someone’s hand at the back of the saddle. The time was 1944, the place a NAAFI canteen, and the introduction was performed by a fellow air-gunner who appeared to be equally as scruffy, beery and philistine as I appeared to be. It was only a year since I had left Oxford and I was going through a period of culture-rejection. I listened only to the Light Programme, read only the *Daily Mirror*, talked like a backward bricklayer, and spent all my non-flying time in a state of horizontal torpor from which I was occasionally aroused by a cigarette burning down to my fingers.

The last thing I thought I wanted to do was behave like a soldier-scholar with the *Oxford Book of English Verse* in his gasmask case. It was Oxford which had put me off English Literature in the first place. Now I wore boredom like a suit of armour – undoing the beaver or the cod-piece only when it was my turn at the bar or the barmaid. If the point of reading was to learn how to rewrite the original in diluted form – as the Oxford school seemed to insist – then I would give up reading, and writing. What made the system so unattractive was not that it was difficult, but that it was too easy. Books were devoured like memorable meals and the student’s task was to annotate the menu with footnotes in rich, romantic prose.

The promising pupil was the one who could paraphrase a poem, pot a novel or digest a critical work without using any of the same words that occurred in his source. The tutorial was an academic parlour game with its own rules and conventions like a double acrostic. To process another man’s language through Roget so that it emerged as a parallel translation – colourful, knowledgeable, and yet immune from the charge of plagiarism – was a clever, meaningless trick which I soon learned to master. It was excellent training for advertising copy-writing or second-rate journalism, but it seemed to have little to do with literature. In the end I began to feel that there never had been a Spenser or a Milton, a Keats or a Shelley. These were simply labels given to volumes of famous quotations.

Oxford in 1942-43 was not, perhaps, at its most impressive. Blacked-out at night and greyed-out by day, it was dominated by scientists and women. The arts men were almost all deferred servicemen, granted a temporary respite from uniformed slavery to receive a lick of culture and a dab of tradition. Probably never, before or since, have so many non-U undergraduates dropped their aitches in the ancient precincts, held the silver cutlery in clenched fists, and turned up at the Master’s sherry party

wearing brown shoes, bright blue suits and open-neck Aertex shirts. Some of the dons were heard openly to complain that it was impossible to instil civilised values into such provincial corner boys. But whether we were good enough for them or not, I heard no one, whether Old Etonian or Old Souphalesian, doubt that they were more than good enough for us. But the mass of the remaining dons were prehistoric dugouts, fossilised in the petty peculiarities of Victorian pedantry. I was permitted to worship at the slipper socks of a Reverend Doctor to whom any book on the Syllabus was part of Holy Writ. Twenty years ago, this was the Oxford which is now pictured as having been narrowly saved from the stormtroops of Dr. Leavis and his dictatorship of the intellect. In truth, I never once heard his name mentioned or his magazine discussed, even unfavourably.

It is not surprising perhaps that, in the RAF at nineteen, higher education seemed to me part of the higher pretentiousness. The sole reason which urged me to return was the certainty that my college did not want me. ('You will come back to this place, Mr. Brien,' observed the Principal, 'over my dead body.' 'As you say, Dr. Hazel,' I replied. And as he said, I did.) But Dr. Leavis's *Scrutiny* brought all those pseudo-books down from the library shelves and put them in the bookseller's window. I realised for the first time that I was under no obligation to like and admire everything that had ever been written and survived to be set in examinations. Certainly, he was angry, opinionated, dogmatic, contrary – spoiling for a fight. But a fight presumes opponents and the possibility of rival viewpoints. Dr. Leavis behaved as if the authors of the past were equally as alive as he was. Here at last was a scholar who thought literature was worth losing your temper over.

Too much has been made of this tendency to personal abuse – is it really such a disqualifying attribute of a critic? Do we think less of the work of Sainte-Beuve, or Hazlitt, or Dr. Johnson because they attacked their enemies? It is also alleged that he pandered to the prejudices of lazy-minded youth by supplying them with an easily imitated line on every author: But at least the line was unexpected, unusual and bolstered by chapter and verse. To agree, or disagree, you were expected to read the text with an attention to detail only given in Oxford to Anglo-Saxon.

When an Oxford don like C. S. Lewis did soak his literary views in his own philosophy (in this case a kind of mediaeval mysticism), no one complained that he was poisoning the generations and creating a priesthood of little Lewisites. Yet Professor Lewis often manipulated the evidence quite brazenly to fit his silly-clever intuitions in a way which any trained Scrutineer could soon fault but which still passed for gospel among his own students. For example, his claim in *The Allegory of Love* (page 352) that Spenser's Bower of Bliss is 'a picture, one of the most powerful ever painted, of the whole sexual nature in disease. There is not a kiss or an embrace in the whole island: only male prurience and female provocation.' This is the sort of talk which is very exciting to young readers, yet what do we find when we check with Spenser? Only five stanzas before the one he quotes, there is Acrasia

> And oft inclining downe with kisses light,
> For feare of waking him, his lips bedewd
> And through his humid eyes did sucke his spright,
> Quite molten into lust and pleasure lewd.

In the stanza he does quote to prove that no one does anything but 'peep' at her breast, the next lines go on:

> And yet through languour of her late sweet toyle,
> Few drops, more cleare than Nectar, forth distild,
> That like pure Orient perles adowne it trild.

What does Professor Lewis imagine that 'her late sweet toyle' was unless making love? Dr. Leavis never promulgated such a howler. Yet it remains uncorrected in the 1958 edition.

Even some of those who grant Dr. Leavis and *Scrutiny* the highest marks cannot help suggesting that he and his closest followers suffer from a persecution mania. They concede that at one time he

may have been treated with contemptuous disdain but argue that those days are long gone. But are they? Only a fortnight ago in the *Sunday Times*, John Raymond accused him of being responsible for 'this blighting period in which literature has been proscribed as a matter of enjoyment and enjoined as a substitute for predestinarian theology ... the rose of its enjoyment cankered at the centre by a cloud of literary misanthropes who have made a Moloch out of a mere literary technique and spoiled the pleasure of ordinary people.' Did *Scrutiny* ever use harsher and more malicious invective? If they did they proferred another view of literature to replace the one they condemned. What does Mr. Raymond produce as an alternative to 'a mere literary technique?' His method is almost a parody of Oxonian clubmanship in action:

> Perhaps the best way to review the collection is to try to imagine which other poets would have enjoyed which of the poems most. I am certain, for example, that Browning would have delighted in Mr. Hilary Corke's wonderful and evocative....

While intelligent and erudite critics can write like that in serious papers, the Metropolitan Literary Gang is still not disbanded and Dr. Leavis has more demolition work to do.

¶ 1963 1108 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/8th-november-1963/17

READINGS IN SPENSER

SIR, – Alan Brien really should not carry his hatred of the Oxford English school to such absurd lengths. 'Mediæval mysticism,' 'silly-clever intuitions' and 'brazen manipulations of evidence' may perhaps be characteristic of C. S. Lewis elsewhere (where?), but a fuller reference to the passage from *the Allegory of Love* (p. 332 in the 1938 reprint) and to that section of *The Faerie Queene* with which it deals shows nothing of the sort.

To quote: 'The good Venus is a picture of fruition: the bad Venus is a picture not of lust in action but of lust suspended – lust turning into what would now be called *skeptophilia*. It is for the *voyeur* that 'there is no kiss or embrace on the island.' Of course Acrasia has just been making love: the whole point is that the watcher is aware of this as a spur to his 'prurience,' which is merely passive and receptive of 'female provocation.' The contrast is made (and sustained by evidence) between this corrupt voyeurism and the mutual delight of thos lovers who are typified by the 'good Venus.'

Perhaps this is all a bit mediæval: but after all Spenser thought of this brand of 'silly-cleverness' before Professor Lewis did. And it may even be Mr. Brien who has made the 'howler' owing, one suspects, to a horror of this Oxford idol sufficient to prevent a re-reading of the passage in its entirety. I can't believe that this is what is meant by being 'a trained Scrutineer.' MARY HOLTBY

1 The Abbey, Carlisle

¶ 1963 1115 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/15th-november-1963/15

SIR, – In defending C. S Lewis, Miss Mary Holtby refers to a character called 'the watcher.' No such character occurs in Spenser, or, to do him justice, in Lewis (though there is a passing reference to Cymochles). It is the 'bad Venus' herself who is credited with *skeptophilia*, and we are told – with no indication that the statement is restricted to one particular moment – 'Acrasia herself *does* nothing.' Thus Miss Holtby's defence won't work, and Lewis's account is just as clever-silly, and unfaithful to the text, as Mr. Brien says it is. J. C. MAXWELL

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

¶ 1963 1115 | Alan Brien
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/15th-november-1963/34

Afterthought

Correspondence columns are notoriously unsatisfactory arenas for controversy. The last contributor always seem to have the best case and few readers can bother to look up a previous issue to check whether one man actually said what the other man said he said. Often, too, the correspondence quickly gets out of synch and all the letter-writers seem to be carrying on monologues, like characters in a Chekhov play, deaf to the comments of their neighbours on the page. Few people like to be proved wrong in public and the agonised writhings of a dying controversialist are often embarrassing to eavesdrop upon. So I shall leave J. C. Maxwell's rebuttal of Mary Holtby's rebuttal of my rebuttal of C. S. Lewis where it stands on page 627. Three times, in his *Allegory of Love*, Professor Lewis asserted in varying terms that no activity of any kind occurred in Spenser's Bower of Bliss. Yet the stanza I quoted (no. 73 in Canto XII of Book II) describes in rather pleasantly pornographic detail a long series of nuzzles and caresses. If this is not a howler by the standards of the Oxford School of English Literature, so much the worse for those standards.

What I do find significant is the way that both Mr. Maxwell and Miss Holtby are so much under the spell of the famous Lewisite reputation for erudition that they each accept his phrase, 'lust turning into what would now be called *skeptophilia*,' at its face value. Yet I have been unable to find this technical term in any of the standard works. The accepted word seems to be 'scoptophilia' which Dr. Benjamin Karpman in his *Sexual Offender and his Offences* defines as 'excessive interest in looking at genitalia, sex acts, etc., as a sexual stimulus.' English and English's dictionary of psychological usage gives the only possible alternative spellings as 'scopophilia' or 'scotophilia.' So 'skeptophilia' may be another howler.

As a constant reader of Spenser I get the impression that it is the poet rather than any of his characters who is the *voyeur*. 'Dainty' is his invariable adjective for most parts of the female anatomy and there is a lip-smacking relish about his 'peeping' which suggests that he is always on the point of digging in with a spoon. In sonnet LXXVII of his Amoretti sequence, he describes his mistress as an ivory table 'all spred with juncats,' the centre-piece of which is a silver dish containing two golden apples. And in the previous sonnet, he apostrophises her bosom as 'the bowre of blisse.' There is no shortage of Freudian symbols in *The Faerie Queene* for those who know how to recognise them and they are at their most impressive when they are unconscious. Consider the lustful monster (Book IV, Canto VII, stanza 6):

> His neather lip was not like man nor beast,
> But like a wide deepe poke, downe hanging low,
> In which he wont the relics of his feast,
> And cruel spoyle, which he had spard, to stow:
> And ouer it his huge great nose did grow,
> Full dreadfully empurpled all with bloud;
> And down both sides two wide long ears did glow,
> And raught downe to his waste, when up he stood,
> More great then th'eares of Elephants by Indus flood.

You do not need any psychoanalytical training to see here a rather grisly amalgam of the male and female sexual organs.

While the surface of his mind was occupied with the mechanics of allegory, Spenser's Id was having an enjoyable time drooling over perversions far more scabrous than scoptophilia. In Canto VII of Book III, stanzas 47 to 49, we have twins who commit incest in the womb of a giantess and the female partner descends even lower – when short of young men 'to quench her flaming thrust,' observes Spenser, she 'suffred beasts her body to deflowre.' Even Tennessee Williams has not yet given us

characters quite so clinically exposed. Nymphomaniacs, cannibals, rapists, fetishists, perverts – they roam this picture-book landscape in terrifying numbers. Puritan Spenser, protected by the thought that he is preaching chastity and religion, allows his imagination to luxuriate in obscenities that sensual Shakespeare or outspoken Donne would not dare to admit into the light of print. Sometimes his mind, like ours, seems to grow a little tired of the more saintly figures (at the end of Book III, he even forgets which sex Britomart is meant to be, calling her 'he' and 'him') but the writing always stokes up heat and energy whenever anyone is about to be bedded.

These gentle ladies, wandering so provocatively alone in the sex-haunted woods, are not always as innocent as they appear. Dame Hellenore, for example, having run away from her old husband, Malbecco, with the courtly lover, Sir Paridell, is not at all perturbed at being captured by the Satyres. She settles down quite cheerfully to milk their goats and make their cheese even though 'euery one as commune good her handeled.' And when the old cuckold creeps up to see how she is suffering the mass rape, Spenser slips in a stanza which is little more than a dirty joke.

> At night, when all they went to sleepe, he vewd,
> Whereas his lovely wife emongst them lay,
> Embraced of a Satyre rough and rude,
> Who all night did minde his joyous play:
> Nine times he heard him come aloft ere day,
> That all his hart with gealosie did swell;
> But yet that nights ensample did bewray,
> That not for nought his wife them loved so well.
> When one so oft a night did ring his matins bell.

Professor Lewis is right when he declares that the history of Spenserian criticism is 'a history of gross under-estimation.' Spenser is often a superb pornographer but this is a view of a national poet which conventional academics find it hard to admit. When his moral taboos are at their weakest, he is often at his strongest as writer. It is no more necessary to condemn his verse when you condemn his obsessions than it is to admire him when you enjoy his technique. The undressing of Serena (Book VI, Canto VIII) over five stanzas, by the 'salvage nation' who intend to rape, sacrifice and eat her, is a brilliant exercise in titillation. We are taken on a slow conducted tour of the naked heroine, stopping at each point of advantage for a little homily, which leaves little to the imagination. To us today, the arrival finally at the *pièce de non-résistance* has comic overtones when 'those daintie parts, the dearlings of delight, Which mote not be prophaned of common eyes' are compared to princely trophies hung on 'the triumphall Arch' of her 'goodly thighes.' But the effect is still highly arousing and compares well with the more routine pleasurings in *Fanny Hill*.

There is also a great deal of interest for the modern reader in Spenser's politics. He continually rails and complains against the conditions at court and in the country – the way suitors are humiliated, the advance of uneducated entertainers into favour, the riotous behaviour of the lusty vagabonds, the pretensions of the new rich, the ignorance of the clergy, the extortions of the monopolists, the dangers of equality between men and women and masters and men. Like Evelyn Waugh, he is a right-wing satirist yearning for a golden age and an antique time that he himself never knew. But he also is obliged as a propagandist of the *status quo* to praise the Queen and submit to God. He agitates for reforms but at the same time preaches 'all change is perilous, and all chaunce unsound.' He sees that the wrong people are in charge but must also pretend that the 'great Maker' has ordained all – 'whatever thing is done, by him is done.' In fact, his poems now can be read like the early novels of Waugh – for their vivacity, for their humour, for the sex – without the grateful reader feeling obliged to subscribe to the peevish reactionary opinions. It is not a judgment that is likely to commend itself to the orthodox priests of the Oxford English School.

¶ 1963 1122 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/22nd-november-1963/18

READINGS IN SPENSER

Sir, – Alan Brien had a legitimate point to make against Dr. C. S. Lewis. It is a pity he had his afterthought in which he goes for Dr. Lewis for his use of the word *Skeptophilia.* If we need a word of Greek derivation for voyeurism let that be it. *Skoptophilia,* which he prefers, is an absurdity which would convey nothing whatever to a Hellenist. *Skopophilia,* a proper formation, by a quirk of the Greek language might suggest a CCF gone very queer indeed 'with a passion for targets.' *Skotophilia* could only mean 'love of the dark.' We have a perfect analogy; *kleptomania* might better have been *klopomania,* without any ambiguity, but it is a sufficiently well established English word to serve as a model.

If there are too few left to worry about the maltreatment of Greek, there should surely be sufficient with a very elementary knowledge of Latin to wonder what Mr. Brien meant by the sentence, 'But he is also obliged as a propagandist of the status quo to praise the Queen.' If he was in search of an overworked cliché to save himself thought, he might have paid his own language the compliment by using 'establishment' instead; it would at least have had the advantage of trying to mean what he probably wished to say. JOHN COWSER

3 King's Park, Belfast 5

¶ 1963 1129 | Portrait of the Week
https://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/29th-november-1963/3

IZVESTIA SUMMED IT UP: 'It was as if a mad film projectionist mixed up cans of film, interlacing the bitter tragedy of the great American nation with a cheap Texas thriller, a detective story and comics.' So the paper commented on the first occasion Russian television made use of Telstar. Messages from Mr. and Mrs. Khrushchev indeed were among the most moving tributes to the assassinated President. The world's statesmen flocked to his funeral and the world mourned his loss. Only the Chinese were out of tune: the trade union *Workers' Daily* printed a cartoon 'President Kennedy biting the dust' with the distorted President lying in a pool of blood, his tie covered with dollar signs.

*

THE PRESIDENT DIED in Parkland Hospital, Dallas, thirty-five minutes after he had been shot as he travelled through the town with the Texan Governor, Mr. John Connally. Mr. Connally himself was seriously wounded and a bullet narrowly missed Vice-President Lyndon Johnson. Speculation as to the killer and his motives was immediate: there was widespread relief that he was white, then general astonishment that the man arrested was a twenty-four-year-old former marine and marksman known to be of the far left and a Cuban sympathiser. Forty-eight hours after his arrest and before he had confessed Mr. Lee Harvey Oswald was himself shot in the full view of television cameras as he was being transferred from police headquarters to the county gaol. He too died in Parkland Hospital. The Dallas police declared the case closed but three possible inquiries are pending and Mr. Jack Ruby, a Dallas strip club owner, is being charged for murder with malice of Oswald. 'I did it,' he said, 'for Jacqueline Kennedy.'

*

MR. JOHNSON TOOK OVER the Presidency with dignity. He announced that his main aim would be to continue the late President's policies, and had meetings with Sir Alec Douglas-Home, President de Gaulle and Dr. Erhard, all in Washington for the funeral. There is to be a further gathering early in the new year, and the meeting with Mr. Mikoyan was also said to be encouraging.

*

AT HOME THE STRUGGLE for modernisation continued: Labour won Dundee West with a majority increase of almost 5,000, MPs' pay claims made progress and Mr. Henry Brooke almost won over the

Opposition with the second reading of the Police Bill. The Buchanan Committee produced its plans to take us by car into the twenty-first century; Professor Buchanan was promised a grant of £45,000 by the Nuffield Foundation to continue his studies; and Lord Franks advised the setting up of two £1,000,000 national business schools. Sir Giles Guthrie's appointment to do a Beeching with BOAC was confirmed and any member of the public who has anything to say to the committee on busmen's pay and conditions should get in touch with the Ministry of Labour.

*

NOVEMBER ROSES bloomed along the Rhine; the authorities of Lloret de Mar attempted to wipe out stray dogs by scattering poisoned lumps of meat along the street and the Spanish Minister of Information came to London. Aldous Huxley and Professor C. S. Lewis died and Dr. F. R. Leavis was not re-elected to the board of Cambridge English Faculty. Glasgow policewomen won the right to wear trousers in cold weather, the architect for the new Foreign Office is to be chosen without a competition, the British Unidentified Flying Objects Association held its first annual conference and a solitary seasonal reminder comes from the man who threw a brick through a High Wycombe window in order to get back inside for Christmas.

¶ 1964 0605 | C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* · review by John Holloway
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/5th-june-1964/20

Grand Design

This short but packed and various book was put together by C. S. Lewis, about a year before his death, from a celebrated course which he used to give when a don at Oxford. Modestly he introduces it as a preliminary survey of the mediaeval world view such as may help those who get stuck with the hard passages in reading. Unwisely, his publishers add their bolder and juster claims as a mere tailpiece to this. In fact the book must be out and away the best account in its field and of its size.

The mediæval Grand Design, as the argument succinctly shows, was a cosmic picture that squared with the Christian faith but was far from a mere part of it, and was usually passed over by the more devoutly religious writers. Its majestic spheres of music- and light-filled æther were the creation of classical authors (among whom Ovid is ignored as too familiar) and those seminal writers, from the third to the sixth century, who were Christian in a loose sense if al all. The relating of these immensely influential but now unread writers to the Mediæval Model is superb; and Lewis then briefly shows how the unity which resulted made mediæval biology, psychology, history, witch- and fairy-lore, even education, all follow smoothly from its ordered 'splendour, sobriety and coherence.'

Over sobriety, I venture to think Professor Lewis partly wrong. The grand outlines had it as they had splendour and coherence; but their proliferations (bees loved to be chaste, the beryl stone maintained family harmony and the rest) were often a riot of insobriety. Sometimes, elsewhere, his argument is cut rather short. To see the mediæval 'Image' as facilitating love of the created cosmos says too little of the great tradition of repairing home from worldly vanity that Chaucer's 'yonge fresshe folkes' were invited to endorse; and something important is left out when mediæval realism (that, to be sure, is real enough) is linked with the loved cosmic order and then the unhappy nineteenth century turns out more realist still.

The author's interest declines, in fact, earlier than the nineteenth century, for the book is hardly an 'Introduction to … Renaissance Literature' as it is to mediæval: the break from Dante and Chaucer to Tasso and Spenser is not discussed. Moreover, in concluding that both the mediæval World Image and the modern one for which it was 'discarded' issue from men's psychic needs, Lewis does not quite do justice to the bleak integrity of the latter. The modern scientist's findings meet one psychic need alone: they issue from what he thinks the valid mode of inquiry.

What meets this need commands the field though it may disappoint all others. Macrobius, Boethius and the rest make one feel that they didn't know, and perhaps couldn't have made so greyly courage-

ous a move. But my criticisms do not affect the high value of this book – its range, its lucid learning, its luminous style and its being perhaps the final memorial to the work of a great scholar and teacher, and a wise and noble mind.

¶ 1965 0730 | John Bayley · book review
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/30th-july-1965/16

…The Ways of Man to Man

The real subject of theology is not so much divine truth as human compulsion, not the ways of God but the needs of man. Even believers are apt to recognise this in a sense, as Péguy in his comment that 'tout commence en mystique et finit en politique,' and in the seventeenth century theology not only ended in politics but began with it. Not surprising, therefore, that *Paradise Lost,* our great theological epic, is also our most exciting political poem.

This has long been recognised, though not always openly. Dryden must have perceived it when he adapted the heroic style to political purposes in *Absalom and Achitophel*. Dr. Johnson's reaction to Milton was essentially political, so was that of Blake and Shelley and T. S. Eliot. Royalists or Republicans, their response was predictable: they were unanimous in judging by party what was meant for mankind. In any age opposing ideologies can find a superb duelling-ground in *Paradise Lost,* and the neo-Christians, as Professor Empson calls them, have made full use of it. Its subject, stated Charles Williams, is *war*. Away with all the bland nonsense about its 'wondrous epic artifice' and 'majestic roll of proper names' – what they responded to was Milton's offensive and defensive genius, his military ferocity, his masterful cunning and vigorous pride. C. S. Lewis made the poem his chief text in expounding the dark dramatic struggle between good and evil, Christian and non-Christian, almost – indeed – between one fellow of Magdalen and another. For him, Milton's true glory was that he brought not peace to high table but a sword.

Professor Empson carries on the war. He and C. S. Lewis are temperamentally of a kind – like Milton's God and Satan, one is tempted to feel – and Empson's tribute in this new edition* to his dead opponent has a splendidly infernal courtesy quite in keeping with the poem. Both take God very seriously, Lewis because he believed in him, Empson because he does not. It is one of the fascinating things about the poem that once you really get into it you cannot help getting excited and worked up about persons whom your official viewpoint may hold to be neither true nor necessary, rather as a reader with enlightened modern views on adultery and divorce none the less gets worked up in *Anna Karenina* and starts taking sides. Empson's disbelief in God doesn't stop him hating him as a man, and indeed in the poem he *is* a man – a certain sort of tyrant or political leader. The delicate question of his abdication from power, and his relation to the Son, brings up all sorts of succession problems – Cromwell's dilemma about handing over to his son, and the relation to their heirs of all Caesars, kings, Czars, and dictators. God and Satan compete for man in the poem as politicians do in the world, and the struggle may well indicate subliminally Milton's disillusionment with the outcome of all revolutionary or theological politics: there is not so much to choose between God and Satan – Satan's plan for mankind is also, as Empson points out, God's plan – and 'new presbyter is but old priest Writ large.' Empson says that the poem is good *because* God is bad, not (as used to be said) in spite of the difficulties that Milton had with God, and this would be a way of saying that good art which dramatises political man is good because political man is bad.

I think myself it is a pity that Empson never quite admits that political issues are what he is writing about (it is extraordinary that there is no mention of Dante in the index). Not that one would want to go along with Wilson Knight's superb hint that the poem is a political allegory, but in saying that Milton knew and felt just how difficult it is to justify God's ways, Empson is really also saying that

* *Milton's God.* By William Empson. Revised edition with notes and an appendix. (Chatto and Windus, 30s.)

Milton was too honest an advocate and too great an artist not to present authority – whether political or divine, and however much his reason wished to approve it – in highly ambiguous light. Empson's hatred of Christianity seems to me too localised, and when in the last chapter he leaves the poem and really lets it rip, he is talking about much *smaller* things than Milton's art is. But even when inveighing against torture (which he thinks all Christians secretly enjoy the idea of, but so, unfortunately, does almost everyone else?) and anti-sex, he is always a delight to read and his modesty is beguiling – he even insists that everything in the book comes from other critics.

Milton's God stands up triumphantly to rereading, and this revised edition includes notes and replies to critics, as well as an appendix which discusses the evidence for the charge that Milton himself had inserted, in the licensed version of the *Eikon Basilike*, the prayer from the *Arcadia* – known as Pamela's Prayer – for whose use he then savagely denounced the king in *Eikonoklastes*. F. F. Madan has defended Milton from this charge with all the arcane resources of the bibliographer; Empson finds the case non-proven, but conjectures that Milton may have given advice on the point before he became the official government propagandist. He may have felt that the Royalist comparison between the death of Charles and the crucifixion was itself so blasphemous and suggestive of pagan sacrifice that it was quite fair to assert that the king had used a pagan prayer, particularly as his supporters were too ignorant to realise it was one. Assuming the truth of the story, the acute French critic Morand wrote that Milton himself had 'fallen,' as it were, through becoming a propaganda chief and putting political expedience above truth, and that this gives a kind of crazy imbalance to the moral structure of the poem. Interestingly, Empson does not seem to mind much what Milton did, being concerned only to show (largely from the *De Doctrina*) that he but a sharp and incredulous eye upon God, but he does suggest that experience as a propagandist 'is what makes Milton's later poetry so very dramatic.'

The dramatic plea – that 'though a furious partisan Milton can always imagine in all its force exactly what the reply of an opponent would be' – is, of course, an old one. And it is no excuse for moral incoherence and inadvertency – we do not find those things in Shakespeare. Unlike most critics, Lewis and Empson make a steadfast claim for Milton's complete moral coherence: Lewis on the ground that Milton sets out to show that God is good and Satan bad, and does so; Empson, that Milton's learning and imagination had made him grimly aware of God's shortcomings, and he is saying that we had better accept them. Of the two, Empson's is surely closer to most people's experience of the poem, but both may be felt to distort it through paying too much attention to God as God. If we see the poem as about life, like the *Iliad* or *Coriolanus* or *War and Peace*, the problem disappears, and with it our anxiety about Milton's moral position. No novelist is expected to know exactly what will happen to his invention when he has set it in motion, and than Milton's imagination is more that of a novelist than of a systematic theologian.

As so often, we should trust the tale rather than the teller, and then we shall not fall into the odd contradiction, of Empson, who tells us at one point that 'the poem is not good in spite of but essentially because of its moral confusions,' and at another that we must not suspect that Milton 'could not understand the poem.' I entirely agree with that first assertion (it is also true of Kipling and perhaps Dickens), but I do not think that even such a good critic as Empson can have it all ways. Not caring much for the novel, he has always seen ambiguity not as the kinds of complexity in motive and behaviour which a novelist almost unconsciously understands and renders, but as an arrangement of counters simple in themselves, as in mah-jongg. The exotic structure of *Paradise Lost* is certainly like mah-jongg in some ways, but it is also full of the involuntary and unconscious processes of creation, which the creator can only acknowledge', not comprehend.

¶ 1966 0923 | C. S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds*, ed. Walter Hooper · review by Anthony Burgess
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/23rd-september-1966/20/matters-of-romance

Matters of Romance

C. S. Lewis was a good critic, but too lucid, urbane, modest and humorous ever to seem formidable. Moreover, he worked in an area outside the Great Tradition, interesting himself in *The Romance of the* Rose, fairy-tales and science-fiction. This posthumous volume brings together essays – some of them long – on these last two subjects, and there is a sizeable bonne bouche of some of his own unpublished stories. Prospective readers who fear an admixture of Anglican theology may be reassured; Lewis knew how to keep his categories separate.

Lewis writing on the aspect of fiction called Story has to be listened to, since he was himself a superb story-teller. He regrets, and rightly, I think, the subordination in modern fiction of 'the series of imagined events' to idea and character, and he naturally looks for the despised element (is it a sour-grapes despication?) in literary forms which the Leavisites might not regard as serious. The best 'juvenile writers' work from 'the common, universally human, ground they share with the children, and indeed with countless adults. They label their books "For Children" because children are the only market now recognised for the books they, anyway, want to write.' True, and it is true that we never outgrow a book like *The Wind in the Willows*, since, in a sense, it represents the Middle Ages (as adult a period as our own) smuggled into today under a 'juvenile' label which is no more than a protective cover.

The contemporary novel must reject the concept of 'story' if it is to be totally naturalistic: the novelist may not manipulate, exploit the coincidental or the marvellous, or (except in dreams) take off into the fantastic. Science-fiction – which perhaps too many of us regard as a kind of infra-literature – is the one sophisticated category which will allow all the mediaeval appurtenances. We're not surprised to find Lewis making a list of books that exploit the marvellous which begins with the *Odyssey*, 'much of the Kalevala and *The Faerie Queene*' and ends with David Lindsay's *Voyage to Arcturus*, Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, and Eddison's *Worm Ouroboros*, while 'some of Ray Bradbury's stories perhaps make the grade.' Lewis's own SF trilogy comes in for some discussion in the dialogue called 'Unreal Estates.'

This presents the voice, not the pen, of the master. It is a conversation between Lewis, Kingsley Amis, and Brian Aldiss, taped by Aldiss – for which he deserves a large liquid vote of thanks – and vastly entertaining. How well Lewis talks and how much he has read, and how nicely he ends it all before going out to dinner. He tells how the Bishop of Exeter saw a girls' school performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and, congratulating them, said: 'Among other things I was very interested in seeing for the first time in my life a female Bottom.' I apologise for remembering that better than some of the things said about SF, but one characteristic of many of Lewis's literary *dicta* is, alas, that they are unmemorable. Get into his writing and he flows all about you; get out and you are soon dry.

Perhaps that is why he is not one of the great critics. No man, though, knew better what criticism should be (read his disconcerting essay 'On Criticism'), and no man worked harder to promote aspects of literature which the big thumping world preferred to bypass. He was one of the last of the great readers. 'You can't get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me,' he said to Walter Hooper. He must have been the only man, after Edmund Spenser, to read the whole of *The Faerie Queene*. For that reason alone, one wants to approach him in awe. But awe is one of the things he won't allow in his presence.

¶ 1966 1014 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/14th-october-1966/17

A C. S. LEWIS MYSTERY

Sir, – Professor C. S. Lewis wrote all his works by hand. As editor of his literary remains, I sometimes have difficulty in reading his handwriting, especially pieces written during his last years. I am completely stumped by a single word in an essay on 'Religious Language' which I am at present editing. In the same sentence in which this word appears, Lewis connects it with a 'Mr Young.' If I knew who 'Mr Young' is, I could perhaps decipher it.

At the end of a digression on poetic language, Lewis says: 'My conclusion is that such language is by no means merely an expression, nor a stimulant, of emotion, but a real medium of information. Which information may, like any other, be true or false: true as Mr Young on ——, or false as the bit in *Beowulf* about the dragon sniffing along the path.'

The illegible word looks like 'weirs.' Is there a Mr Young who is an authority on weirs? I have discovered a chapter entitled 'Notches, Weirs and Orifices' in *An Elementary Treatise on the Mechanics of Fluids* (1960) by W. J. Duncan, A. S. Thom and A. D. Young. If Lewis was referring to this book, or some other treatise by Mr A. D. Young on weirs, how did he expect his audience (and, unfortunately, I do not know who the audience was) to know whom he referred to?

Another guess which I feel much less confident about, is that the illegible word is 'nerves.' The only reason that I think it might be 'nerves' is the existence of a book entitled *Doubt and Certainty in Science: a Biologist's Reflections on the Brain* (1951) by Professor J. Z. Young.

Such is my problem. I should be most grateful for any help your readers – especially those who heard Lewis's lecture – could give me. WALTER HOOPER

¶ 1966 1028 | *letter to the editor*
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/28th-october-1966/14

A C. S. LEWIS MYSTERY

Sir, – The 'C. S. Lewis Mystery' mentioned in your columns of October 14 remains mysterious although your readers (to whom thanks) have lightened some dark areas as well as shown me other possible solutions. Lewis said that 'poetic language …. is a real medium of information. Which information may, like any other, be true or false: true as Mr Young on ——, or false as the bit in *Beowulf* about the dragon sniffing along the path.'

Who, I asked, is 'Mr Young?' I was also in doubt about the illegible word, which I guessed to be 'weirs.' Here is the way in which the mystery seems to be working out: (1) None of the numerous answers I received from your readers supported my long-shot that Lewis referred to Mr A. D. Young's treatise on the mechanics of fluids. (2) Others hold strongly to the possibility of Professor J. Z. Young being the right man. He was a colleague of Lewis's at Magdalen during the war and they debated at meetings of the Oxford Socratic Club at the time. However, the more closely I examine Lewis's MS, the less the illegible word looks like 'nerves' – which are Professor Young's specialty. (3) A few readers suggested Brigham Young (the Mormon leader) on 'wives.' (4) Mr Ivan Yates put forth as a candidate the Rev Canon Andrew Young, with the comment: 'He is, after all, a poet – unlike A. D. and J. Z. Young.' This was strengthened by the clear reasoning of Professor C. J. Fordyce, who suggested that Lewis's 'Mr Young' is 'someone who has conveyed true information *in poetic language* as the author of *Beowulf* conveyed false.' Professor Fordyce also believes the specification to be met by Canon Young, who, in his poems, the Professor notes, 'mentions weirs but, I think, only casually. "Worms" is tempting: for he has observations on them and that provides a nice antithesis to *Beowulf's* Worm.' The idea that 'Mr Young' is true about something or other in *poetic* language seems to be perfectly obvious now that it has been shown me.

My next move was to lay the question before Canon Young himself. From him I learnt that Lewis wrote to him saying that his poems were of a kind that appealed to him (this seems to me significant). In his view, the 'worms' theory is probable.

As Professor Fordyce points out, the parallelism between 'worms' in poetic language and *Beowulf*'s Worm forms a 'nice antithesis.' And I have, in fact, discovered numerous references to worms in the Canon's poems. This explanation, then, appears to be as complete a solution as I should have wished for. But I do not believe it to be entirely true.

Canon Young is, I believe, Lewis's 'Mr Young.' But in the MS there is definitely a dot over the letter 'i' and so I must reject the 'worms' reading. Though there are few references to weirs in the Young poems, Lewis probably *remembered* more to be there than in fact there are. He himself used the word 'weirs' often and the many observations about water in the Young poems could have caused him to believe that Canon Andrew Young gave true information in poetic language about 'weirs.' I cannot at present see any further than this. WALTER HOOPER

Chaplain, *Wadham College, Oxford*

¶ 1966 1111 | *letter to the editor*

http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/11th-november-1966/16

A C. S. LEWIS MYSTERY

Sir, – All my dreams of late have been of 'weirs,' 'worms,' 'wires,' 'waves' and 'nerves' – a result, no doubt of the windfall of information and suggestions I have received in answer to the C. S. Lewis mystery: 'Mr Young on ——' (SPECTATOR, October 14). The dreams, however, are small price beside the valuable help you and your readers have given me.

As so many people are still writing to me about this curious allusion to 'Mr Young' in Lewis's essay on 'Religious Language,' I trust some further light on the mystery may be of interest.

The conclusion I had reached in my letter of October 28 was that C. S. Lewis meant: 'Mr [Canon Andrew] Young on weirs' – which conclusion has received strong support from my friend, Mr Owen Barfield. Mr Barfield, who has been an intimate friend of Lewis's since they met at Oxford in 1919, wrote to me saying: 'I think "Mr Young" is almost certainly Andrew Young. I introduced Jack [C. S. L.] to the works of this poet – probably some time in the late '40s – and be was delighted with them, delivering the shrewd critical *aperçu* that they were something like a combination of Wordsworth and Andrew Marvell.' Mr Barfield quoted, as the sort of thing Lewis would be fond of, Andrew Young's poem 'The Slow Race,' which contains the lines:

> And when we reached the weir
> That combed the water's silver hair

– lines, by the way, which recall the 'silver weirs' in Lewis's own poem, 'A Confession' (*Poems*; Bles, 1964).

In my letter of October 28, I said that 'Though there are few references to weirs in the Young poems, Lewis probably remembered more to be there than in fact there are.' This is, I think, not so subjective an argument as it may at first appear. While I was Lewis's private secretary, I was impressed by his phenomenal memory. Yet, as he himself said, after quoting a passage of verse or prose for years, he found on re-reading the text that it was not nearly so good as what he remembered – or even there at all. As his editor, I feel that I know this first hand. I have discovered that his misquotations are always (at least, to my mind) *improvements* on what the author actually wrote. As an example, in my edition of his *Studies in Mediaeval and Renaissance Literature*, I reprinted his 'Note on *Comus*' (1932). I checked all his quotations from Aldis Wright's facsimile of the *Comus* MS by the copy in the Bodleian. One line from the facsimile which Lewis quoted in his essay as being 'good theatre' and out of which 'an actor could still make something lively' is '*Beyond* all doubt or question – No!' (His

punctuation and my italics.) What Milton actually wrote was '*Without* all doubt or question, no.' (My italics.)

One further point. I find it curious that none of the people who have written to me about 'Mr Young' mention having heard Lewis read this paper. This in itself is something of a mystery, for he obviously wrote it in response to a specific request. It opens with the words: 'I have been asked to talk about religious language …' Of the original sixteen pages of this MS, pages 4 and 5 are missing.

If they were discovered to be lost before he was due to read the paper, I don't think this would have prevented his reading it. He would probably have rewritten them. But this is all in the realm of guess-work, and so I sternly draw rein. WALTER HOOPER

¶ 1968 0105 | J. W. M. Thompson
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/5th-january-1968/10

SPECTATOR'S NOTEBOOK*

So Mr Wilson decided to give the poet's laurel to the sound and worthy Establishment man after all. Cecil Day Lewis may be the first ex-communist to hold the office;† even so, today he floats securely on the sluggish main stream of laureate verse. The nicest thing about his appointment is that he's so obviously delighted by it; in this at least he recalls Alfred Austin, upon whom Lord Salisbury bestowed the laurel in 1896 'because he wanted it so much.' In recent years Day Lewis has even been gently broken in to the title. He was hailed at the Women's Institute's jubilee conference in 1965 as 'the WI's own poet laureate': this in return for various poetic services to the movement, including a composition containing the lines

> 'Acting, handicrafts, lectures, yes,
> But best of all the togetherness'

– a thoroughly laureate-like sentiment. It's odd now to think of the steeliness of his 'thirties poems, or even that in the 'fifties he was the 'modernist' candidate for the Oxford poetry chair against C. S. Lewis (whom he defeated). He will no doubt rise loyally to meet all the mild demands now made of a poet laureate. And just as company chairmen politely acknowledge, on receiving their knighthoods, that the honour is really due to the team they represent, so, I take it, the honour to Mr Day Lewis is also a salute to the blameless army of thriller-writers, writers of children's books (*The Otterbury Incident* is a particular favourite in my family), publishers, the Arts Council, Lord Goodman, and the Royal Society of Literature. I wish they'd been able to persuade John Betjeman to take it on, though.

¶ 1968 0301 | Denis Brogan
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/1st-march-1968/11

Table Talk

On Pornography and Censorship

Princeton, NJ – Reading, as I seldom do, the entertainment pages of the local prints, I have discovered that a 'B' movie is being prepared called *The Scandalous Daughter of Fanny Hill,* and that in the hospitable climate of Italy, an 'A,' that is expensive, movie is being made of *Candy,* Mr Terry Southern's scandalous parody of *Candide.* This has induced some reflections on how far 'permissiveness' can go, since *Fanny Hill* is a classic, perhaps *the* classic, of Anglo-Saxon pornography or erotica. It is an

* [Fragment.]

† [Cecil Day Lewis (1904-72) was appointed Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom in 1968 following the death of John Masefield in the previous year. See also the article by "Oxonian" of February 17th, 1956, above.]

elegant literary production (a parody, a learned kinsman tells me, of Fielding), but it is undoubtedly devoted to the pursuit of happiness via the bed. Its few ethical phrases are not obtruded and the love affair isn't plausible. This is sex-for-sex's sake. It is still banned, in its unexpurgated form, in Britain, but is freely on sale in the drug stores and airports of this quite recently prudish land. What *does* this mean?

I suspect it means very little. I can't see how, even in these permissive days, any movie can give the full flavour of Cleland's prose or how Candy on the screen can reproduce the parodistic effect of Mr Southern's erotic guying of both *Candide* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. But leaving the movies out of it, is America going to the demnition bow-wows because *Candy* and *Fanny Hill* are both freely on sale? Here a personal note may be intruded. I first saw the name *Fanny Hill* in an Italian translation on sale in the Corso in Rome, in Mussolini's *anno primo*, '*primavera di bellezza*.' Below the book was a card: 'Seized by the police in Milan last week. Buy while there is yet time.' So it was with a shock of pleasurable recognition that I read last year that the Milan police were still pursuing poor Fanny Hill. But I suspect, as well as hope, that she will escape the Christian-Democratic net as she did the stern moralists of fascism.

I have some dissident views on the censorship of books, because I find the humbug of both sides equally irritating and equally misleading. Each side pulls its punches. Thus gallant attempts were made to show in the English trial of Miss Hill's narrative that it was a useful piece of social history. I haven't read *The Memoirs of a Lady of Pleasure* for quite a long time, but, as I remember it, it is peculiarly lacking in social history. There is none of the information about prices, for example, that you get in Balzac, Conan Doyle, or Dickens. I can think of nothing that isn't better done in a sober book like Dr Dorothy George's *London Life in the Eighteenth Cemtury*. Fanny, or John Cleland, had a one-track mind. Should that mind be hidden from us?

Here we come to another type of humbug, the humbug of the censors. For they usually argue that pornographic or erotic books are harmful because they 'put ideas into people's heads.' Maybe they do. But the ideas of *Fanny Hill* are there in the adolescent male mind anyway. The story varies in detail, but many of us know of the question put by the curate, schoolmaster, scoutmaster: 'Are you much troubled by impure thoughts?' and of the schoolboy's candid answer: 'Troubled? I simply love 'em.' Whether *Fanny Hill* increases the amount or concreteness of impure thoughts in the young male, I don't know.

But for many boys (and girls), the first 'dirty book' they read was the Bible. Indeed, I have known a Scottish-matron who banned the Bible as dangerous reading for the young. But the Christian view of impure thoughts is that it is lust that is the sin. To lust after a woman in your heart is to commit adultery. Therefore it is not necessary for Lord Soper or Sir Cyril Black or the embattled censors of the Irish Republic to show that reading the Bible or *Fanny Hill* or *Ulysses* leads to any specific act of unchastity. But once you begin censoring on this Christian ground, it is very hard to stop.

Miss Pamela Hansford Johnson has argued, in a book that I have not read, that behind the horrible crimes of Brady lay the reading of the Marquis de Sade. As one who has never been able to read even one of *The Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* without a combination of boredom and disgust, I suspect that the disciples of the 'Divine Marquis' have tendencies that he excites but does not create. (Yes, I have read Mario Praz's *The Romantic Agony*.) But does erotic literature not lead to erotic activity? An eminent American statesman and poet, the late Mayor of New York, Jimmy Walker, once announced in the New York Assembly 'that no girl has ever been ruined by a book.' But an even more famous municipal politician and poet, D. Alighieri, had a different view. It was reading an early version of *Camelot* that led Francesca da Rimini to sin immortally, and the idea of all well lost for love has led girls into trouble often enough. Can we abolish romantic love? Should we?

Then the effectiveness of a book as an aphrodisiac depends on whether its attractive picture of illicit love provokes mere day-dreaming or active imitation. *The Blue Lagoon*, judging by how difficult it was to borrow it from Rutherglen Public Library, was very popular. But the idea of warm water, warm sands, no problems of clothing or feeding was too remote from the west of Scotland to in-

cite to imitation. In the same way an imitation of the *Histoire d'O*, set in the West End of Glasgow and on the banks of Loch Lomond, made far better reading than the preposterous and odious original; but '*l'amour sur l'herbe*' on the bonny, bonny banks of Loch Lomond suggests rheumatism, pneumonia and arthritis rather than a successful '*voyage à Cythère*.'

But I shouldn't (or wouldn't) like it to be thought that I have done nothing to keep the public mind as clean as a Boy Scout's. During the Second World War, I dropped in on Joe Jackson, the literary editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the literary dictator of 'the Coast.' He pushed across to me a massive typescript. 'Have a look at that. A very good-looking girl brought it in last week and asked how she could get it published. I looked it over and said, "Miss Winsor, your novel will either be a great failure or a great success. I fear it will be a great success."' I looked it over and thought it might be a great success, but to make it really pay in cash in compensation for the loss of credit, the firm of Hamish Hamilton would have had to stop publishing me, such was then the British paper shortage. An older firm found a way round the paper control and had the profits of letting the British reader savour *Forever Amber*, which Bernard de Voto rightly described as '*Fanny Hill for Harper's Bazaar*.'

Poor Miss Winsor tried a comeback a year or two ago, but though she was as 'powerful' as ever, the difference in power standards was like that between an ordinary atomic bomb and one of those new hydrogen bombs our American friends leave around like absent-minded professors. Nowadays, it would not surprise me to read the original *Fanny Hill in Harper's Bazaar*. Mere shock value now is hard to provide. Dirt value can be provided, as is done regularly by Mr Harold Robbins of *The Carpetbaggers*, which, I was glad to learn, has been banned in Birmingham. As a moral gesture it should certainly be banned somewhere and the citizens of the Second City can always travel to Wolverhampton.

I am aware that there is a great deal more to be said on the subject of literary censorship than I have even hinted at. Dr George Steiner has published a powerful attack on the deliberate substitution of an external – and debased – imagination for the genuine imagination, including the erotic imagination, of the victims of literary fashion and of the doctrine of unlimited permissiveness. It is not, indeed, a doctrine of permissiveness but a demand for approval, since it claims that all truths, despite the French proverb, *must* be expressed. We are not allowed the liberty of repulsion or disgust. I have some kinds of prudery which I think I am entitled to express, although I don't want to impose my prudery on more liberated souls.

A learned friend of mine had an experience in an American university which he was visiting that is to the point. There was a knock on his door around midnight and when he opened, he was faced with one of his better students who hurriedly addressed him. 'Do you know what's wrong with this college? Too much thwarted chastity. There are a lot of people here who don't want to go in for indiscriminate sex at this time but public opinion won't let us follow our own judgment.' I suspect there is more aesthetic, religious, romantic chastity about than it is fashionable to admit!

There is also probably a great deal less innocence, which is not, I think, a bad thing. The late Anita Loos reported that many readers of her classic *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* believed that kind Mr Ginsberg (later Mount Gins) was really spending his money in educating Lorelei Lee. After all, Henry James has told us of a Boston performance of *The Lady of the Camellias* in which the lady was described on the programme as Armand's 'fiancée.'

I suppose the liberating generation was just after the First World War (long before Miss Mary McCarthy went to Vassar). It was at that time that it was noticed that 'the young can talk about anything' – a liberal slogan to which a sour American retorted, 'The trouble is that they can't talk about anything else.' Even in those enlightened days, there were communication blocks, as when a fresh young thing, hearing a four-letter word used, said in astonishment, 'I didn't know anybody said those words. I thought they only appeared in books.' In 1955, the late C. S. Lewis argued in this journal that verbal descriptions of the sexual act were aesthetically wrong because there was no suitable vocabulary. The scientific terms were deadening and the traditional words (not the slang words) were so debased by vulgar use that a false impression was given that was not given by the plastic arts or by music. It was, I believe, one of D. H. Lawrence's aims in that absurd book, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*,

to rescue the fine Anglo-Saxon nouns and verbs, out of public use since Chaucer's time. He didn't do it, but the ingenious Yankees were turning the problem by inventing semi-obscene nouns and verbs which had not been debased and withdrawn from speech. These were restored to print with increasing freedom. As Cole Porter put it, 'anything goes.'

Yet there were mishaps. I can remember dining at New College high table with a noisy, learned don, long since dead. There were American guests and, as the presiding fellow, he wanted to make them feel at home so he told them how much he had been amused by a joke of Miss Dorothy Parker's: 'If all the girls at the Yale Prom were laid end to end it wouldn't surprise me a great deal.' The reverential Americans were shocked and I broke the news that Miss Parker's joke was more concrete than the eminent scholar had thought. No reader of SPECTATOR would need to be warned today. I think this is a gain since, for certain jokes, an erotic vocabulary is needed.

I fear that to Lorenzo and his disciples, the assertion that a vocabulary is needed in order to make jokes about sex is blasphemy. It is too sacred to be joked about. I can only say – rubbish. Most cultures of which I know anything have a rich store of sex jokes. True, there are none in the Old Testament but there are no jokes of any kind in the Old Testament. But Vulcan is only one of the oldest examples of that great comic hero, the cuckold. Other men always laugh at the wearer of the horns and some crafts and worldly situations traditionally invite cuckoldry. In France, even a fairly modern official, the station master, is traditionally a cuckold. But I know of one instance in which the tables were turned. A troop train entering Nancy station was greeted (so a friend told me) by a large banner: 'ce chef de gare n'est pas marié.'

But this is a long way from the case for and against censorship. In the United States where I now am, sex books are sold with a freedom and with a cheapness unknown in the Place des Vosges before the arrival of Madame de Gaulle stopped business. There are so many of them that I begin to suspect that where there is so much smoke there may be next to no fire. For the purposes of research, I bought a promising paperback; *The Bedroom Game* (95 cents). I was swindled, for what I got was an interesting novel about the difficulties of setting up a small investment trust in Los Angeles, the dangers of intervention by the Securities and Exchange Commission and the risk of being robbed by loving friends. It was fascinating and there was very little sex, although I did enjoy the account of how the hero profited by the generosity, financial and amorous, of a mature film star called Marie Corelli.

But the deception reminded me of an admirable example of justice given by the American Post Office. A citizen who had sent good money to get a packet of what it was very strongly indicated were 'feelthy postcards' protested that what he had got was the Venus de Milo, *La Source*, etc. The Post Office prosecuted the vendor for two offences. It is a federal felony to offer to send obscene matter through the mails; it is another federal offence not to deliver goods promised. So the vendor got two years on each count, to be served consecutively.

¶ 1968 0719 | John Braine
http://archive.spectator.co.uk/page/19th-july-1968/7

The Parties

Goodbye to the Left

John Braine, author of 'Room at the Top' and other novels, published an article before the 1964 general election entitled, 'Why Labour must win.' He here explains how he has come to change his views, and his party.

There was a time when, in this country at least, the subject of intellectual freedom would have been only of theoretical interest. But this year we have seen an organised attack upon intellectual freedom not only in this country, but in the USA, in France, and in West Berlin. It isn't my intention to discuss

the student revolt in any detail, but it isn't possible to write about intellectual freedom without referring to it.

And, when I come to think of it, I have almost without realising it been involved at, one almost might say, the barricades. The only opportunity that I have had to confront – in English, to meet – the students in revolt was recently when I met two of their representatives on *Late Night Line Up* after the BBC's *Students in Revolt* programme. And also recently I visited the Free University of West Berlin (in order, I might add, to talk about literature) and had the opportunity of talking to some of those whose intellectual freedom has been assailed. What I am saying here is that, whether one likes it or not, one must take sides: whether one wants to be involved or not, one will be involved. And not to fight what I would call in a very old-fashioned way the forces of evil simply means that one is collaborating with these forces, that one is – and I am not being over-emotive here – a traitor.

It is completely futile, and worse than futile, to say that the students may have in some respects justifiable cause for complaint or to make any sort of excuses for them. It is futile to complain that our society isn't perfect, it is futile to say that we must, before we can take action, try to remedy the many faults and shortcomings of our society. The choice is not between good and bad but between bad and worse. The choice is essentially the choice which had to be made in the last war, which was between an imperfect and in many ways grossly unjust form of society and between a society which was wholly dedicated to evil.

There are, of course, signs even now that the forces attacking freedom have been defeated. That magnificent monster President de Gaulle, after having been written off by the left, has now resoundingly defeated his enemies. And in his enemies now, as during the war, are our enemies also. If the Gaullists had not won the election in France, that would have been the last free election in their lifetime. This the people of France knew, and they acted upon it gloriously and instantly. I, personally, dislike President de Gaulle intensely, and never cease to be astounded at his cold and callous and implacable ingratitude towards my country. But one nevertheless has to acknowledge his very real greatness and his enormous, indeed heroic, faith in the people of France. Fortunately for us, and fortunately for France, that faith was fully justified. It is instructive to note, whilst we are upon the subject, that the working-classes of France, no less than the middle-classes, firmly rejected Socialism.

But what concerns me now, is exactly how I arrived at my present position. Exactly how did I come to make a very firm choice for Conservatism – and that means whether we like it or not, for the capitalist system – and to reject Socialism?

I grew up a Socialist – was in fact born one – because I grew up in Bradford between two wars. Add to this the fact that I am of the working-classes, and it's difficult to see what other choice there was. Bradford was a Socialist city in a decent old-fashioned Nonconformist sort of way: the late Fred Jowett, a kind and honourable and modest man, was the archetype.

More important than this was the fact that virtually every living writer of any consequence was a Socialist. I didn't come to. Auden and Isherwood and Spender and the rest until about 1942, when already attitudes were beginning to change. But I could hardly have been expected to know this. W. H. Auden, for instance, was for me still the W. H. Auden of *The Orators*, Stephen Spender still the Stephen Spender of *Forward from Liberalism*. And E. M. Forster was always saying that in Communism he saw hope. (I didn't ask myself when or under what circumstances he said this, or whether now he might have changed his mind.) Even George Orwell was enlisted by me under the Socialist banner. Whenever he was critical of Socialism and specifically of Communism, I simply skipped. He was one of us, he was an engineer of the soul (a phrase I was very fond of) with a paid-up union card, and he was entitled to be wrong-headed occasionally.

There was, of course, some sort of idealism behind my beliefs. I was genuinely convinced that Socialism was the only way out of the mess in which the world had found itself. It was all so splendidly lucid; it was only necessary to understand that left was good and right was bad. Communism was, of course, on the extreme left, and Fascism (which by about 1942 naturally included National Socialism) on the extreme right. The Labour party was mid-left, the Conservative party was mid-

right. There can rarely have been in any society a more inaccurate way of delineating political differences. That the accident of the seating of the political parties in the *Chambre des Deputés* should now have firmly established itself as the basis of political terminology doesn't surprise me; but it more and more frightens me.

I didn't, however, join the Labour party at once; I was, being a local government officer, discouraged from political activity. In any case, all my observations of constituency politics led me to suppose that there I should find only boredom and drudgery. But when I was at last in a position to do so I joined all, or nearly all, the approved associations; it was as if I were grooming myself as a charter member of the Left Establishment. The Fabians, the United Nations Association, the Council for Civil Liberties, CND and, naturally, the local Labour party; I was so thoroughly Establishment in my thinking that I was savagely glad when, under Gaitskell, Labour was defeated at the general election of 1959.

I hated Gaitskell almost as much as, if not more than, Macmillan. For he was betraying Socialism. He was against CND and CND was a Socialist organisation. That he was against CND because with all his faults he loved his country was yet another black mark against him.

For I despised patriotism as a motive. I was an internationalist, ready to proclaim my love of all mankind at the drop of a petition form or editorial request from behind the Iron Curtain. I spoke frequently for CND all over the country, generally managing to bring tears to my own eyes, if not to the audience's. I varied the speech to bring in the latest announcement of some politician or general or scientist, and I was adept at pressing quotations from authors like Chekhov into service, but essentially it was always the same speech.

But I was to grow more and more disenchanted with CND, the disenchantment beginning with the demonstration against Queen Frederika of Greece which ended with her having to hide from her pursuers. It wasn't only the sheer nastiness of this near-lynching which upset me. It was that such a demonstration could only be for the benefit of the Communist party. It had nothing to do with unilateral nuclear disarmament. If the leaders of CND knew that they were being used, then CND had become yet another Communist front organisation. If they didn't know, they were so stupid that one couldn't possibly follow them any longer.

Nor was I enthusiastic about the sit-ins. Deliberately to put oneself in jail struck me as being not only immature but downright perverted. It should, I reasoned, be our opponents we should be planning to send to prison – if, indeed, anyone had to be sent to prison at all.

But my activities in CND had always been confined to speaking. I had never taken part in the Aldermaston March or any other demonstration. Instinctively I felt nothing but revulsion on the two occasions when I observed the long procession make its way into Trafalgar Square. Hysteria wasn't very far away, these people had lost their individuality; and though I agreed with them nothing on earth would have persuaded me to join them. I mightn't, I thought, amount to much as a person, but my individuality was all I'd got, I couldn't give it up even temporarily in a good cause.

These reservations aside, I continued as a professing Socialist until the beginning of 1965. There is an article of mine supporting the Labour party published just before the 1964 General Election to prove it.

But at the same time as the article was published I was beginning to reject certain important items of the left package deal. I looked at the statistics for crimes of violence and for murder, for instance, and realised that I didn't really believe that crime was an illness to be treated, and that the function of prison was to reform. As I looked at the statistics I could come to only one conclusion: the humanitarian approach to crime had vastly increased the sum of human suffering. It wasn't, properly speaking, humanitarian at all but ideological. The principle of deterrence – including capital punishment and the cat – was the genuinely humanitarian one, simply because it demonstrably decreased the sum of human suffering.

I went further, slowly and painfully. Severe punishment wouldn't reform anybody, it wouldn't make anyone behave well. But to make people behave well wasn't the function of the criminal law. Its

function was to prevent people from behaving badly in certain specific ways. I went further, aided by an essay of the late C. S. Lewis.*

The concept of crime as a disease to be treated and not a personal misdemeanour to be punished is essentially inhuman. If a man commits a crime, is jailed for the allotted time, and serves his sentence, then his debt is paid. Punishment is finite. If his crime is to be regarded as an illness, then the treatment may take any form which the ever-changing fashions in psychiatry direct – including lobotomy, electric shocks, and castration – and may take any length of time. It might indeed be decided that the patient was incurable; and euthanasia is also part of the left package deal. In short, the criminal is no longer a man to be punished, a debtor paying his debt, but a faulty machine to be repaired, remade, or scrapped.

The 'Moors' murder case rid me forever of the belief in another left article of faith, to be summed up in the phrase *We are all guilty*. (A variation of this, especially popular with hard-pressed journalists, is the use or rather misuse of the passage from one of John Donne's sermons beginning *No man is an island …*)

I had used this approach as much as anyone; most of all in my CND days. I had declared myself guilty of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Belsem and Dachau so often that I'd almost come to believe that I had a direct share of responsibility in what had happened in these places. But when I was told, in one article, that those who wished to hang Hindley and Brady were guilty, in exactly the same way, then something snapped inside my brain. I hadn't murdered those children, I would literally (and I never use this word lightly) rather have died than commit such foul and beastly atrocities. Above, all, I wasn't there. And I wasn't at Belsen or Dachau either. I could only be held guilty for actions which either I had personally committed or which I had given my authority for or which I had allowed to be committed having the authority to prevent them. And my desire to see Hindley and Brady hanged was activated not by my emotional kinship to them, but by my utter detestation of their crimes. I, and the majority of the population of Great Britain, was making the sort of moral judgment which has to be made if any civilised society is to survive.

It's difficult to say exactly when I rejected Socialism and progressive ideology in general. But this was the key-log, this was the beginning of freedom.

The thinking – and I cannot emphasise often enough how abhorrent thinking in the abstract is to me – began in America in the autumn of 1964 when I made a lecture tour of three months. I missed my wife and children, I found the travelling more tiring than I had bargained for, and it wasn't really financially profitable. There were many aspects of American life which I disliked, and cities like Detroit I found especially depressing. But nevertheless throughout the trip there would be regular visitations of absolute happiness of a kind which I'd never previously experienced.

Towards the end of the trip I worked it out: the name of the happiness was freedom. This was still a country in which you could be anything you wanted to be, from beatnik to millionaire. This was a country in which still the state was there for the people not the people for the state. The name of the system the people lived under was capitalism. It was often cruel, often unjust, often inefficient, often wasteful, but it gave everyone, even if in an arbitrary and confused way, the chance to be what he wanted to be. Above all, it didn't care. It left people alone. One could, as long as one was prepared to pay the price, contract out of it.

And, for all its faults, it gave the majority of people a far higher standard of living than did either Communism or its ugly little sister Socialism. There were pockets of devastating poverty but, given time, those would be wiped out. There was a racial problem alongside the poverty problem but given time that would be wiped out too. The profit motive would do the job; for what poverty represents to capitalism is not so much an evil as an untapped market. The desire to make a profit out of one's

* ["The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment", a two-part essay first published in 1949 and 1954, reprinted in *God in the Dock* (1970).]

fellow-man is a more reliable and decent motive than the desire to do him good, to change his way of life, to make him a better person.

For eventually he may find himself being made a better person in the torture-chamber or the prison camp or – for the good of the greatest number – on the gallows. The capitalist sells him something which, by and large, has to be reasonable value for money if he wants to make another sale. But he doesn't care what the customer believes or what colour he is as long as he gets his money. Money, as Caligula said when he taxed the contents of public urinals, doesn't stink. And it only enslaves those who allow themselves to be enslaved by it. The richest man in the USA has not the power of life and death. The most minor bureaucrat in the Soviet secret police can exercise it a hundred times a day.

I don't think that I worked it out quite as coherently as this in America: the happiness was quite enough. When I returned I eventually resigned from the Council for Civil Liberties, CND, the Labour party, the Fabians, and the UNA. I don't for one moment suppose that any of these organisations were in the least affected by my defection.

There was no new set of beliefs to replace the old, no new package deal, no new ideology. One is naturally a member of the Conservative party because it represents the only effective opposition to the Labour party. But the essence of my attitude now is that I judge each issue on its own merits and not in relation to any philosophical system. One isn't a member of any sort of Establishment and one isn't ruled by any sort of Establishment either. In my middle age I have become free.

And in my middle age I have been sustained by love. I have been able to acknowledge at last what I have always felt instinctively. I don't care about the well-being of any other country except my own. I can say quite shamelessly, *I love my country* and, in saying it, be no less an individual, but find myself more closely in touch with the majority of people than ever before. There's another source of strength for me to draw upon now. I am more myself, whoever I am, than ever I was before, but I am not alone.