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THE PROBLEM OF FAITH AND THE SELF:
The Interplay between Literary Art, Apologetics and
Hermeneutics in C. S. Lewis's Religious Narratives

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Abstract

Based on the observation that “interdisciplinarity” is the essential nature of C. S. Lewis’s religious narratives created by twofold enterprise—imaginative writing and Christian apologetics, this thesis aims to undertake a comprehensive reception of Lewis’s works by considering carefully the inter-mixture of literary art and Christian apologetics within the texts and the relevance of the reader’s role to the textual experience. In other words, the whole study is oriented to combine literary analysis, apologetic reading and “hermeneutical” reflection upon the encounter between reader and text. The purpose in general is to demonstrate that Lewis’s literary world remains artistically engaging, religiously meaningful and existentially significant to the readers beyond his time.

The main part of the thesis presents a practice of close reading and multi-faceted discussion of five texts of Lewis, including: *The Pilgrim’s Regress* (an allegorical account of a modern man’s conversion), *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce* (theological fantasies concerning interaction between subjective being and objective reality), *Till We Have Faces* (a mythic novel about the correlation between self-knowledge and religious experience), and *A Grief Observed* (a first-person narrative of an inward journey of coming to terms with grief and faith). Varied in literary modes of expression, these texts are read in terms of one common theme about the inter-related problem of faith and self. More specifically, they are treated as works of “literary apologetics”—written to manifest and tackle in an “existentialist” manner the alienated or disrupted relationship between the human self and religious / Christian faith.

In the concluding section, the discussion is moved from interpreting the texts to revisiting C. S. Lewis’s mind and rethinking the proper mindset for Lewis’s readers. This part of the discussion is intended firstly to re-estimate the enterprise of C. S. Lewis as a Christian thinker and literary writer through connecting and comparing his ways of thinking and reading with contemporary theologians and hermeneutical thinkers, particularly Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Ricoeur, and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Such association between Lewis and the contemporary trends of hermeneutics leads to the conclusion that C. S. Lewis is indeed an intellectually defensible thinker as well as literary figure in and even beyond his time. Moreover, it helps to fulfill the second objective of this final discussion, which is also the chief goal of the whole

thesis, namely, to shed light on an appropriate way of reading C. S. Lewis.

Methodologically, this research is done on a cross-disciplinary basis in terms of a multiplicity of theoretical ideas concerning such topics as literary tropes, figures of speech, the psychology of religion, literary theory and (Kierkegaard's) existentialist philosophy of irony, and hermeneutics. Illuminated by these miscellaneous tools of interpretation, the whole research looks to attest to the claim that the genuine experience of Lewis's texts is not gained through simply appreciating the art of expression or digging out the underlying ideas of Christian apologetics, nor does it rest upon the response of the reader alone, but must rely on the co-working and interplay of all these three aspects of experience.

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Introduction

With all his scholarly expertise in the pre-modern period of literature, the Renaissance and the medieval age in particular, C. S. Lewis's literary outputs are, however, products of the modern time. Deeply concerned with the relationship between (human) being and (Christian) faith, Lewis's religious narratives, on the one hand, are distinctly marked by traditional Christian views, such as belief in the supernatural, the redemption of human soul, and the transformation of the self via re-union and reconciliation with the divine other, i.e. God. On the other hand, they are also invested with symbols, dramas, and sometimes realistic portrayals of the "pilgrimage" that is typically "modern" in the sense of acquiring faith not simply through the acceptance of divine grace but even more importantly via the exercise of understanding as well as human freedom (i.e. the will to believe). Therefore, "traditionalist" as the religious import may be, Lewis's narratives are to a considerable extent reflective of and related to the modern spirit of *thinking on one's own*, although equally true is Lewis's suspicion of the reliability of the rational self of human being, especially when it comes to religious truth or even the self-knowledge of the human subject him- or herself.

In his 1784 essay, "What is Enlightenment?" Kant, the most prominent *modern* thinker of eighteenth century Europe, proclaims that he who *dares* "to use [his] own understanding" (to grow "mature") is a true child of the age of Enlightenment.¹ Such a spirit of relying on the confidence of the human self as an independent thinker rather than "the guidance" from outside, whether tradition, political authority, church, or whatsoever, is described by Gadamer, the renowned German philosopher in the

¹ Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" *Kant's Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H. G. Nisbet), p. 54.

twentieth century, as “the radicality of the Enlightenment which grew out of Christianity.”² In addition, Gadamer makes the following statement, which gives pertinent expression to the modern mindset of abandoning religious belief for a new belief in the self: “For the first time in the history of mankind, religion itself is declared to be redundant and denounced as *an act of betrayal or self-betrayal*” (emphasis added).³ Gadamer’s judicious remark very keenly and subtly touches upon the “existentialist” trait of modernity. To put it in another way, in the modern age, religion has broadly lost its status as *the very imperative* for leading a fulfilling human life; thus, turning or returning to religious belief could mean contradiction to, at least something incompatible with, the integrity and subjectivity of the human self.

Basically, this modern revision of the meaning of religion to the human life / self speaks for the cultural context, specifically the intellectual and spiritual “climate” of the modern western world, in which C. S. Lewis undertook his joint enterprise—imaginative writing and Christian apologetics. Focused on several texts representative of Lewis’s twofold and intermingled enterprise, this study aims to explore Lewis’s “answer,” articulated by his literary texts, to the particular “situation of modern culture,”⁴ namely, a prevalent problem, even loss, of faith that besets human souls, as evidenced in the modern self’s severed relationship with the supernatural, divine being of the Creator and Redeemer. The texts selected for close reading include an allegory of conversion (*The Pilgrim’s Regress*), two theological

² This description and the statement quoted below appear in the conclusion of Gadamer’s article, “Aesthetic and religious experience,” in which Gadamer argues that poetic speech can be a viable medium to communicate religious truth and that art and religion are compatible rather than oppositional, even if there are fundamental dissimilarities between them. *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986, trans. Nicholas Walker), p. 153. “Aesthetic and religious experience.” Pp. 140-153.

³ Gadamer, *Ibid*, p. 153.

⁴ This phrase is borrowed from Paul Ricoeur, who in “Conclusion: The Symbol Gives Rise to Thought,” the concluding chapter of his book, *Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969, c1967, trans. from the French by Emerson Buchanan), symbolic language, such as found in myths, carries in itself the capacity for giving an “answer to a certain situation of modern culture,” meaning the culture of ceasing to believe in God. P. 348.

fantasies (*The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce*), a mythic novel (*Till We Have Faces*) and finally an “autobiographical” fiction (*A Grief Observed*). These five works are all characterized not just by the religious concern with the problem of acquiring faith but also by their focus upon the individual self’s existential struggle with believing or not believing. Therefore, through interpreting each of them, we may detect the apologetic vision of C. S. Lewis—articulated through a *literary* approach, namely, via his imaginative writing—about how the alienated or disrupted relationship between human existence and religious / Christian faith could or ought to be tackled.

But, this does not mean that Lewis writes these narratives simply to propagate Christian faith—how it is lost and can be found again. Neither is this research concerned with the religious meaning of Lewis’s works only. In fact, this study argues that the first and foremost principle to approach the texts of Lewis’s religious narratives is to treat them essentially as literary art rather than “religious propaganda.” Based on this understanding, this study purports to demonstrate a valid reading of C. S. Lewis—in accordance with the most distinctive, also un-dismissible, quality of his texts, that is, interdisciplinarity. Why is this critical principle, namely, an interdisciplinary approach, of primary importance to the reception of C. S. Lewis’s religious narratives? In addition to pursuing a valid act of reading, to underscore such an essential feature of Lewis’s texts is also for the purpose of rectifying the unfair and “reductionist” misjudgment that tends to hold Lewis’ literary enterprise as nothing but a sort of adjunct apologetics. Some critics may deliberately overlook the fact that these religious fictions are works of literature simply because of their personal antagonism toward the Christian ideas within Lewis’s texts.

The noted American literary scholar, Harold Bloom, is one such example. In his introduction to *C. S. Lewis’s The Chronicles of Narnia* (2006), a critical collection

edited by him, Bloom makes the following derogatory remarks, with the obvious intention of discrediting the value of C. S. Lewis as a writer of (children's) literature. However, Bloom's critical disaffirmation is not in the least made on any literary ground but clearly based on the steadfast dogmatism of Lewis's Christian faith, which Bloom cannot but feel repelled and also "amazed" by:

One could say that Lewis by far transcended St. Paul's definition of faith. For the author of the *Narnia* books, faith was the substance of things already possessed, the evidence of things perpetually seen. If C. S. Lewis had one singular originality, it was that he was the most dogmatic human being ever to exist. I say this not to malign Lewis, but I am now three quarters of a century old and have read non-stop all my life. Never have I encountered any other writer so dogmatic in temperament and in conviction as C. S. Lewis. Compared to him, John Calvin and Martin Luther were relatively tolerant spirits.⁵

If these disparaging words were spoken not from a literary critic but from some "spiritual appraiser," they might be taken, at their face value, as a compliment to Lewis. Yet, the antipathy Bloom expresses here appears rather out of place, for it is aimed at repudiating the "originality" of Lewis as a *literary* writer—by exaggerating the "level" of Lewis's faith or faithfulness. In other words, without bothering to consider Lewis's fantasy writing (i.e. *The Chronicles of Narnia*) according to their aesthetic merits or demerits, Bloom, with all his long-term scholarship in literature, simply and quite curiously devalues the "originality" of Lewis by referring sarcastically to his opinion about how incredibly dogmatic a Christian C. S. Lewis is. Of course, Bloom's antipathetic attitude is understandable, if we take into account the observations of Wayne C. Booth that it is impossible to demand total "objectivity" in

⁵ See Harold Bloom's "Introduction." C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* (New York, N.Y.: Chelsea House Publishers, 2006), p. 2-3.

the reader and that the “incompatibility of beliefs” between the reader and the author (as emerged from the literary text) must “fundamentally affect [the] literary responses” of the former.⁶ Bloom, in the same introduction, indeed acknowledges that his own “Gnostic convictions” as well as his “manifesto,” that is, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* of William Blake, (of whom Bloom claims himself as “a disciple”), are in direct contrast with the belief of Lewis, the author of *The Great Divorce*. Yet, if we think more thoroughly about the question of belief in the reading of literature, it is highly suspicious whether one can justifiably judge a piece of literature simply in terms of the author’s religious faith, or take literary works as nothing but the propaganda of the author’s belief.

In fact, it is exactly Bloom’s failure, more exactly, his refusal, to read Lewis in literary terms that renders his depreciation of Lewis’s literary authorship (not just of *The Chronicles of Narnia*) unacceptably fallacious. Besides his sarcastic and not really convincing denigration of Lewis’s literary originality quoted above, Bloom’s insistently “unprofessional” treatment of Lewis’s literary works as something like religious “propaganda” can also be discerned in the following comments: “I am a touch remorseful at being ungrateful to a major scholar who dismissed questions and heroically affirmed that he had all the answers, both as to this world and the next.”⁷ In response to Bloom’s commentary, two questions could be raised: Is it true that the textual worlds created by C. S. Lewis’s literary imagination provide no literary experience but merely outspoken “answers” manipulated by Lewis’s personal faith in Christianity? And, is it justifiable or merely preposterous for a literary reader, who is supposed to genuinely interact with or confront the text concerned, to reach the conclusion that the author possesses “all the answers”? These two questions actually

⁶ Wayne C. Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (London: Penguin Book, c1991), p. 139, 140.

⁷ Bloom, *Ibid*, p. 2.

are closely related to the main concern of the present research, that is, how to *receive* C. S. Lewis's imaginative works, or, "literary apologetics." With the recognition of "interdisciplinarity" as the predominant feature of Lewis's religious narratives, this study maintains that the valid and indispensable approach to Lewis's texts should be interdisciplinary—concerning not only religious but also literary aspects. In this sense, the negative and yet completely *unliterary* criticism of Harold Bloom, shown in his tendency to put mono-concern with religion and reject a literary author like C. S. Lewis in terms of non-literary issues, is just a perfect example of the bad kind of reception the present study means to disclaim. In spite of his long-term devoted and celebrated profession as a literary critic, Bloom in his critique of Lewis the author of the *Narnia* tales actually exemplifies a completely un-professional approach to literature, which ultimately discredits not the literary work or its author (i.e. Lewis) but the literary critic himself.

To counter the reductive and simplistic sort of reception, or rejection, of C. S. Lewis's literary outputs, the critical objective of this C. S. Lewis study is to demonstrate a comprehensive and in-depth interpretation of his texts and examine the value and meaningfulness of his Christianity-imbued literature to us contemporary readers, whether Christian or non-Christian. To put it in another way, this research aims to testify as to why the religiously "dogmatic"⁸ and, in a sense, "anachronistic" Lewis is still worth reading and his literary worlds are profoundly engaging. For the purpose of getting engaged with Lewis's literary texts themselves (instead of paying indiscreet attention to Lewis the person or his faith), the following discussions on his five narratives are oriented to probe into not only the *Logos* (i.e. religious meaning) of

⁸ In his essay, "Answers to Questions on Christianity," C. S. Lewis himself acknowledges that "in all the things which I have written and thought I have always stuck to traditional, dogmatic positions." C. S. Lewis *Essay Collections: Faith, Christianity and the Church* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2000, ed. Lesley Walmsley), p. 327.

each text but also the *Poiema*, that is the artful texture of interweaving religious themes with specific vehicles of communication. The terms and concepts of these two important aspects of literary works are derived from C. S. Lewis's book on literary criticism, *An Experiment in Criticism*, in which Lewis expounds what the two essential elements play in the art of literature as follows:

A work of literary art can be considered in two lights. It both *means* and *is*. It is both *Logos* (something said) and *Poiema* (something made). As *Logos* it tells a story, or expresses an emotion, or exhorts or pleads or describes or rebukes or excites laughter. As *Poiema*, by its aural beauties and also by the balance and contrast and the unified multiplicity of its successive parts, it is an *objet d'art*, a thing shaped so as to give great satisfaction.⁹

Intended to examine both what is said and how it is made, the discussion on each of Lewis's texts is divided into an introductory chapter / section concerned primarily with analyzing the expressive mode or rhetorical tool that is employed for effective conveyance of certain "Logos" and then a new chapter or further discussion focused on thematic explorations.

More specifically, when looking at the allegorical text, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, the "literariness" of the text is examined through a theoretical analysis of the suitability of "allegory" for Lewis to embody a most immaterial experience of transcendence. Next, in the introduction for the two texts of Lewis's theological fantasies, textual analyses are concerning the elements of "the fantastic" and "the ironic" as meaningful vehicles of communicating Lewis's theological imagination of the encounter between the supernatural and the subjective. Then, when it comes to the myth-rewritten

⁹ Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 132.

novel, *Till We Have Faces*, appreciation of the mythopoeic quality of Lewis's text is connected with how Lewis tactfully penetrates into and lays bare the (psychological) truth about the interplay between the development of personality and the growth of spirituality. At last, the study of *A Grief Observed* highlights self-reflective / "autobiographical" writing as a tremendously informative device to facilitate the "readerly experience" of a "landscape of grief" and the internal and ultimately victorious journey through a "crisis of faith." As regards the critical avenues for the service of this interdisciplinary study, a multiplicity of theoretical ideas is applied. Generally speaking, they are related to literary tropes, figures of speech, Jungian depth-psychology, the psychology of religion or mysticism, literary theory and Kierkegaard's existentialist philosophy of irony and last but not least (literary, theological, philosophical) hermeneutics. These miscellaneous tools offer illuminating "points of reference" for different interpretative contexts in accordance with the variety of forms of expression as well as the multi-disciplinary nature of Lewis's texts. Through the textual criticism and the exploration of religious themes as outlined above, this C. S. Lewis study looks to testify to the importance of *experiencing* not only the profundity of the religiousness but also the artful richness of the literariness displayed in the textual world of Lewis's religious literature.

Furthermore, in addition to demonstrating a comprehensive reading of Lewis's works, namely, looking into their literary and religious aspects, the task of interpreting these texts also includes some significant reflections upon the act of interpretation itself. That is to say, the research topics cover not only the theme of religion, *what* is "said" about the existential problem of faith, and the texture of the whole expression, *how* the accommodation of religious meaning within literary space is "made," but also the domain of literary hermeneutics. In fact, this last but not least topic—concerning good readership and the act of interpretation—in a sense, plays the most crucial role

in the undertaking of interdisciplinary research like this. After all, as informed by hermeneutic theories, it is only through interpretation that a text can speak to its audience. Moreover, to approach the kind of literature like Lewis's "literary apologetics," when literary reception must be coordinated with understanding of religious meaning, which means that interpretation may involve the experience of being "confronted" by Christian ideas, how to read thus becomes an issue of special importance and deserves considerable reflection. However, to this critical domain, namely, the significance of "hermeneutics" to the reception of Lewis's literature, very few critics give serious and sufficient consideration. None of them has indeed drawn any association between modern hermeneutic theories and the criticism of Lewis's literary works or the critical ideas established by Lewis. But, there is, in fact, a tremendously noteworthy and important connection between C. S. Lewis and the modern hermeneutic tradition. It is far from impertinent to observe that as Lewis's "literary apologetics" may still speak to the readers up to now *persuasively*, so does his literary criticism impart sophisticated insights which not only provide valuable and sustainable ideas to literary readers, including the readers of his own literature, but also serve to mark him out as an intellectually defensible contemporary thinker as well as literary figure.

Basically, the reason why talking about C. S. Lewis and his literature in terms of hermeneutics can be related to literary criticism in a general sense and to the special "hermeneutics" that the reception of C. S. Lewis's Christian literature¹⁰ may be concerned with. About the general guidelines of literary reception, we can indeed learn much from Lewis's celebrated scholarship in literary criticism. In fact, in some

¹⁰ The meaning of "Christian literature" in this study of Lewis's religious narratives is based on the definition Lewis gives in his article, "Christianity and Literature:" "Christian Literature *proprement dite*—, that is, of writing which is intended to affect us as literature, by its appeal to imagination." C. S. Lewis *Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2000, ed. Lesley Walmsley), p. 4.

of the following chapters, Lewis's insightful viewpoints, such as those on allegory, metaphor, religious language and myth, are often revisited and used as theoretical and critical references of great value. In addition to these literary categories, Lewis's keen observation about the interaction between reader and text is particularly instructive to the present study which intends to exercise "good reading" of Lewis's literary texts. C. S. Lewis, no doubt, has something to offer, not just about how modern people can believe again but also about how readers ought to *meet* a literary text.

To be more specific, the very conception that "the primary literary experience" is "the all-important conjunction (Reader Meets Text)," ¹¹ which Lewis proclaims as the paramount principle for the "literary mode of reading," provides both an important guideline for his readers and definite evidence of the link between Lewis and modern hermeneutics. Even though Lewis himself might not know it (or perhaps would not care about it), his attempt to pay significant attention to "the act of reading" made in *Experiment on Criticism* (1961), his last critical treatise, is in close parallel with the dominant trend of hermeneutics upheld by his contemporaries, such as the pre-eminent hermeneutic philosophers, Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002). The "experiment" Lewis proposes in this treatise is about a "shift" of literary judgment. Lewis recommends that literary evaluation be turned around from judging the reader's taste according to good or bad literature being read to deciding the value of literature by the quality of *how* it is read. From this inverse model of criticism, Lewis draws his conclusion that "[w]hatever the value of literature may be, it is actually only when and where good readers read."¹² Later in the same book, Lewis uses the case of appreciating the "Poema" to further expound the active

¹¹ Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 128-129.

¹² Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 104.

role of a reader in the experience of (the shape of) a text: “The parts of the *Poiema* are things we ourselves do; we entertain various imagination, imagined feelings, and thoughts in an order, and at a tempo, prescribed by the poet.”¹³ In this well-made explanation, Lewis most insightfully exemplifies the imperative of the reader’s engagement with the text.

Noticeably, Lewis’s proposal of moving the emphasis as well as the attention from author’s work (i.e. whether the text is good or not) to the reader’s exercise (i.e. what good reading is) is rather akin to modern reader-response criticism, although Lewis did not use this theoretical term. Moreover, Lewis’s idea of reading is not just sophisticated but even in a sense “advanced” in that it indeed anticipates what Ricoeur later names the “hermeneutical shift” in the wake of structuralism.¹⁴ As we can see in the quotation below, Ricoeur explicates and promotes a preferable “hermeneutic model” based on the “shift” of the site of meaning from subjectivity of either the author or the reader to the inherent “objectivity” of the text that awaits “co-operating” with the “horizon” of the reader so as to become *meaningful*:

The kind of hermeneutics which I now favour starts from the recognition of the objective meaning of the text as distinct from the subjective intention of the author. This objective meaning is not something hidden behind the text. Rather it is a requirement addressed to the reader. The interpretation accordingly is a kind of obedience to this injunction starting from the text. The concept of ‘hermeneutical circle’ . . . does not proceed so much from intersubjective relation linking the subjectivity of the author and the subjectivity of the reader as from a connection between two discourses, the discourse of the text and the discourse of the

¹³ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 133.

¹⁴ In “Conclusion: The Symbol Gives Rise to Thought,” Ricoeur provides a succinct account of what a text is according to “structuralism”: “For structuralism, language does not refer to anything outside of itself, it constitutes a world for itself. Not only the reference of the text to an external world, but also its connections to an author who *intended* it and to a reader who *interprets* it are excluded by structuralism. This twofold reference to a subject of the text, whether author or reader, is rejected as psychologism or ‘subjectivism.’” *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 319.

interpretation. This connection means that what has to be interpreted in a text is what it says and what it speaks about, i.e., the kind of world which it opens up or discloses; and the final act of ‘appropriation’ is less the projection of one’s own prejudices into the text than the ‘fusion of horizons’—to speak like Hans-Georg Gadamer—which occurs when the world of the reader and the world of the text merge into one another.¹⁵

From this astute exposition of Ricoeur’s on the transformation of hermeneutic theories “from a ‘romanticist’ trend to a more ‘objectivist’ trend,” it is observable that C. S. Lewis’s critical leaning is basically in line with the “post-structuralist” development of hermeneutics, even if Lewis himself never made such a connection, nor did he reflect upon reading or text-understanding in any philosophical terms as Ricoeur or Gadamer did. Still, it is not far-fetched or impossible at all to link Lewis’s stance in literary criticism or even his literary creation with the theory of interpretation informed by contemporary hermeneutics. In fact, some hermeneutical insights offered by Lewis’s contemporary thinkers are evidently resonant with Lewis’s critical outlook and also may serve as useful references for the reception of Lewis’s literary texts.

In addition to the notion of reading (or understanding) as an “event” of “dialogic” interplay between text and reader, a hermeneutic principle that Ricoeur rightly holds identifiable with Gadamer’s idea of the “fusion of horizons,”¹⁶ some hermeneutic thoughts, particularly those concerning the phenomenology of religion, are of illuminating value to the present study. Indeed, the profound reflections over

¹⁵ Ricoeur, *Ibid.* p. 319.

¹⁶ The idea of interpretation as an “event” is derived from Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, in *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975, trans. & ed. Garrett Barden and John Cumming), p. 429. Gadamer’s hermeneutics is well expounded and appropriated by the German theorist of literary hermeneutics Hans Robert Jauss, who follows Gadamer, especially the latter’s insight on the “historicity of understanding,” to highlight the “dialogic character” of “literary communication.” See H. R. Jauss. “Horizon Structure and Dialogicity,” *Question and Answer: Forms of Dialogic Understanding* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, ed. & trans. Michael Hays), pp. 197-231.

the relation between literary art / criticism and religion / belief obtained from hermeneutic philosophers or theologians, such as Gadamer, Ricoeur and David Tracy, are called upon from time to time throughout this research. They are treated as references of no subordinate order but of guiding importance. For instance, Ricoeur's following pronouncement is of special relevance to the overall objective of this interpretation of Lewis's religious narratives: "The symbol gives rise to thought . . . it wishes to answer to a certain situation of modern culture."¹⁷ Taken as "symbolic" rather than merely "rhetoric" conveyance of the *real* situation of the intertwined problem of faith and the self in modern time or beyond, Lewis's Christian literature must entertain such a wish as Ricoeur states. But, how can we possibly *hear* the "answer" it "wishes" to give? To this question, Ricoeur, again, offers a most promising guideline to us readers, or critics; he later proclaims: "we modern men, aim at a second naiveté in and through criticism. In short, it is by *interpreting* that we can *hear* again."¹⁸

In fact, the underlying purpose this study pursues is importantly inspired by this famous proclamation of Ricoeur's. That is to say, through the practice of interpretation, e.g. "structural [or textual] analysis" and also "existential appropriation,"¹⁹ of Lewis's Christian literature, this research looks to show that embedded within Lewis's texts is some "apologetic answer" for us to "hear," that is, some *corrective key* to the disunion between human existence and faith in God. It is worth reiterating here that this study at the same time argues that the "Christian apologetics" indicated in Lewis's imaginative writing are intermingled with the literary art of Lewis's works. Furthermore, the *interplay* going on within the making

¹⁷ Ricoeur, "Conclusion: The Symbol Gives Rise to Thought," *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 348.

¹⁸ Ricoeur, *Ibid.* p. 351.

¹⁹ Ricoeur's phrases, derived from his book, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, c1977, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello), p. 321.

or reception of these texts is not between the literary and the religious only. It must involve also the “hermeneutic.” As both Lewis and Ricoeur have taught us, without good reading or even the mere act of interpretation, texts cannot really speak to us. Likewise, until all these essential parts of understanding, i.e. literary art, religious / “apologetic” meaning and “hermeneutics,” are taken into perspective, the “Logos” or “answer” of Lewis’s religious literature could not emerge to become our “window.”²⁰ Through it, our existential reflection upon our being might be deepened and our perception of the supernatural truth about the divine re-awakened. But we cannot *use* such a window without *receiving* the whole world of which the window is only a part. After his literary world is well received and its “truth-revealing” window is properly used, then, to us (post-) modern readers of C. S. Lewis, the will not to power²¹ but to believe, i.e. “the second naiveté,” could possibly become the “fundamental self”²² within each of us.

Ultimately, the attainment of such a self, that is, possessing “post-critical” naiveté to believe, even just open to an apologetic voice / overtone within literature, would signify a possible meeting of the two contradictory patterns of mind noted by Gadamer—“the claim of the Christian message” that “we cannot achieve” without faith and “the radicality of the Enlightenment,” the opposite claim that we can and must make our *own* achievement, e.g., do our *own* understanding.²³

²⁰ Cf. Lewis’s words, “Literature as Logos is a series of windows, even of doors.” *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 138.

²¹ The idea “power” here is used in Nietzsche’s sense, which has a anti-religious / anti-Christian connotation of the self-dependence or self-sufficiency of mankind.

²² This phrase is quoted from Austin Farrer’s article, “The Christian Apologist,” collected in the book, *Light on C. S. Lewis* (London: Bles, 1965, ed. Jocelyn Gibb), published in remembrance of C. S. Lewis. Farrer remarks there: “The very thing that reconversion does is to persuade a man to take a believing self as his fundamental self. We may say at the best that belief is a real (if smothered) attitude in such minds; and it is this that offers an opening to the apologetic approach.” See p. 24.

²³ In the conclusion of his essay, “Aesthetic and Religious Experience,” Gadamer suggests the confliction or contradiction between Christian message which claims the incapacity of human beings to achieve what faith will achieve for them and the Enlightenment mindset of believing in and relying on one’s self to do the thinking for oneself. The quotation of Gadamer’s words can be seen on page 153. See also Kant’s essay, “What is Enlightenment?” especially the opening paragraph.

Ch. I. Allegory and the Mixed Textuality of *The Pilgrim's Regress*

Despite the proclaimed objective to *generalize*²⁴ through allegorical imagination, or representation, of an individual's pilgrimage, C. S. Lewis's allegory and apologia—*The Pilgrim's Regress*—is most truly based on his *personal* history of conversion, which is largely intellectually engaged, as can be seen in its full account of the dialectic of Lewis's own philosophical progress, and more subtly and significantly involved with his subjective experience of the “dialectic of desire.”²⁵ On the other hand, *The Pilgrim's Regress* is far from simply an autobiographical account or, as it were, a “virgin” and “disguised” version of the explicitly autobiographical and completely subjective book, *Surprised by Joy*, appearing about twenty years later but in tremendous parallel with this first apologetic allegory in the context of his conversion. Instead, this allegorized and intentionally generalized account is substantially a work of *art*, even if it may be arguable to decide how artistic it is. To solve this *textual* issue, perhaps the sensible idea is to apply what Lewis the literary critic suggests in *The Allegory of Love* that “life and letters are inextricably intermixed”²⁶ to the reading of his own allegorical text, which attempts to “embody” (rather than to “disguise”) his intellectual, psychic and spiritual experiences with the imaginative, precisely *allegorical*, mode of expression. Accordingly, it is legitimate, even necessary, to put the “twofold textuality,” brought forth by the intermixture of the element of literariness and that of autobiography, into consideration of Lewis's

²⁴ In his “Afterword to Third Edition,” Lewis concludes by the claim that “I was attempting to generalize, not to tell people about my own life.” *The Pilgrim's Regress* (London: Bles Ltd., [1933] 1992), p. 209.

²⁵ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 205.

²⁶ In the first chapter of *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958) on “Courtly Love,” C. S. Lewis also recommends: “we avoid that fatal dichotomy which makes every poem either an autobiographical document or a ‘literary exercise’—as if any poem worth writing were either the one or the other” (22). This critical assertion sounds valid and supportive of my approach to his allegorical text.

only allegorical and first post-conversion apologetic book.

However, to clarify the critical position underlying the following discussion, it should be emphasized that the recognition of “double textuality,” the textual nature derived from the combination of life and art, does not lead to a “joint criticism” of *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, that is, a criticism engaged in the double venture into literary and biographical criticism. Rather, centered on Lewis’s text of the allegory of a modern self’s conversion, this study maintains that the whole text *per se* be treated as a work of art, not a general autobiography. Yet, this does not mean to overlook the relevance of the biographical context of Lewis’s “adventure of faith.” After all, there is undeniable correspondence between Lewis’s own journey and the pilgrimage delineated in the allegory. The biographical context can thus be the valuable *point of reference* to help unravel the elusiveness yielded particularly by the autobiographical element, e.g., the mystery of Lewis’s experience of “Joy” and the complexity of his mental development which is to a great extent philosophically charted and culminates in conversion to Christian faith. Nevertheless, the autobiographical element ought not to be overemphasized in the criticism of the allegory. One can be reminded that Lewis himself, in the expository “Afterword,” referred oftentimes to his life-experiences, particularly of the desire called “Joy,” and acknowledged the “subjectivism” of his allegory about such a particular experience which is indeed full of his own testimony of various cheats in the identification of its unnamable “object.” However, he did also insist that his writing was not intended to be a *personally* subjective account but really a “generalized” allegory. Basically, the following reading of *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, with all biographical association, would take up the authorial intent on “aesthetic objectivity” as the starting point of critical evaluation.

Meanwhile, it is worth making clear in the beginning that the framework of the following analysis as a whole is not simply aesthetics-concerned. In fact, as the

outline below would show, this discussion of *The Pilgrim's Regress* means to comprehend both its literary form (allegory) and its content (the narrative of "Joy" and "conversion," which are, in a sense, no less "intermixed" than the art and life of the artist.) Such a, so to speak, "juxtaposed study" is based upon a simple critical standpoint that a *comprehensive* study of this apologetic allegory, or allegorical apology, of Lewis's cannot evade the double task of considering both its *formal* texture of being an allegory and the *religious* themes treated in the allegorical text.

Starting with Lewis's literary enterprise, the discussion, in the first part, attempts to grapple with the fundamental question about what "allegory" is, at least for Lewis, and then to relate the understanding of Lewis's idea of allegory with the two significant textual elements of his apologetic allegory, i.e., "generality" (intermixed with individuality) and "interdisciplinarity" (religious literature). The chief aim here is to examine theoretically the kind of literary enterprise Lewis is undertaking in *The Pilgrim's Regress* so as to pave the way for further content-interpretation. When it comes to the thematic aspect, the critical analysis, in the following chapter, is mainly concerned with interpreting the allegorical pilgrimage, including its "dialectical" nature and religious meaning (the theme of conversion) and its relationship with the modern context and Lewis's apologetic concerns. In this multi-layered discussion about the religious themes, one of the key tasks is to probe into the problem of "modernity" represented and "interpreted" and "lived through" in Lewis's allegorical pilgrimage, which is understood in this analysis as a modern self's inquiry into religious faith. From the perspective that Lewis's representation of the modern pilgrimage is laden with his "critical interpretation" of modernity, Lewis's apologetic confrontation with the modern problem of "faith" in the allegory will thus be regarded as attributable to his "hermeneutic" enterprise. Following this hermeneutical reading of Lewis's critique and representation of modernity, the last part of the discussion

seeks to re-estimate Lewis's apologetic enterprise "to date" through correlating it with (David Tracy's) "postmodern" hermeneutical thinking about apologetics.

It is noticeable that this study of *The Pilgrim's Regress*, on the whole, is of multiple concerns—basically with literariness, religiousness and its historical preoccupation. These three critical categories are, in effect, inter-related elements within Lewis's text. Through these three elements and their interplay, it can be demonstrated that the "textuality" of Lewis's allegory is indeed full of the intermixtures of art and life, literature and religion. Moreover, they can be associated with three kinds of enterprise undertaken by Lewis as a *modern* apologetic allegorist, including the literary enterprise, apologetic enterprise and even hermeneutical enterprise. Through such a triple enterprise, the readers of *The Pilgrim's Regress* are presented not merely with Lewis's distinctive vision of the problem of faith within the modern soul but also a multi-faceted picture of the possible way to become a convert in the modern age of unbelief.

Concerning the "textuality" of *The Pilgrim's Regress*, the first inquiry is about the quality of Lewis's allegorical writing in which "life" is mediated by and amalgamated with "art." In what sense and by what means is Lewis's allegory a "generalized" account of the absolutely subjective journey of a particular individual? This question, in another word, is concerned with how the two extremely distinct elements, objectivity / generality and subjectivity / individuality, are co-existent in the allegorical text. In one sense, it is a literary investigation into the *style* of writing, looking specifically at the aesthetic manner in which Lewis manages to allegorize the "lived experience." According to David Tracy, a contemporary hermeneutic thinker, style criticism is not "an exercise of biographical criticism" but "an explanation of how individual meanings are produced through peculiar strategies of stylistic

refiguration.”²⁷ In addition to the rhetorical devices and effects, criticism of style also involves inspecting what “individuating way of envisioning the world” is begotten by some “distinctive style,” as further suggested by Tracy. In light of this definition of style, there remains notably a close relation between style and “individuality,” which again can be associated with the “inner life” of the text in which “art” is “inextricably intermixed” with “life” (or mind of the artist).

Before embarking on such “style criticism,” which, in Tracy’s terms, actually involves considerations of both art and theme and therefore will be taken more seriously in the later discussion, the main topic concerning “style” for now is the distinctive “tool” or “mode of expression” through which Lewis represents the individual-pilgrim’s “inward experiences,” or “inner conflict” prior to faith. In other words, the question of “style” is shifted to the literary inquiry into “allegory” as a special way of “talking”—how it functions in the pseudo-autobiographical, tremendously subjective and yet “artistically objectified” text. After all, “allegory” is the very means of “refiguration” Lewis chose to *generalize* the experience of taking a psychic and spiritual journey to faith, which originally belongs to himself, then allegorically to the pilgrim-hero, John, and suggestively even to everyman. The question is: *How* “allegory” (or the allegorist) manages to make it—to mingle generality with individuality, or objectivity with subjectivity, and thus form the special, indeed mixed textuality for a text like *The Pilgrim’s Regress*?

To answer this question, perhaps we need to listen first to Lewis’s definition of allegory in his scholarly magnum opus, *The Allegory of Love*,²⁸ which established him as a well-known and authoritative theorist of allegory. At the very beginning of

²⁷ David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (London: SCM Press, 1988), p. 45.

²⁸ Interestingly, there is only a short time difference between the writing of *The Pilgrim’s Regress* in 1932 and the publication of *The Allegory of Love* (1936), which, though not necessarily promises the compatibility between practice and theory, indeed adds to the impression that Lewis when writing as an allegorist must have possessed an outstanding awareness of what allegory is up to.

his chapter on allegory, the literary historian Lewis offers his insight on what allegory is in rather strikingly *general* terms. He says, “Allegory, in some sense, belongs not to medieval man but to man, or even to mind, in general. It is of the very nature of thought and language to represent what is immaterial in picturable terms.”²⁹ What is striking and also illuminating in this remark is Lewis’s suggestion that allegory can stand for the most indispensable element in human expression and thinking, which, Lewis explains, depends on “a kind of psycho-physical parallelism in the universe,” a phrase coined by Lewis in his essay on “metaphor,” “Bluspels and Flalansferes.”³⁰ To put in another way, Lewis is proclaiming that the allegorical exercise is equivalent to the exercise of the human mind; linguistically, both are in some degree fundamentally metaphorical. Besides, according to Lewis in the same essay, good metaphors are our significant way to acquire “truth,” or truthful meaning, because the metaphorical is the fundamental quality of language itself.

If “truth” sometimes must be conveyed metaphorically, certainly the truth of our “interior reality” is necessarily so. It is based on this point that Lewis relates the role of metaphor in thinking to the function of allegory. He puts in *The Allegory of Love* that “[w]e cannot speak, perhaps we can hardly think, of an ‘inner conflict’ without a metaphor; and every metaphor is an allegory in little.”³¹ The equivalence between metaphor and allegory leads to the observation that in terms of Lewis, the significance of allegory is not restricted to the technical level of being merely a rhetorical “copy machine,” as commonly but “unfairly” attributed to allegory. Instead, allegory, even just for personification or reification, is treated as a “truth-revealing” vehicle, because it is, in essence, metaphorical language. Like all good, that is, not “fossilized,”

²⁹ Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, p. 44.

³⁰ Lewis, “Bluspels and Flalansferes,” *Rehabilitations and Other Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 158.

³¹ Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, p. 60.

metaphor, good allegory, in nature, involves the free play of the imagination, and “imagination is the organ of meaning,”³² according to Lewis. To some extent, this positive idea about what allegory is (up to) may illuminate the connection between the allegorical element and the “generality” of Lewis’s allegorical text of the extremely subjective and individual life-experience. Firstly, because of its innate capacity for “embodying” the invisible interiority of human mind, allegory becomes a totally justifiable means of expression for Lewis to convey the subjectively and internally experienced sense of desire or longing, i.e., the most abstract and mysterious feeling of “Joy.” Moreover, simply through embodying the immateriality of the felt mystery (of Joy), allegory, as a literary “conveyor,” is capable of pointing, not directly but suggestively, to the “truth” beyond the subjective experience of feeling itself and even beyond the feeling subject too.

In the context of *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, we have, on the one hand, the vivified portrayal of the subjective experience of “Joy,” evoked by glimpses of “an island” or mistakenly by sensuous impulse or temptingly by other substitutes of ideas, literary or philosophical. On the other hand, we are ultimately presented with the vision of the “authentic” object of that desire, which is of religious signification and significance. That is to say, however it can be aroused or associated, the very experience of “Joy” represents an unnamable desire of every soul,³³ which is a mystical experience of religious order. In other words, the essentially religious experience of “Joy” does not belong to a single individual only but is actually the *general* reality of human soul. Besides, in literary terms, the allegorized pilgrim is imbued with the “textual metaphoricity” to such an extent that he is no longer easily identifiable with any specific individual, no matter how much autobiographical element can be traced in the

³² Lewis, “Bluspels and Flalansferes,” p. 157.

³³ This is a paraphrase of Plato’s thought appearing in the epigraph for Book one of *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, p. 1.

central experience of the pilgrim's inner life. In other words, the pilgrim's journey to seek out the irresistible but indiscernible "object" of some mysterious yearning is "aesthetically objectified." This "aesthetic objectivity" can be sensed by the allegorical representation of the individual-pilgrim's inward experiences, which are turned into outward adventures, and ultimately, the "physical" journey is, so to speak, turned around to be suggestive of a spiritual pilgrimage in "faith." From this perspective, we may infer that in the allegorical text of *The Pilgrim's Regress*, "allegory" is indeed a useful "comprehensive" tool for representing not just "subjectivity" but also, as it were, "generalized subjectivity."

Furthermore, to better appreciate Lewis's own allegory, it is worthwhile to go deeper into Lewis's "defence" for allegory. Considering Lewis's far from restricted but profound understanding of allegory, we could find it totally fallacious to see it as "derived uncritically from the negative . . . and unsympathetic Romantic definition of allegory,"³⁴ as asserted by William Gray in his critical book, *C. S. Lewis* (1998). In the largely informing chapter, "Telling it Slant: The Allegorical Imperative," Gray points out a "fundamental inconsistency" between Lewis's critical reading of medieval allegory and his theoretical commitment to the Romanticist (particularly Coleridge's) "restrictive definition of allegory"³⁵ in *The Allegory of Love*. Although the question of "consistency" between Lewis's criticism and theory is not the concern of the present discussion, it seems very incredible that the tremendously, if not perfectly, logical Lewis can be "fundamentally inconsistent" in this way and in his academic masterpiece. The relevant question here lies in Gray's observation that Lewis's theory of allegory "deeply" follows the "Romantic privileging of the vibrant,

³⁴ William Gray's chapter essay, "Telling it Slant: The Allegorical Imperative," *C. S. Lewis* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1998), p. 28.

³⁵ Gray, *Ibid*, p. 29.

revelatory symbol over sterile and pedantic allegory.”³⁶ This is really a questionable observation because it is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of Lewis’s idea of allegory and also of Lewis’s demarcation between allegory and symbol. Gray’s quotation of Lewis’s thought in *The Allegory of Love* remains consultable:

But there is another way . . . which is almost the opposite of allegory, and which I would call sacramentalism or symbolism. If our passions, being immaterial, can be copied by material inventions, then it is possible that our material world in its turn is the copy of an invisible world. The attempt to read through its sensible imitations, to *see* the archetype in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism . . . The allegorist leaves the given—his own passions—to *talk of* that which is confessedly less real, which is a fiction. The symbolist leaves the given to *find* another that is more real. To put the difference in another way, for the symbolist it is we who are the allegory.³⁷

(Emphasis added)

Evidently, Lewis here contrasts allegory with symbolism and appears to line up with the Romantics in holding that symbol is the true representative of “the real,” or immaterial reality, whereas allegory is but “the copy”—the fictively materialized imitation of the real. Moreover, Lewis indeed echoes Coleridge in making sharp distinction between symbol and allegory,³⁸ which leaves the impression that he also

³⁶ The original complete sentence of Gray is: “Romantic privileging of the vibrant, revelatory symbol over sterile and pedantic allegory was a not unjustified reaction to what allegory had become by the eighteenth century” (Gray, 28). As far as Romantic negative reaction to the development of allegory is concerned, Gray’s remark is reasonable. Yet, it does not mean that the unsympathetic Romantic view of allegory can represent Lewis’s idea of allegory, including its essential quality and function.

³⁷ Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, p. 45.

³⁸ Unlike Lewis, who attempts to define allegory by contrasting it with symbol, Coleridge, before him, did it the other way around. In his own words: “The symbolical cannot, perhaps, be better defined in distinction from the Allegorical.” See *Coleridge’s Miscellaneous Criticism* (London: Constable and Co. Ltd, 1936, ed. T. M. Raysor), p.99. In his *Lay Sermons* (30-1), Coleridge defines the two categories in contrasted terms: “an Allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses . . . On the other hand a Symbol is characterized by . . .the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative.” Quoted from *Coleridge’s*

“parrots” Coleridge’s Romantic “privileging” symbol over allegory. However, does Lewis really take the theoretical position of Romanticists to devalue allegory as opposed to symbol because only the latter can be the genuine instrument of imagination or the (aesthetic) mediator between nature and thought, as claimed by Coleridge the most prominent Romantic thinker?³⁹ This surely is not the case. As a literary historian himself, when he is looking at the issue about the difference between allegory and symbolism, especially in the context of medieval literature, Lewis’s approach is far from dominated or prejudiced by the viewpoint of the romantics. Instead, the historical scope of his understanding is much wider indeed. From his wide awareness of the literary roots of either allegory or symbolism in the Middle Ages, which, according to Lewis, can be traced separately back to the mode of “the personifications in classical Latin poetry”⁴⁰ and the “diffused Platonism” of the early Christian writers,⁴¹ it is clearly demonstrated that Lewis’s judgment of the two literary modes is one of sophistication rather than “provincialism,” i.e., confined by a merely Romanticist perspective.

Reading carefully Lewis’s exposition, we would see that Lewis, much unlike the romantics, actually takes no stance of “favoritism” toward either allegory or symbol in his demarcation of them. To Lewis, their difference does not necessarily have anything to do with “value.” Right before his passage quoted above, Lewis at first explains that allegory and symbolism are “two ways” in which our mind makes use of the “fundamental equivalence between the immaterial and the material.” It means

Writings vol. 3 on language (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998, ed. A.C. Goodson), p. 80.

³⁹ This conception of Coleridge’s about “symbol” is noted in R. L. Brett’s book about Coleridge, *Fancy and Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1969). In one chapter, “Symbol and Concept,” Brett puts: “For [Coleridge], a work of art is a symbol which mediates between the world of nature and the world of thought” (Brett, 54).

⁴⁰ Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, p. 48.

⁴¹ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 45-46. These writers, mentioned by Lewis, include Augustine, the pseudo-Dionysius, Macrobius, and “the divine popularizer Boethius” (p. 46).

that we can see such “pairs of sensibles and insensibles”⁴² as good and the sun, evil and dark, in either allegory or symbol. That is to say, allegory and symbol are both related to the mind’s employment of what Lewis terms “psycho-physical parallelism,” i.e., metaphorical language. In this sense, they are not absolute “opposites” after all but can be, in effect, of “congeniality” to some extent. Besides, in the passage quoted above, what Lewis underlines is their different function and purpose from the angle of their users or “makers,” namely, allegorist and symbolist. According to Lewis, the allegorist is basically concerned with the “speech-act” itself—*how* to “talk of” the invisible or the abstract, such as passions. As for the symbolist, it is *what* can be “perceived” beyond the “literal” speech that matters. Regarding the fundamental distinction between allegory and symbolism (not symbol), Lewis later sums up his viewpoints in a pithy remark: “Symbolism is a mode of thought, but allegory is a mode of expression.”⁴³ In terms of Lewis’s *functional* demarcation between symbolism and allegory as well as his affirmation of the congenial quality in symbol and allegory, can Lewis be really counted as an “uncritical” follower of “Romantic privileging” of symbol over allegory as William Gray assumes?

Intriguingly, Gray’s misunderstanding of Lewis’s ideas of allegory, which he mistakenly equates with the Romantic “prejudice” against allegory, is probably due to the confusion caused by the fact that when it comes to “imaginative writing,” be it symbolic or allegorical or simply metaphorical or even mythic, Lewis actually blurs the demarcation between these “figurative” categories. The awareness of this is particularly important when we approach his allegorical writing—*The Pilgrim’s Regress*. In other words, Lewis is an unrestrictive allegorist not only in theory but also in practice. The tendency of Lewis (the imaginative writer) to “intermix”

⁴² Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, p. 44.

⁴³ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 48.

different rhetorical tools is most evidently suggested in the “Afterword” when he tries to make an “apology” for adding the running headline to the new edition of *The Pilgrim’s Regress*:

My headline is there only because my allegory failed—partly through my own fault (I am now heartily ashamed of the preposterous allegorical filigree on p.90), and partly because modern readers are unfamiliar with the method. But it remains true that wherever the *symbols* are best, the key is least adequate. For when *allegory* is at its best, it approaches *myth*, which must be grasped with the *imagination*, not with the intellect. If, as I still sometimes hope, my North and South and my Mr. Sensible have some touch of mystical life, then no amount of ‘explanation’ will quite catch up with their meaning. (208, emphasis added)

In this brief “literary apology,” it is noticeable that Lewis indeed expects his allegorical text to be the “combination” of the allegorical and the symbolic as well as the mythic.⁴⁴ This “textual” quality is of course not a result of what William Gray asserts—“Lewis’s leaky vessels of allegory and myth / symbolism” or that “Lewis is working with ...an impoverished concept of allegory.”⁴⁵ As a matter of fact, though underscoring the distinction between allegory and symbol in *The Allegory of Love*, Lewis at the same time notes that “the two things [are] *closely intertwined*”⁴⁶ (emphasis added).

Apparently different from William Gray’s perspective, Doris T. Myers, in the essay entitled “The Context of Metaphor,”⁴⁷ offers an insightful study of Lewis’s

⁴⁴ Actually, the same passage is, again, misinterpreted by William Gray in his essay “The Allegorical Imperatives” wherein he comments that Lewis is contradictory as a theorist of allegory and a creative writer because, according to Gray, “for [Lewis’s] allegory to succeed as a story, it must turn into which is defined as being its opposite—that is, myth or symbolism” (Gray, 30).

⁴⁵ Gray, *Ibid*, p. 30.

⁴⁶ Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, p. 45.

⁴⁷ The essay is one of the chapters in Myers’s *C. S. Lewis in Context* (1994).

metaphors by the allegorical text of *The Pilgrim's Regress*. In her interpretation, Myers recognizes that there is indeed some combination of and “interplay” between “symbol” and “allegory.” Such recognition is indicated in Myers’s central idea of interpreting Lewis’s allegory as “structured” by the “interplay” between two types of metaphors— “archetypal metaphors that are just ‘there’ and individually created metaphors.”⁴⁸ Myers’s categorization of the two kinds of metaphor is clearly borrowing Owen Barfield’s distinction between “the unitive metaphor” and “the analytic metaphor,”⁴⁹ developed in *Poetic Diction*, which is also the book Myers claims profoundly influences Lewis, at least in the context of metaphor. What is noteworthy in Myers’s metaphorical reading of *The Pilgrim's Regress* is that she actually identifies the usage of “the archetypal metaphors,” held to be one of *Regress*’s predominant allegorical “structures,” with what Lewis defines as “sacramentalism or symbolism.” Such identification may sound somewhat confusing; one cannot but wonder: how come Lewis’s allegorical use of metaphor can be equal to what Lewis claims is opposite to allegory, that is, the symbolical. Paradoxically, the confusion may be exactly the reinforcement of the critical perspective that in Lewis’s allegory the allegorical and the symbolical can be “intermixed” to such an extent that one is inseparable from the other. Moreover, Myers’s reading out of *The Pilgrim's Regress* the “intermixture” of elements of allegory and symbol, or to put in another way, the combination of the “individual invention” and “the archetype,” serves to back up my observation about the “textuality” of Lewis’s allegory—the intermingling of the individual and the general (or universal).

⁴⁸ Doris T. Myers, *C. S. Lewis in Context* (Kent, Oh.; London: Kent State University Press, c1994), p.12.

⁴⁹ Myers quotes Barfield to explain that “the unitive metaphor, ‘given, as it were, by Nature,’ and the analytic metaphor, in which an individual ‘register[s] as *thought*’ a perceived relationship (102-103)” (Myers, 12). Myers’s “archetypal metaphor” is modeling on the first kind, “individual metaphor,” the second. See *C. S. Lewis in Context*, p. 12.

In theory or in creative practice, Lewis's paradoxical (yet not contradictory) treatment of the distinction between allegory and symbol—opposing the two rhetorical categories on the one hand and exposing the possibility of their “interpenetration” on the other—testifies to the sophistication and “objectiveness” of Lewis's perception of “allegory” in both literary criticism and creative writing. Lewis can be held “objective” precisely in the sense that Romantic as he is theoretically and imaginatively inclined to be, his understanding of the nature and function of allegory, however, is not in blind commitment to the Romanticist disaffirmation of allegory. Seen from the angle of their functions, it is absolutely valid to hold the view that the allegorical and the symbolical are in some *co-operative* relationship, particularly in the literary text concerned with religion. From this point of view, Lewis's literary notion and exercise of allegory are to a great extent correspondent with the hermeneutical ideas about the difference and similarity between allegory and symbol stated by the modern, also Lewis's contemporary, German hermeneutic philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002).

In his essay entitled “The relevance of the beautiful: Art as play, symbol, and festival” (1977), Gadamer attempts to return to the “original,” i.e., classical, definition of allegory and its distinction from symbol with an indication of the need to do “justice” to the former in spite of its functional contrast to the latter:

[A]t least in the classical use of the term . . . “allegory” means that what we actually say is different from what we mean, . . . As a result of the classicist conception of the symbol, which does not refer to something other than itself in this way, allegory has unfairly come to be regarded as something cold and unartistic.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Gadamer, “The relevance of the beautiful: Art as play, symbol, and festival,” *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, p.32.

As asserted here by Gadamer, despite the contrast between allegory and symbol, it remains “unfair” to deprive the allegorical of its “artistic” quality. In other words, no less than symbol, allegory can be practice of *art* as well and therefore also the very mediator of religious meaning, instead of being merely its “manifestation,” because Gadamer in this essay makes clear that “art achieves more than the mere manifestation of meaning.”⁵¹ Furthermore, Gadamer’s hermeneutical viewpoints about the “common ground” between allegory and symbol stated in his masterpiece, *Truth and Method*, as quoted below, may serve to justify Lewis’s insight about the combination and “co-operation” of the allegorical and the symbolical, the “two ways” of approaching the immaterial reality, such as religious truth:

Allegory originally belonged to the sphere of talk, of the logos, and is therefore a rhetorical or hermeneutical figure. Instead of what is actually meant, something else, more tangible, is said, but in such a way as to suggest the other. Symbol, however, is not limited to the sphere of the logos, for a symbol is not related by its meaning to another meaning, but its own sensuous nature has ‘meaning’. . . . [Allegory and symbol] both find their chief application in the religious sphere. . . . The allegorical procedure of interpretation and the symbolical procedure of knowledge have the same justification: it is not possible to know the divine in any other way than by starting from the world of the senses.⁵²

In this informing exposition, Gadamer obviously holds a “favorable” view to both allegory and symbol as equally significant and “applicable” though functionally different [allegory for “interpreting” purpose; symbol for “knowing” purpose] conveyors of religious meaning. In terms of this as well as the emphasis on the

⁵¹ Gadamer, *Ibid*, p. 34.

⁵² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 65-66.

common use of the visible or the sensual in the allegorical and symbolical expression of transcendental reality, Gadamer indeed echoes Lewis the theorist and allegorist.

In addition, Gadamer's notion of allegory, as being as good as symbol, to be a qualified and applicable tool especially for the religious text confirms the "validity" of Lewis's employing allegory (containing the symbolical element) to concretize and generalize the pilgrim's "inner conflicts," which ultimately become the mental and spiritual struggles with faith in transcendence. In line with Gadamer's points of view, Lewis's ideas in *The Allegory of Love* also provide the theoretical "justification" for his allegorical writing of the "romantically" and spiritually adventurous pilgrimage:

The function of allegory is not to hide but to reveal, and it is properly used only for that which cannot be said, or so well said, in literal speech. The inner life, and specially the life of love, religion, and spiritual adventure, has therefore always been the field of true allegory; for here there are intangibles which only allegory can fix and reticences which only allegory can overcome.⁵³

It is noticeable that both Gadamer and the theorist Lewis notify the propriety of the "marriage" between allegory and religion. Their agreement in this respect is meaningful to the reading of *The Pilgrim's Regress*, which is not a mere allegory after all but an allegorical text intermingled with significant religious meaning. To put it in another way, the ineradicable truth about Lewis's allegorical text is that it is not just a text *of* literature but also a work *for* Christian apologetics. Based on the awareness of its twofold "textuality," or in another words, its "interdisciplinarity," it is perfectly reasonable to hold that the criticism of *The Pilgrim's Regress* demands a double critical undertaking—not only of literary analysis but also of religious study. In

⁵³ Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, p. 166.

other words, it requires a kind of “joint criticism”—putting equal significance to inquiries about literariness and about religious meaning conveyed or embedded within the literary text. Such an inter-disciplinary research is exactly what this study of Lewis’s allegory means to do.

Following the theoretical discussion about “allegory” and the investigation focused on the literary facet of the text, the subject matter of the next chapter is shifted to the religious facet to look closely at Lewis’s apologetic enterprise in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*. Before embarking on the new critical task, it needs to be reiterated that the allegorical and the religious are not two “separate” and unrelated elements of the text. In effect, they together form the unity, or “integrity,” of the text. Therefore, the religious study of Lewis’s apologetic allegory could be seen as a continuing or extended inquiry into the “artfulness” and function of “allegory,” now only more concerned with an added dimension, namely, the religiousness of *the* allegory.

Ch. II. *The Pilgrim's Regress*: A Modern Self's Pilgrimage toward Conversion

"Be sure it is not for nothing that the Landlord has knit our hearts so closely to time
and place—to one friend rather than another and one shire more than all the land."

--C. S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress*

This chapter is focused on the religious aspect of *The Pilgrim's Regress* by associating the allegorical pilgrimage with Lewis's apologetic enterprise, particularly in terms of the text's "historical preoccupation," that is, its close relationship with the *modern* context. Regarding the theme of religion and apologetics, what is the primary concern of Lewis's allegory? Generally speaking, it is mainly about the "modern phenomena of conversion" manifested in an individual's pilgrimage, or, to be more specific, about the crucial factors, *subjective and objective*, that lead a "modern" pilgrim toward or distract him from conversion. In view of this, to probe into the "religiousness" of Lewis's apologetic allegory, there are at least two critical issues of tremendous importance: firstly, the nature and meaning of the modern pilgrimage; secondly, the theme of conversion. It is through exploring these two topics that the following discussion looks to grasp the quality and efficacy of the "apologetic enterprise" Lewis ventures on in *The Pilgrim's Regress*.

To understand the *particular* pilgrimage of the allegory, the proposed interpretation is to put it in "context." Such a "contextual" reading is based on the perspective that the whole allegorical pilgrimage is *located* within both the particular / subjective context of the individual self's inward life and the general / objective context of the "intellectual climate" or "spiritual phenomena" of *modern* time. To be sure, the two qualities—the "particularity" of an individual's inner self and the "generality" derived from the outer / historical situation—are not just juxtaposed but

coalesced in the modern pilgrimage concerned. Moreover, the very “interaction” between the two contexts, personal (self) and historical (situation) can be proved to be most significant in the nature of the pilgrimage represented in Lewis’s allegory. But, here comes a further question—in what sense do these two co-existent contexts interact with each other?

To cope with this question, some insights of the contemporary hermeneutic theologian, David Tracy, on the correlation between self and other are especially informative and helpful. For instance, the subjective and objective contexts can be associated with the socio-scientific terms David Tracy employs, namely, “the microstructure of our individual psyches” and “the macrostructure affecting us all.”⁵⁴ To put in another way, the two contexts in question can be understood by the conceptions of “microstructure,” referred to the “individual interiority,” and “macrostructure,” speaking of the “historical situatedness,” (or “tradition” in Tracy’s term). These two conceptions come from Tracy’s theory about “correlation” between “situation” and “tradition.” Certainly the significance of Tracy’s “correlational theory” does not lie in the mere terminology he offers. Speaking as a proponent of pluralistic dialogue in religion, Tracy most significantly appeals to a hermeneutic conversation which demands what he calls “constant self-exposure to the other” in order that the “focal meaning” of one’s own particularity and the “focal meaning” of different traditions of thinking (or believing) will be *correlated* and that “the development of ordered relationships for self, world and the ultimate reality will occur.”⁵⁵ Such an appeal of Tracy together with his stress upon the necessity of the interaction between “microstructure” (self) and “macrostructure” (tradition, world, or the ultimate reality) through “conversational” or “hermeneutical” correlation may

⁵⁴ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (London: SCM Press, 1981), p. 340.

⁵⁵ Tracy, *Ibid*, p. 449.

serve to illuminate the inter-relationship between the internal and external predicaments of John, the allegorical “modern” pilgrim in Lewis’s allegory, *The Pilgrim’s Regress*.

Besides understanding the allegorical pilgrimage in terms of its twofold context—the selfhood of the pilgrim and the historical situatedness of the pilgrimage, another relevant, even more fundamental, question about the pilgrimage is the sense of “modernity” indicated in both of the contexts. How are we to define the “modernity” of the pilgrim’s inner world and of the outer world wherein he is situated and also of the “interaction” between the two worlds in his pilgrimage toward conversion? To tackle such an inquiry about the text’s preoccupation with modernity, the autobiographical element can be a good starting point, since John’s pilgrimage is basically modeled on Lewis’s own journey. The biographical background concerned is, above all, a gripping and yet elusive kind of experience of an “intense longing” which Lewis coins as “the dialectic of Desire,” or “Joy.” The strong and unusual sense of “bitter sweetness” it arouses gives rise to its “dialectical nature,” which according to Lewis is sadness and excitement at the same time because to “have it is, by definition, a want; to want it . . . is to have it” (“Afterword,” 203). As proclaimed by Lewis himself, this peculiar experience is the very “psychic event” dominating his childhood and adolescence. Without doubt, it is also the “central theme” that predominates in the inner life of the allegorical pilgrim as well as his particular pilgrimage. In other words, the very motive / motif underlying the pilgrimage of John (or Lewis) is this painful yet also most desirable sense of yearning for some unnamable “object,” which can “never be fully given” by anything or anyone in *this* world, or to use Lewis’s words, “in our present mode of subjective and spatio-temporal experience” (“Afterword,” 205). Therefore, it is basically because of the obscure and unattainable quality of its “object” that this desire is mysteriously

peculiar as well as dialectical.

In the allegory of *The Pilgrim's Regress*, the peculiar mystery of the “object” is imparted by a fantastical vision coming to John when he is “awakened” for the first time to “Sweet Desire” in the childhood. It is, in a glimpse, materialized as “an island” with some god-like, unearthly inhabitants on it in the midst of a misty and “calm sea.” With all the enchanting view like this, somehow even little John feels a sense of suspicion toward his memory of the envisioned “island” to such an extent that he cannot but tell himself that “what had befallen him was not seeing at all” (8). This suspense between seeing and yet not seeing, or disclosure and in the mean time concealment, bespeaks the elusiveness about *what* is the source of the Desire. It seems that the “object” simply evades any visual embodiment, even in an allegorical space or state of mind, as suggested by John’s bafflement and suspicion. Nonetheless, years later, after repeatedly turning to the wrong resource (having sex with a “brown girl” in the wood) for satisfying his intense and persistent longing for retrieving the experience of the Desire, John decides to embark on the journey in search of “the island.” In fact, his whole journey becomes a “pilgrimage” for pursuing the truth about the mystery of the “object” in the hope that the Desire can be really fulfilled someday, in some way.

The significance of the mysterious “object” of this Desire cannot be overstated, for the nature and meaning of not only the Desire itself but also the whole pilgrimage of the allegory depends on how this unnamable object is to be understood. Indeed, the allegorical pilgrimage can be viewed as, so to speak, a journey to find out the “authentic” key to the riddle about the knowledge of it. Is it just the out-dated, irrational belief of the “backward villagers” as Mr. Enlightenment (the nineteenth-century worldly Rationalist) assumes? Is it equal to the aesthetic “thrill” or romantic “eroticism” to be found in the beautiful music and tender daughter of Mr.

Halfway (representative of Romantic Poetry)? Is it merely man's mental "illusion" for the sake of "wish-fulfillment," "the pretence . . . put up to conceal [one's] own lusts from [oneself]" (46), according to the theory of Mr. Sigismund Enlightenment (Psychology of Sigmund Freud)? Does it mean nothing but, if one likes, an "accessory" to good life in terms of Mr. Sensible, whose supreme principle of judgment is not reason but "good sense"? Is it true that as agreed by the three "pale" sons of Mr. Enlightenment senior, the counter-Romanticist brothers (Classicism, Humanism and Catholicism), the vision together with the picturing experience ought not to be taken seriously at all because there is no solid or valid ground for it? Or, should it be dismissed as "a childish thing" and put behind like what the "advanced" Mr. Broad (modernized Church, friend of the world) has done and urged John to do? Evidently, these different opinions about what the "object" is or is like either contradict or conflict with each other. Apart from these mutually opposing responses to John's quest, is there still any other *way* for John the pilgrim to take and see beyond all these countervailing views so that he may carry on his pilgrimage to seek out, or perhaps "live out," the answer for himself?

In fact, contrary to those really misleading "paths" of thinking, there are some alternative ways of *seeing* and *going* which can counterbalance the impacts of those dismissive opinions John receives from "the world" and support or enlighten John in his search for "the island." One of the relatively positive ways is offered by Reason, who is figured as a tall, Titaness-like woman. Playing the role of a giant slayer, Reason rescues John from his captivation by "Spirit of the Age," who can turn anyone caught by his penetrating eye to look "transparent" and get imprisoned in the terror of the ugly reality of his own self. More than releasing John from physical bondage set by "Spirit of the Age," Reason manages to set him free from the giant's control of his mind through "deconstructing" the giant's power of penetration as good for nothing

but presenting “unreality” which brings about self-hatred to man. Also, regarding John’s inquiry about “the island,” Reason, instead of giving John a straight answer, leads him to “reason” against the “pseudo-scientific” attempt of the “modern” age to explain away both the belief in the Landlord (God) and John’s Desire as merely man’s wishful speculations. Reason thus helps correct the misleading theories about both the Landlord and the human self that “Spirit of the Age” and his subjects try to impose on John. The corrective argumentation of Reason is based on the evidence that their disbelief is grounded on false induction, which can prove no truth but only their own “wish-fulfillment dream” (64). Moreover, Reason advises John that to remain agnostic is even better than to rush to the wishful conclusion of those disbelievers who ignorantly reject the consultation of Philosophy and Theology (Reason’s two younger sisters) for one thing and don’t really have evidence for their disbelief for another. “Fatiguing” as it is to follow Reason, John, however, is encouraged to resume his journey of seeking after “truth,” by getting back to the “main road.”

In terms of the “spiritual topography” within the allegory, Reason’s suggestion for John to keep his way on the main road is tremendously meaningful. To remain on the main road, in one sense, means to keep away from the “by-roads,” that is, the wrong ways leading to either the northward locales occupied by the “over-wise men of rigid systems” (such as the big family of Mr. Enlightenment), or the southward habitats of the “over-foolish men” who are engaged with “the smudging of all frontiers” or “the relaxation of all resistances” (“Afterword,” 206) (like Mr. Broad, representing the “modernizing religion,” associating with the world and making no pilgrimage). Symbolized as “two equal and opposite evils” for pilgrimage, the north and the south, therefore, ought to be avoided not just by John the sole pilgrim in the allegory but indeed also by every man. Just as Lewis states in “Afterword,” “between them the Road on which alone mankind can safely walk” (206) because “we

were made to be neither cerebral men nor visceral men, but Men,” namely, “things at once rational and animal” (207). Also, the suggestion of the Main Road in between as the only right way that can avoid extremes can be associated with Oriental wisdom, e.g., the axiom of Confucianism, which goes, “safety lies in the middle course.” Therefore, the symbol of the Main Road, in another sense, is connotative of a certain universal appropriateness, which may remind us of the idea of “the Way,” or the *Tao*.

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis puts much emphasis on the existence of the *Tao*⁵⁶ because without this universal Law or “doctrine of objective value”⁵⁷ humanity and the universe as well would become void of meaning. In association with the *Tao*, this Main Road in the allegorical pilgrimage accordingly carries the significance of being not just a safe “midway” but also the only right way connected with “the Way”—the “Natural Law,” which is not simply relevant to the material world but is essentially the revealing element of the Ultimate Reality. To put it in another way, the meaningfulness of the connection between the Main Road and the Way lies in the implication that the pilgrim, firstly, needs to discover, or at least recognize, the existence of Reality beyond the visible as well as his subjective world, for only in the Way, that is, the objective truth, can he find out the genuine “object” of his Desire. That is to say, the very vision of “the island in the west” might not to be found in the material world, and John’s subjective experience of the “dialectic of desire” may need to be understood as a kind of “metaphysics of desire.”⁵⁸

The “metaphysical” nature of the Desire has never really and so clearly come to John until he encounters Mr. Wisdom, the spokesman of Idealist Philosophy. Unlike

⁵⁶ In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis explains also that what he calls the *Tao* can be referred to all forms of the same conception—“Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Christian, and Oriental alike.” P. 28-29.

⁵⁷ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁵⁸ This convincing idea of “the metaphysics of desire” is borrowed from William Gray’s commentary in his article, “The Quest for Joy”: “The Pilgrim’s Regress, one of the “three main texts where [Lewis] explicitly articulates what we might call his metaphysics of desire.” See Gray’s book, *C. S. Lewis*, p. 5.

all the other “debunkers,” from the worldly cultures (irreligious or even religious, romantic or anti-romantic), of John’s glimpse of “the Transcendent,” Mr. Wisdom confirms the authenticity and significance of John’s mystical Desire, even though he both denies any “hope” of “its fruition” and rejects its connection with religion. The most striking instruction of this exoteric sage, concerning John’s experience of the extraordinary and incomprehensible desire, is his proclamation to John that “what you desire is no state of yourself at all, but something ... Other and Outer” (123). This unusual viewpoint to a great extent enlightens John to see his Desire with a new perspective, one that has little to do with his subjectivity but has explicit relevance to some “objective truth.” This enlightenment from Mr. Wisdom about the “otherness” and “objectivity” in the nature of John’s Desire could be held as a significant “milestone” in John’s pilgrimage. For John, who has already “tasted” but not really understood the “transcendental” Desire, Mr. Wisdom’s metaphysical explanation of it seems to make good sense of the mysterious experience.

However, the comprehensive doctrine of “the Absolute Mind” Mr. Wisdom introduces to John is a quasi-religious belief in the (impersonal) Transcendence of all “appearances,” including not only “the island” of the Desire but also John’s (finite) feeling self, and indeed the whole world, sensual, rational and imaginative. According to Mr. Wisdom’s philosophy, the acknowledgement of the Absolute is based on a metaphysical standpoint that recognizes the co-existence of “the Phenomenal” and “the Noumenal.” In the context of John’s pilgrimage, this metaphysical standpoint, in some sense, means a crucial “turning point” to John’s mental and spiritual development; henceforth, his pilgrimage starts to move into a double “progress” both into self-understanding and toward the awareness of the Divine Other.

In addition to referring the Desire to the Absolute Mind, Mr. Wisdom also lays

bare the twofold sense of “I” and its relationship with the meaning of John’s Desire. According to Mr. Wisdom, the mystery of the dialectic of desire can be unraveled if we grasp the ambiguity of “I” (human selfhood) yielded by its “double nature” of *soul* (mortal and apparent self) and *Spirit* (the real and eternal self). He makes his observation about their correlation as follows: “The Island is nothing else than that perfection and immortality which I possess as Spirit eternal, and vainly crave as mortal soul” (128-129). That is to say, in terms of Mr. Wisdom’s Idealist philosophy, the inherent “metaphysics” in the experience of the dialectic of desire actually reflects some “ontological” truth of the experienced self. From this (Kantian) perspective, it thus follows that metaphysics and ontology are indistinguishable. To put in another way, John’s *metaphysical* quest for “the Island,” prompted by an ecstatic glimpse of the Transcendent, would be, in itself, a journey of “self-discovery,” on account of the ontological relationship between the Desire and his self. In this sense, the allegorical pilgrimage turns out to signify something more than the pilgrim originally expects it to be. Now, more than ever, his Desire-prompted journey seems to be a real “pilgrimage,” coming to the threshold of encountering with the Reality of the Transcendence, with which not only his Desire but also his self is involved.

So far, the so-called “religiousness” could not yet be ascribed to the allegorical pilgrimage, at least not “literally,” under the supposition that the pilgrim’s pursuit of the “transcendental” object of desire cannot be fully satisfied except in the religion of “the Landlord,” instead of in any aesthetic or intellectual exercises, still less in sexual practices. Traveling northward or southward, John has indeed undergone many “adventures” among different cultural, intellectual and even spiritual phenomena, none of which, however, really serves to turn his quest or journey into a “religious” pilgrimage. Quite on the contrary. Most of John’s encounters in these “worldly”

adventures manage to either carry John farther away from his childhood belief in “the Landlord” or dissuade him from believing that there is any link between his Desire and the Landlord. Reason is of course one of the few exceptions. But, even “she” would not provide a definite answer to John’s perplexity about the relation between his mysterious experience and the Landlord, or even to the question about the mere existence of the Landlord. It is because the personified Reason, though being “infinite” and “immortal” as she is the daughter of eternal “Truth,” cannot but speak according to what John’s “natural” reason can comprehend, unless his *finite* reason can be united with what Mr. Wisdom would call the “cosmic *Logos*.” The very mentor who instructs John in the idea of the “cosmic Truth and Spirit,” Mr. Wisdom, however, takes his side with “unbelief” too, refusing to pin down the Ultimate Reality as “limited” and “specific” as a religion (such as the Landlord), although it is true that his Idealist doctrine of the Absolute plays a crucial part in bringing John closer than ever to the metaphysical and religious meaning of his pursuit. Indeed, owing to the enlightenment given by philosophical wisdom, the pilgrimage of John begins to be transformed into one involving profound “self-consciousness” and the consciousness of the transcendental “Outer and Other,” the two “indispensable” elements for the pilgrimage to *progress* as a pilgrimage of “conversion.”

Therefore, it is discernible that the allegorical pilgrimage should, for the most part, be described as “unreligious,” in the restricted sense of “religion,” namely, identifying the vision of “the Island” with the existence of “the Landlord” (God). To diagnose the hidden meaning behind this, namely, the indication of the “un-religious” character of the pilgrim’s “adventures of faith,” we might treat the pre-conversion “un-religiousness” of the pilgrimage as *preparation* for the ultimate culmination of the pilgrim’s religious faith. Yet, this is only a *superficial* reading of the scenario of conversion in the allegory. To go deeper into the “under text” of the

allegory, we may wonder not simply when and how the pilgrim becomes a convert but perhaps more importantly, what the “un-religious pretext” signifies in the allegorical pilgrimage of conversion. Besides, we should also keep in mind that this allegory of conversion is also an “apologetic” text with certain autobiographical touches. It means that the allegorist, in his post-conversion retrospection, must attempt to *reflect* upon what used to *preoccupy* his mind and soul that could be meaningful not simply in terms of the documentation of his personal history but for some good “use,” or reference, of others, the *later* potential converts. In other words, instead of a “confessional” posture for the sake of autobiography,⁵⁹ the allegorist delineation of the mental or intellectual process that keeps “deviating” from the divine Reality is really for the purpose of showing a kind of “anti-proof” against the “spiritual phenomena” that are in “enmity to ‘immortal longings’” (“Afterword,” 205) and ultimately against the “unbelief” in the “objective truth” of God.

Therefore, it is definitely right to hold that the “unreligious” quality that characterizes most of the hero’s “pilgrimage” in the allegory is, on one level, indispensable because of the “autobiographical” demand of faithfulness. On another level, it should be thought of as significant “constituent” for the allegorist-apologist who aims not just to map out but, more importantly, to confront the problematic situations disadvantageous or even hostile to the progress of pilgrimage. This, in some sense, is another way of looking at the “double textuality” of the allegory—the intermixture of subjectivity and objectivity, only that the element of objectivity is here specifically related with the storyteller’s attempt to speak—not for himself but *to general* readers. Concerning the problem of the readers’ reception of his allegorical

⁵⁹ Some critics of *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, such as William Gray and Manlove, hold it to be “confessional,” a way of reading which, in my opinion, is not necessary, especially in terms of Lewis’s intent on writing out his journey in the form of “apologetic allegory.” Besides, even his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, is not a “confessional” text, according to Lewis himself.

apologetics, Lewis admits that his allegory can be of intellectual “obscurity” to the readers, most of whom can be unfamiliar with or indifferent to the history of ideas which Lewis’s own intellectual development is involved with. In the beginning of the “Afterword,” Lewis remarks,

On the intellectual side my own progress had been from ‘popular realism’ to Philosophical Idealism; from Idealism to Pantheism; from Pantheism to Theism; and from Theism to Christianity. I still think this a very natural road, but I now know that it is a road very rarely trodden. In the early thirties I did not know this. If I had had any notion of my own isolation, I should either have kept silent about my journey or else endeavoured to describe it with more consideration for the reader’s difficulties.

(“Afterword,” 200)

In this authorial commentary on the “weakness” yet also “authenticity” of his own work, we could read, on the one hand, Lewis’s “subjective” justification for representing a distinctive pilgrimage in his allegory, which is simply copying his own intellectual and spiritual journey. More than that, Lewis’s remark is definitely pointing to his “writer’s” concern as well. It is evident that “subjective” as his allegorical pilgrimage is, and however “out-of-place” his and his hero’s philosophical journey may seem to a modern reader, Lewis indeed puts his readers in mind, even if he finds he failed to do so more seriously as he wrote the allegory. From the critic’s point of view, we should then wonder: how can Lewis’s allegorical pilgrimage speak to other “modern” readers? Does it speak as well to those who have a so-called “post-modern” mentality—to an extent eager to re-embrace religion while unwilling or unable to make real commitments to a religion, such as Christianity?

To grapple with such a critical question, we need to return to the problem of “modernity” that is embedded within the allegorical representation of *a* particular

pilgrimage (modeled on Lewis's own) and meanwhile is the very "target" of confrontation within Lewis's allegorical apologetics. Evidently, the *modern* pilgrimage concerned is predominated by what Lewis calls "characteristic illusions" of the modern age, experienced by Lewis himself and manifested within his allegorical text. One of these "illusions" is coined by Lewis in *Surprised by Joy*, as "chronological snobbery," a kind of "modern" state of mind that he confesses he used to possess. According to Lewis, through Owen Barfield⁶⁰, one of his best friends (and also debating partners) in Oxford, he comes to realize the fallacy of holding a favorable and uncritical stance toward "the intellectual climate common to our own [modern] age" and assuming that "whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited."⁶¹ Opposite to such wrong-headed "chronological snobbery" is a changed viewpoint that "our own age is also 'a period', and certainly has, like all periods, its own characteristic illusion."⁶²

This altered, that is, "neutralized" and relatively objective, view about the contemporary fashions of thinking is actually only the starting point for Lewis to detach himself from his old commitment to the modern age. Henceforth, he enters into a certain (dialectical) process of philosophical contemplation which eventually leads him to think beyond modernity, i.e., the modern adherence to its representative dogmatism, namely, Realism or Empiricism, and later the equally fashionable and seemingly more valid philosophy of Idealism, especially its doctrine of the impersonality of the "Universal Spirit." After conversion to the definitely dogmatic and indeed totally out-of-fashion belief of Christianity, Lewis's neutral attitude toward modern preoccupations, i.e., with Realism, scientism, Freudianism, religious

⁶⁰ In this context, Lewis is referring to the Great War between him and Barfield, whose belief in Anthroposophy was once held by Lewis as "medieval-fashioned" and thus unconvincing. See *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, [1955] 2002, p. 239-241.

⁶¹ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 241.

⁶² Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 241.

Liberalism, Idealism and Pantheism, turns into an apologetic mindset, not just reflective but pointedly *critical*. Considering his own experience of journeying through various misleading “ways” dominated by the intellectual or spiritual “climate” of modern times, there is no wonder that the post-conversion allegorist would set out to expose the inadequacy in each of them and on that account voice his critique of modernity, the matrix of them all.

From this perspective, it seems justifiable to underscore Lewis’s critique of modernity as the core of his apologetic enterprise within the allegory of modern pilgrimage. To put in another way, we may say that Lewis’s representation of the modern pilgrimage in the allegory, which is also a modern tale of conversion, is an allegorical expression of his critical interpretation of modernity. Moreover, the particular sense of modernity interpreted or criticized by the allegorist and apologetic Lewis can be understood on different levels. First of all, the modern misinterpretations of the pilgrim’s transcendental experience are demonstrated in the allegorical pilgrimage to be various sorts of illusions and wrong ways of thinking. As pointed out above, none of those dismissive or misleading or missing-the-target answers derived out of modern ideas serves to facilitate the pilgrimage—to guide the pilgrim to reach “the Island,” that is, the prospective fruition of his Desire. Obviously, “modernity” in this sense is pointed at the pilgrim’s exterior journey into the world, which involves encounters with different thoughts of the modern age and thus also pertains to the pilgrim’s intellectual progress. Indeed, in *The Pilgrim’s Regress* as well as in *Surprised by Joy*, the “outward journey” is portrayed on an intellectual basis. It is, generally speaking, a dialectic process of moving *with* and *against* the various tides of modern thought.

Nevertheless, the journey within the allegory or the autobiographical book of *Surprised by Joy* is not simply involved with intellectual development. More

importantly, as the former discussion has highlighted, the pilgrimage is primarily concerned with John (and Lewis's) dialectic of desire. To dig out the deeper sense of modernity in the allegorical apology, it is worthwhile to reiterate that the modern pilgrimage in question is not only dominated by the external world of ideas but also, more centrally, preoccupied with the pilgrim's internal world of the *imagination*. In fact, the two phenomena of the pilgrimage are in association with each other. Noticeably, a large proportion of the modern pilgrimage is about the on-going *interaction* between the macrostructure or tradition of modern thinking and the microstructure of the modern self's psychic and imaginative event. It can be demonstrated that the pilgrim's experience of the dialectic of desire and his no less dialectical adventures through the mutually conflicting modes of thinking in modern times are both prominent to his ultimate experience of conversion. The close relationship between his experience of conversion and the two dialectical life-experiences, inward and outward, imaginative and intellectual, is suggested in the following statement of Lewis:

The dialectic of Desire, faithfully followed, would retrieve all mistakes, head you off from all false paths, and force you not to propound, but to live through, a sort of ontological proof. This lived dialectic, and the merely dialectic of my philosophical progress, seemed to have converged on one goal; accordingly I tried to put them both into my allegory which thus became a defence of Romanticism (in my peculiar sense) as well as of Reason and Christianity. ("Afterword," 205)

In these self-explanatory remarks, Lewis definitely underlines the importance of "the dialectic of Desire," which, when "lived through," plays the crucial role of mediating the dialectical development of the thinking mind and even the ultimate growth in

spirit, that is, conversion. Besides, he is also proclaiming that the inter-relationship between the *felt* or *imagined* desire and the dialectics of thinking and the experience of conversion naturally entails his apologetic concerns in the allegory—with “Romanticism,” Reason and Christianity. To the present discussion about Lewis’s apologetic enterprise within the allegorical text of modern pilgrimage, these three categories of defense are tremendously intriguing topics for investigation. How are they related to Lewis’s critique of modernity in his apologetic allegory?

In effect, probing into the three aspects of defense prescribed by Lewis himself would help clarify, to a great extent, the many-layered sense of modernity criticized and interpreted in Lewis’s allegory. To put in another way, through these apologetic concerns of Lewis’s, we may discern keenly his “distinctive style of envisioning” of the modern situatedness of pilgrimage and find out more clearly his approaches to tackling modern man’s problem of *faith*. Furthermore, the investigation into Lewis’s allegorical defenses of the three categories might enable us to envisage with Lewis, a modern believer and Christian apologist, the hope of *becoming* a convert in the modern age of doubt. Apologetically, Lewis’s “prescription” for the unbelieving phenomenon of modern time is, above all, that the modern self, like the allegorical pilgrim, needs to re-cognize the existence of the objective truth of Reality before he or she can *know* “what” or “who” to identify with the *tasting* of the transcendental, if being tasted at all. This is correspondent with the marrow of Lewis’s thinking in *The Abolition of Man*. Similarly, in his essay, “The Poison of Subjectivism,” Lewis in a prophetic tone urges that “[u]nless we return to the crude and nursery-like belief in objective values, we perish.”⁶³ In fact, the acknowledgement or “preunderstanding” of the *objectivity* of either the logic “behind” thinking or the “object” of

⁶³ See *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories*, p. 257. The essay originally appeared in *Religion in Life*, Volume XII (Summer 1943).

transcendental imagination is also the underlying principle in Lewis's defenses of "Romanticism," Reason and Christianity. In the context of the allegorical pilgrimage, the modern pilgrim, indeed, has to firstly encounter with Mr. Wisdom's philosophy of "the Absolute Mind / Spirit," which then becomes the important pretext for his later conversion and discovery that his unknowable vision of the Island is really the picture sent by the Landlord, who alone can bring ultimate fruition of his Desire.

Yet, the distinctive quality of the whole pilgrimage does not, at least not simply, lie in the hero's acquisition of transcendental knowledge or acknowledgement. The real pretext of the pilgrim's ultimate conversion, even prior to the pretext of the enlightenment of Idealist philosophy, is actually his experience of Joy, which can also be counted as an experience of transcendental *imagination* or "Romantic"⁶⁴ longing. It is unquestionable that allegorically the whole pilgrimage is characterized by this imaginative or Romantic experience of immortal longing, or, in Lewis's word, "Romanticism." On the other hand, it is a journey characteristic of the dialectic progress in the pilgrim's rational self or philosophical mind. The allegorical focus on the dialectic of desire and the juxtaposition of imagination and rationality bring forth some interesting inquiries. Why is Romantic imagination such a central element within the allegory of modern pilgrimage? And, what makes this allegory inevitably become some "defenses" for "Romanticism" and Reason as well? How do the elements of "Romanticism" and Reason coordinate with each other in the allegory of conversion? Finally, what is the allegorist apologist's vision and revision of modernity on account of his defenses of both?

To figure out these important questions about the particular sense of modernity

⁶⁴ According to Lewis, the experience is termed "Romantic" simply because it is evoked by things like "inanimate nature and marvelous literature" ("Afterword," 202).

reflected in the allegorical apologetics, we may listen to some of Lewis's diagnostic and apologetic viewpoints about "modernity" made in the article, "Modern Man and His Categories of Thought."⁶⁵ In the beginning, Lewis observes that modern people are difficult to convert particularly because they have lost the predispositions of pre-moderns, such as the belief in the supernatural, consciousness of sin and fear of divine judgment, and even the prevalent "Pagan reverence for heroes, ancestors, and ancient lawgivers."⁶⁶ Then, he points out several causes of the altered mind of modern man, some of which are exactly in line with his allegorical portrayal of the modern problem of faith. For example, the removal of the reverence for tradition in modern education brings about the intellectual Provincialism, which is similar to the disease of Chronological Snobbery preoccupying the old self of Lewis (before his conversion). In *The Pilgrim's Regress*, by the mouth of History the Hermit, the personification of the history of human thoughts, those unbelievers who attempt to divert or annihilate the pilgrim's other-world longing are called "stay-at-homes," whose mind is full of blunders because "they seldom travel."

In addition to "Provincialism," modern man is also narrow-minded because of the disease of "practicality," or "irrationality." Speaking of his difficulty of approaching the un-converted, Lewis puts: "In lecturing to popular audiences I have repeatedly found it almost impossible to make them understand that I recommended Christianity because I thought its affirmation to be objectively *true*."⁶⁷ Relevant to this "unhuman practicality," Lewis adds, is modern man's "indifference to, and contempt of, dogma."⁶⁸ This un-dogmatic or even anti-dogmatic attitude toward religion is manifestly compatible with the allegorical depiction of the pilgrim's

⁶⁵ Written in 1946, this essay was requested by Bishop Stephen Neill for the World Council of Churches Assembly, Commission II materials on "God's Design and Man's Witness." See *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories*, p. 208-212.

⁶⁶ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 208.

⁶⁷ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 211.

⁶⁸ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 211.

readiness to discard his childhood belief in the Landlord and His rules and also to shun Mother Kirk (the traditional Church of Christianity). Last but not least, prevalent to the modern mind is the phenomenon of “Scepticism about Reason,” an irrational belief that “reasoning proves nothing and that all thought is conditioned by irrational process.”⁶⁹ In “Modern Man and His Categories of Thought,” Lewis associates this theory of human illusions with modern thinkers, like Freud. The allegorical representative of such an intellectual phenomenon is definitely Sigismund Enlightenment, the descendent of Nineteenth-century Rationalism and the personified Freudism. Moreover, in the allegory, even if irrationality is epidemic, there is the personified figure of Reason, who plays the role of fighting against the Spirit of the age. It is she who urges the pilgrim from the beginning to follow the imperative of keeping his way on the Main Road. When conversion is imminent, it is also Reason who appears in his dream (the medium of contemplation) and becomes his inner light that guides him all the way to the gate of the Landlord’s castle. Ultimately, at the moment when John is struggling not to move on, it is Reason who holds his hand and does not allow him to turn away.

From the illustrations given above, it is obvious that the apologetic vision embedded within the allegorical delineation of modern pilgrimage matches the perception of Lewis the modern Christian apologist / evangelist. Above all, both convey the key idea that the literary or the apologetic Lewis maintains in his miscellaneous writings: to tackle with the modern problem of faith, it is a requisite to have “the buried (but not dead) human appetite for the objective truth”⁷⁰ re-awakened. Strategically, Lewis suggests that it may be even necessary to “re-convert men to real Paganism as a preliminary to converting them to Christianity.”⁷¹ Interestingly, his

⁶⁹ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 211.

⁷⁰ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 212.

⁷¹ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 211.

allegorical pilgrim is just following an “un-Christian” process into conversion. Before his journey finally leads him (*back*) to the religious belief in the Landlord, i.e., God, John’s pilgrimage is essentially driven by his “Romantic desire” that is basically evoked by literary imagination, sometimes even kindled by erotic fantasy, and perhaps associated with philosophical notion but never really defined or identified as a religious, not to mention Christian, sentiment. If what is un-Christian can be ascribed to Paganism, certainly the allegorical pilgrimage is more Paganism-based than Christianity-oriented.

Yet, un-Christian as it is, the modern pilgrimage presented in Lewis’s allegory does promise the ultimate hope of conversion, which accordingly discloses the truth that the essence of the pilgrimage is, in reality, “religious” and even the pilgrim’s imaginative experience of the Desire is transcendental in itself. The contributors to the realization of this hope, subjectively speaking, are, as it were, the imaginative self and the rational self within the pilgrim. In other words, it is imagination and reason, in confliction or better in union, that ultimately mediate the pilgrimage to be transferred from Paganism to Christianity. To put in another way, without being triggered and sustained by the power of imagination (the Desire) and being justly guided by Reason, there will be either no pilgrimage at all or no possibility of a pilgrimage of conversion. Besides, like another pair in the inward drama of the pilgrimage, namely, passion (John) and conscience (Vertue / the moral self of John), the pilgrim’s imaginative and rational parts can be in bad companionship, namely, confliction. However, as long as they are in good coordination, even union, with each other, they become the joint strength that causes the pilgrim’s *spiritual* progress. More specifically, only when John follows both his imaginative impulse / intuition and the inference as well as the protection of Reason from deviating forces of the outside world, can he arrive at not simply the unity of his selfhood but also his union

with the Transcendent God. This can explain why Lewis the allegorist apologist must juxtapose the double enterprise—defenses of both “Romanticism” and Reason—in his allegory about the making of a Christian convert.

In fact, for Lewis, imagination and reason do not necessarily conflict with or contradict each other. On the contrary, they can both serve as mediums or aids to the attainment of “truth.” In “Bluspels and Flalansferes,” Lewis makes it very clear that the “cooperation” of the two faculties is elemental to pursuing truth: “I am a rationalist. For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning. Imagination, producing new metaphors or revivifying old, is not the cause of truth, but its condition.”⁷² As to the relationship between imagination and (his) religious faith, the following post-conversion retrospective remarks from *Surprised by Joy*, provide a revealing explanation:

I do not think the resemblance between the Christian and the merely imaginative experience is accidental. I think that all things, in their way, reflect heavenly truth, the imagination not least. ‘Reflect’ is the important word. This lower life of the imagination is not a beginning of nor a step towards, the higher life of the spirit, merely an image.⁷³

In the footnote, Lewis adds that the relevance of imagination (or “art” in Gadamer’s term) to belief is actually initiated by the divine, for it is God who “can cause [human imagination] to be such a beginning,” a beginning to approach beyond the reality of the senses to the reality of “the spirit.” What is suggested here is the double edge of imagination: it can be spiritual and non-spiritual. The divine can make the materials of imagination or imagination itself spiritual. But imagination cannot

⁷² Lewis, “Bluspels and Flalansferes,” p. 157.

⁷³ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, p. 193-194.

cause its object to become spiritual, although it can mistakenly claim to achieve such an impossible goal, which is typically Romanticist thinking. That is why, although Lewis proclaims part of his allegory to be a defense of “Romanticism” (in his private definition), on the other hand, he also treats Romanticism (represented by Mr. Halfway’s art of music) allegorically as “cheat,” “Ectype,” not “Archetype.” Therefore, History the Hermit, who is also the mouthpiece of Lewis, indicates in the quotation below that human imagination (or “picture”) still needs one’s “lived experience” to check out whether or not the imaginative event really participates in the revelation of the (divine) truth:

The Landlord sends pictures of many different kinds. What is universal is not the particular picture, but the arrival of some message, not perfectly intelligible, which wakes this desire and sets men longing for something East or West of the world; something possessed, if at all, only in the act of desiring it, and lost so quickly that the craving itself becomes craved; something that tends inevitably to be confused with common or even with vile satisfactions lying close to hand, yet which is able, if any man faithfully live through the dialectic of its successive births and deaths, to lead him at last where true joys are to be found. (151)

As suggested here by the Hermit, the experience of longing, or imagination, can be easily misunderstood; either the longing may become an absolutely subjective experience of longing for longing’s sake, or the wrong objects can be mistaken for the real one of the longing. This is exactly what John has gone through in his pilgrimage. To clear out all his confusion and misunderstanding, what John has to do is to recognize the universal and supernatural quality of the object of his Desire. Moreover, it is through the faithfully lived dialectics of the desire, including the dialectical process of pursuing the meaning of its object, that John, or any pilgrim, can

really discover the truth from which his transcendental imagination comes.

Also, in living through the dialectics both of Desire and of the process of finding out its true goal and meaning, reason has definitely an important part to play. Without the exercise of reason, the *knowing* faculty of the feeling pilgrim, the experience of Joy could possibly be merely a *tasting* of some “aestheticized truth.”⁷⁴ As “the natural organ of truth,” in terms of the “rationalist” Lewis, reason is not only the fundamental avenue to knowledge but also an indispensable element in the journey of conversion. So far as the “religious” meaning of Joy is concerned, it depends less on imagination but more on reason to make distinction between the fake objects and the only real one and to ascertain the *supernatural* existence that is both in and beyond Joy, because, according to Lewis, “reason is not a part of Nature but evidence for a Supernature,” as Stephen Thorson rightly phrases in the essay, “‘Knowledge’ in C. S. Lewis’s Post-conversion Thought: His Epistemological Method.” In this sophisticated and comprehensive essay, Thorson correctly sums up Lewis’s epistemological methods as a “three-fold path to knowledge—via reason, experience, and authority.”⁷⁵ Noticeably, these three paths are also the pilgrim’s seeking out or living through the religious meaning, and transcendental significance, of his pilgrimage. Apart from his subjective experience of imagination / Desire and participation of his reason / intellect, John might still fail to reach “the Island,” namely, the truth of his Desire / God Himself, if he does not obtain any divine help—the Church of Christ (e.g., Mother Kirk) and even Christ Himself. Does this mean that reason, as a knowing tool, is not reliable? The answer could be *yes and no*.

After all, the epistemological usefulness or necessity of reason does not

⁷⁴ This notion is borrowed from William Gray. In “The Allegorical Imperative,” Gray puts “The Joy which, as Lewis amply illustrates in *Surprised by Joy*, is a *tasting*, if not a knowing, of reality. In a deeply Romantic gesture, Lewis thus aestheticizes “truth” (Gray, 34).

⁷⁵ Stephen Thorson, “‘Knowledge’ in C.S. Lewis’s Post-conversion Thought: His Epistemological Method,” *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review*, vol. IX (Marion E. Wade Center of Wheaton College and Bookmakers Guild, Inc., 1988), p. 92. Pp. 91-116.

absolutely promise the arrival at knowledge, especially the knowledge of the supernatural. On the topic of faith and reason, Austin Farrer rings very true when he asserts that “[r]easoning is not a source of knowledge but an instrument to clarify apprehension.”⁷⁶ Similarly, despite his appeal to rationality, if not rationalism, Lewis also holds that mere human reason is inadequate and that its “imperfections” need to be “corrected” by “total Reason—cosmic or super-cosmic Reason.”⁷⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas too, the medieval scholastic theologian noted for approaching faith on rational ground, disclaims the absolute value of reason. For example, in *Faith, reason and theology*,⁷⁸ he talks about the ethics of reason from a perspective very close to Lewis’s idea to the effect that human reason is double-edged—both good and defective; therefore, we should live both “according to” and “apart from” reason, and the latter is especially valid when we are in need of being “led by divine grace to what is above reason,” such as in knowing about “the truths of faith.”⁷⁹ In other words, St. Aquinas, on the one hand, holds the principle that natural reason and faith are compatible, for the former can bring us to the latter. On the other hand, he also emphasizes the necessity of divine grace for rational inquiry into religious faith, as noted in these words: “the will cannot will rightly unless helped by divine grace, as Augustine says. Therefore, neither can the intellect understand the truth unless it is illumined by the divine light.”⁸⁰ St. Aquinas’s notion about the relationship between reason, faith and divine grace sounds remarkably illuminating for the discussion of the pilgrim’s conversion in Lewis’s allegory.

Indeed, before receiving the help of the Holy One, the pilgrim’s will and intellect

⁷⁶ Austin Farrer, “Faith and Reason,” *Reflective Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London: S.P. C.K. 1972, ed. Charles C. Conti.), p. 50.

⁷⁷ See Lewis’s essay “De Futilitate,” in *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories*, p. 270.

⁷⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Faith, reason and theology: questions I-IV of his commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987).

⁷⁹ Aquinas, *Ibid*, p. 68-69.

⁸⁰ Aquinas, *Ibid*, p. 15.

both fall short of sustaining his *mere* journey, not to mention his pilgrimage (of a religious order). When finding himself unable to climb up and “overcome” the towering cliff on one side of the Grand Canyon (symbol of Chasm between human sinners and God), the pilgrim, in “a confusion of shame and sorrow and bewilderment” (136), can think of nothing but giving it up and going back to his old way (of life) with the intention to “live out the rest of [his] life as best as [he] can” (136). On the edge of turning back, he is suddenly called by some man (Christ Himself) and offered a hand to accomplish the impossible steep and rocky climb “right up to the top.” In such a desperate predicament of the pilgrim, this help is absolutely the only way *up* and seems too good to be refused. Besides, to accept it or not is like an imminent call—the Man said, “It’s now or never” (137). Thus, the Christ’s offer of help, in another sense, appears to be a kind of intervention forcing the self-dependent but desperately helpless pilgrim to carry on his pilgrimage, even at such a disillusioning point where the pilgrim must realize that his imaginative passion or intellectual judgment or moral determination can all fail him.

Furthermore, what is even more dramatic in the pilgrim’s process of becoming a convert is his inward battle between faith and his reason. As the pilgrimage goes on, we see the pilgrim’s encounter with divine grace, in reality, does not lead to immediate conversion. The practical experience of transcendence indeed brings the pilgrim into a voluntary and almost spontaneous response to divine existence—with a not so conscious act of praying. However, the religious response just causes to a gripping sense of existential anxiety in his mind; the pilgrim cannot help falling into a mental struggle, trying to explain away his transcendental encounter as well as his religious act of praying in purely *literary* terms, as shown in the touching narration quoted below:

John sprang up as he saw what he had done. ‘I have been *praying*,’ he said. ‘It is the Landlord under a new name. ... And I am caught.’ ... he said that he had only fallen into a metaphor. Even Mr. Wisdom had confessed that Mother Kirk and the Stewards gave an account of the truth in picture writing. And one must use metaphors. The feelings and the imagination needed that support. “The great thing,” said John, “is to keep the intellect from them: to remember that they *are* metaphors. (138)

The gesture of praying certainly can be regarded as an attestation of some growth in the pilgrim’s spirit and faith. Yet, as shown in this passage, it is evident that he is not really a voluntary believer, at least not *consciously* voluntary. In his conscious mind, he refuses to let his reason / intellect get involved with the whole experience of the divine grace. Instead, he willfully insists upon *interpreting* the lived experience of intercourse between him and the divine as having nothing to do with faith but only metaphor: fiction, not reality. Considering the efficacy of reason in man’s assent to faith, it is tremendously intriguing to see how the pilgrim could (subconsciously) discern the danger of his rational potentiality when his conversion seems imminent. On the other hand, Lewis’s delicate treatment of the mental phenomena of conversion in his allegorical pilgrim does attest to the observation that without the intervention of divine grace, mere reason or imagination cannot bring about conversion.

Returning to the question about how the issue of modernity is intertwined with Lewis’s affirmation of the inter-relationship between imagination, reason and faith, we must take into consideration both the apologetic element and the literary (not simply the allegorical) aspect of Lewis’s allegory. Apologetically speaking, Lewis’s defenses of both “Romantic” imagination / Desire and rational (logical or philosophical) thinking can be treated as demonstrating his distinctive strategies of tackling the problem of faith prevalent in the modern, unbelieving and “irrational,”

world and existent within an individual soul. To be more specific, one of these strategies is a *rationalistic* type, attempting to bring the modern states of mind / movements of thinking antagonistic to faith into dialogue with the authentic reason of humanity and even with “religious Reason” from the Divine. One of the best allegorical instances for such a dialogue can be found in the scene of John’s preparing himself to dive into the pool as Mother Kirk directs him to do (to be baptized). At that moment, the wraiths of all those modern mindsets he has journeyed through suddenly reappear to trouble his mind, endeavouring to dissuade him from jumping and stopping being an “advanced,” “wiser” and more “liberal” modern man. Following the scene, after John has done his dive which leads him to arrive at the blissful land beyond the Canyon, there is still Mr. Wisdom who also shows up to convince John once again that his spiritual adventure is un-reality and nothing but mythology. Then comes the divine declaration to de-construct such a philosophical speculation and disclose to John the truth behind all the mysteries:

Child, if you will, it *is* mythology. It is but truth, not fact; an image, not the very real. But then it is My mythology. The words of Wisdom are also myth and metaphor . . . But this is My inventing, this is the veil under which I have chosen to appear even from the first until now. For this end I made your senses and for this end your imagination, that you might see My face and live . . . (169)

What is inspiring in these truth-revelatory remarks of the Divine, besides the truthfulness of “the divine mythology” and the real myth of human wisdom, is the affirmation of the connection between the pilgrim’s Pagan or Romanticist experience of the Desire and the ultimate Reality (the Christian faith).

This link between John’s whole pilgrimage out of Joy and its destination of

religious faith bespeaks another strategy of Lewis's allegorical apologetics wrestling with the modern problem of faith—the appeal to “Romanticism.” Through his allegorical representation of a modern pilgrimage, Lewis manifests articulately the value and potentiality of “Romantic imagination” to serve as the countervailing agent neutralizing the inherent arrogance or ignorance of human wisdom. Moreover, Lewis makes still another appeal to the indispensable medium of divine grace, which not only initiates the imaginative journey but also plays the ultimate part in re-orienting the pilgrim's mind from the illusion and irrationality of the modern mindsets toward the truth of the Divine-invented mythology and thereby restoring the modern pilgrim *back* to his abandoned faith. In view of this, it is discernible that the apologetic resorts suggested in Lewis's allegory of modern pilgrimage include not just the paradoxical double strategies of the rationalistic and the Romantic but also the intervention offered by the Divine Himself.

In literary terms, Lewis's representation of *a* modern pilgrimage is featured by the juxtaposition of portraying the “extrinsic” aura of unbelieving “modernity” and dramatizing the “intrinsic” world of the life of a prospective modern convert. The significance of such an allegorical juxtaposition, which is also the inter-mingling of the outside world of the modern age and the inner life of the modern self, can be associated with the efficacy of Lewis's apologetic allegory of exemplifying the prospect of conversion in the modern situation. E. F. O'Doherty, the author of *Religion and Psychology*, proclaims that modern men, being in the milieu designated by loss of faith and under the influence of the rationalist and scientific frames of thinking, are in fact having an even better opportunity to embrace a “free choice of faith without subjective certainty or felt state of conviction, [which] is in itself a more

mature and more valuable thing.”⁸¹ This view, though seeming optimistic, indeed points out the paradoxical predicament of modern man having both the difficulty of the rational mind in believing and the chance of making a “pure” act of choosing faith. O’Doherty’s description of the “pure act of choice” can be applied to the ultimate conversion of John, the agnostic and passionate seeker of truth yet also a pilgrim inescapably liable to go astray or fall into confusion in the unbelieving world, an age extremely “hostile to immortal longing.”

But, the point of making a choice is not the whole mark of the modern situation for a prospective convert that Lewis the apologist strives to hit. Rather, Lewis’s concern is largely with the whole dialectical process of pilgrimage. Lewis’s allegorical pilgrimage is such that it proceeds in a multi-voiced outside world whose characteristic spirit is expressed through a medley of competing, or compelling, and essentially self-contradictory modes of thinking and being. Besides, it simultaneously takes place within a warring heart that is void of the naiveté of faith and full of the rivalry or tension between reason and passion, between unreliable and impulsive feeling and strong-willed though not really self-sufficient conscience, and finally between belief and unbelief. In other words, Lewis’s apologetic vision is comprehensively concerned with both the macrostructure of the modern spirit and the microstructure of the modern pilgrim’s interior reality. Such a comprehensive approach to the modern predicament of pilgrimage is definitely of great efficacy pertaining to both the apologetic and the literary enterprises of the allegorist Lewis.

Furthermore, Lewis’s allegory, articulating his defenses of Reason, “Romantic” imagination and Christian faith, involves not simply the double ventures of literature and apologetics but also Lewis’s critique of modernity—his critical interpretation of the modern situation characterized by the spirit of un-reason and unbelief. In other

⁸¹ E. F. O’Doherty, *Religion and Psychology* (New York: Alba House, c1978), p. 71.

words, the apologetic allegory contains also Lewis's critical and interpretive venture, namely, a "hermeneutical" enterprise. In fact, Lewis's allegorical and apologetic prescription of the necessity to restore the lost "predisposition" in the modern mind through the exercise of imagination and the participation of reason, or better, of "religious Reason," can be associated with the insight of the hermeneutic philosophers, such as Gadamer and Ricoeur, who hold that hermeneutics can be a "modern pathway" to re-link human understanding and belief. In "The Symbol Gives Rise to Thought," the concluding chapter of Ricoeur's book, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Ricoeur attempts to designate the interpretation of "symbol" as "the 'modern' mode of belief."⁸² Speaking of the relationship between hermeneutics and modern man's problem of faith, Ricoeur makes an illuminating remark that "we modern men, aim at a second naiveté in and through criticism."⁸³ This notion of the hermeneutical attainment of the "second immediacy of belief" is remarkably correspondent with what is presented and prescribed in Lewis's apologetic allegory, namely, the imperative of exercising the modern pilgrim's imagination and critical reason for acquiring his "second naiveté." The pilgrim's conversion after the whole journey through imaginative and intellectual dialectics parallels the recovery of his belief in the supernatural and his mental capacity of identifying the transcendental Desire with the faith of the Christian God.

In addition, Ricoeur draws an association between the hermeneutical circle of symbol and criticism ("the symbol gives and criticism interprets") and the "living and stimulating circle" of believing and understanding ("We must understand in order to believe, but we must believe in order to understand").⁸⁴ Again, it can be evidenced that Lewis's allegory of modern pilgrimage echoes Ricoeur's association. Full of

⁸² Paul Ricoeur, "Conclusion: The Symbol Gives Rise to Thought," p. 347-357.

⁸³ Ricoeur, *Ibid*, p. 352.

⁸⁴ Ricoeur, *Ibid*, p. 351.

symbolic and religious meaning, Lewis's allegory presents a lived example of the hermeneutical circle Ricoeur ascribes to modern "interpreters" and "believers." This can be illustrated by the pilgrim's outer and inner predicaments. Externally, the modern pilgrim is situated within the intellectual, cultural and spiritual phenomena that can distract or thwart or simply oppose his religious sentiment and pursuit. That is to say, the outside environment for the pilgrimage is characteristic of its tendency to misinterpret the symbol of the pilgrim's Desire on account of its spirit of unbelief. As for the pilgrim's inside world, his psychic life goes through the "living circle" of struggling to understand so as to believe, that is, to acquire faith, and gaining perception through belief to understand, namely, to perceive the truth and meaning of his pursuit. Whether dealing with the external reality that is good only for misinterpretation and misunderstanding or with the internal reality of the hermeneutical circle that a modern individual tends to undergo, Lewis's manifestation of modernity demonstrates vividly the hermeneutics of tension between understanding and belief. This further evidences the joint enterprise in Lewis's apologetic allegory, which consists of not merely allegorical imagination and apologetic confrontation but also hermeneutical implication of the modern situation of faith.

With these analyses of re-visiting Lewis's critique of modernity within the apologetic allegory in hermeneutical terms, we may further wonder whether it is possible to re-think Lewis's allegorical, apologetic and hermeneutical vision and revision of the modern problem of faith in a "postmodern" context. In relation to such a critical inquiry, some intriguing questions may include: How do Lewis's interpretations, or critiques, of the intellectual and spiritual situations of modern time answer postmodern concerns with "otherness" and "difference"? And, can Lewis's critique of modernity presented through the combination of his apologetic enterprise and allegorical imagination be correlated with postmodern hermeneutics, such as the

postmodern theologian David Tracy's "interpretation-as-conversation" hermeneutics? David Tracy's hermeneutic theory is distinctively illuminating for a postmodern rethinking of Lewis's critique of modernity mainly because it is, in itself, a religious-based theory of interpretation. Besides, Tracy's hermeneutic thinking is very much concerned with the challenges and tasks that contemporary apologetics are supposed to involve.

Regarding the meaning of postmodernity, Tracy gives his insightful definition from a hermeneutic point of view, in the article entitled "The Uneasy Alliance Reconceived: Catholic Theological Method, Modernity and Postmodernity."

To argue that our age is better characterized as postmodern than as modern . . . is to acknowledge that radical plurality and a heightened sense of ambiguity, so typical of all postmodern movements of thought with their refusal of premature closure and their focus upon the categories of the 'different' and the 'other.'⁸⁵

According to Tracy's suggestion here, the postmodern spirit of criticism is a spirit of open-mindedness toward difference and otherness and of readiness to accept plurality or ambiguity in the pursuit of meaning and truth. In terms of this hermeneutical understanding of postmodernity, we can discern that there is some postmodern touch in Lewis's literary and critical interpretation of the modern situated-ness of conversion. It is noticeable that throughout the journey in search of the ultimate truth of his Desire, Lewis's allegorical pilgrim must live with a strong sense of hermeneutical plurality and ambiguity, which is manifested by the pilgrim's encounters with the multi-voiced and mostly conflicting modern states of mind.

⁸⁵ David Tracy, "The Uneasy Alliance Reconceived: Catholic Theological Method, Modernity and Postmodernity," *Theology after Liberalism: A Reader* (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, ed. John Webster and George P. Schnier), p. 337.

Moreover, the whole pilgrimage delineated in the allegory is one with an on-going hermeneutical conversation between (the pilgrim's) self and other(s) (the modern world of ideas), a kind of conversation that consists of argumentation between contraries and negotiation between suspension and belief.

In effect, it is this phenomenon of negotiation between self and other, subjectivity and objectivity, or in Tracy's term, interaction between "microstructure" and "macrostructure," that not only gives the whole pilgrimage its profoundly dialectical inner life but also manifests the nature of inquiry within Lewis's critique and revision of modern problem of faith. Furthermore, the allegorical display of the hermeneutical conversation between unbelief and belief could be seen as reflecting the allegorist apologist's hermeneutical position toward modernity. Like his pilgrim who endeavours to think both in and against modernity, Lewis also posits himself as a critic engaged and disengaged with modern movements of thinking, particularly regarding religious faith. This paradoxical and dialectical position together with the dialectics and hermeneutics within the allegorical pilgrimage bespeaks the evidence that the allegory of *The Pilgrim's Regress* is indeed a piece of hermeneutical-apologetic work permeated with a postmodern aura of meaning, namely, understanding and belief through conversation and criticism.

In the allegory, the pilgrim ends up becoming a convert. This can speak for the ultimate vision, if not a postmodern vision, of Lewis, the interpreter and critic of modernity, that to believe, a modern pilgrim may need to embrace his imagination, and more importantly, he has to think *beyond* modernity.

Ch. III. Fantasy, Irony and Christian Existentialism in *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce*

Already in his very first trying of literary apologetic—his attempt at allegorizing a personalized journey toward conversion to Christian faith, a particular pilgrimage centered on the theme of *Sehnsucht*, which is a mixed experience of existential, romantic and transcendental longing, the interplay between subjectivity and objectivity is significantly manifested, or suggested, by C. S. Lewis. As the former chapter on *The Pilgrim's Regress* has underlined, it is precisely with subjective experience, namely, the so-called “individual situatedness,” that Lewis puts his focal concern while endeavouring to tackle the (modern) problem of faith. In other words, Lewis the allegorist is, as it were, playing the literary as well as apologetic “spotlight” upon the relationship between the individual self and ultimate reality, or in other words, between the inward life of the human person and the supernatural reality of the divine. The highlighting of such a relationship, or interaction, is, generally speaking, a predominant feature of Lewis’s religious narratives in which the literary world incorporates some Christian “apologetic” vision.

In view of this, it would be simply unfair and off the mark to ascribe an impertinent overemphasis upon “traditional supernaturalism, with its tendency to demean the natural and the merely human,” to Lewis’s imaginative and religious texts, as Gunnar Urang does in his criticism of C. S. Lewis’s writing of religion and fantasy.⁸⁶ Such a critical viewpoint, kind of naïve and reductive, actually reflects the critic’s ignorance of the fact that the textuality of Lewis’s religious fantasy is comprised not just of its significant preoccupation with the otherness of supernatural

⁸⁶ Gunnar Urang, *Shadows of Heaven: Religion and Fantasy in the Writing of C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1971), p. 154.

reality but also of the special attention to the truth about human selfhood. In effect, far from focusing exclusively on the supernatural at the expense of the value and significance of the natural and the human, Lewis in his religious narratives tends to put important concerns with exploring *spiritual reality* through allegorical or fantastical or mythical lens to envisage the inter-relationship between the objective / metaphysical *and* the subjective / personal. This enriched textuality can be evidenced, for example, by Lewis's two texts of "theological fantasy," *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) and *The Great Divorce* (1946), which, in this respect, are correspondent with the text of *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), the allegorical manifestation of the innermost being of human self possessed by the heightened sense of "romantic" longing / Joy—the central theme in Lewis's life and most of his works.

Thematically, unlike *The Pilgrim's Regress*, neither *The Screwtape Letters* nor *The Great Divorce* is dealing with a pilgrimage predominated by the experience of Joy, whether concerning its origin (from the divine) or its impact upon the inwardness or spirituality of human existence. Nonetheless, these two shorter but absolutely no less powerful (in terms of imagination, intellect or even theology) texts also present, respectively and fantastically, the pilgrimage in which the close relationship between supernaturality and subjectivity is even more realistically lived out. The paradoxical combination of both the fantastic and the realistic in the delineation of pilgrimage is shown in both *The Screwtape Letters*, with letters about how a human soul's daily journey of faith can be, particularly psychologically, under the rein of diabolical temptation, and *The Great Divorce*, through dream-vision contemplating from the perspective of eternity the reality of the human choice of heaven or hell happening in the mundane realities of life, such as habits of mind or ways of thinking or problems of human relationship. Also, it is perceivable that C. S. Lewis's *fantastic* imagination is most conspicuously and profoundly devoted to depicting the

pilgrimage that a human self existentially and spiritually embarks on, in a sense tremendously akin to the Platonic philosophical conception of “human life as a pilgrimage from appearance to reality,”⁸⁷ to use the informing phrase of Iris Murdoch. Basically, the following study of these two fantastical texts will be centered on the theme of the truth about selfhood disclosed through the spiritual journey into *reality* of a metaphysical / religious order, in both the Platonic and Christian sense.

Following the previous criticism on *The Pilgrim's Regress*, undertaken from literary and religious perspectives, the investigation of this chapter of *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce* into such issues as “selfhood” and “reality” or existential and religious truth, again, aims to inspect closely both *form*, i.e. mode of expression (literary enterprise) and *moral* (apologetic enterprise). Also, the efficacy of Lewis’s literary apologetics is to be assessed, as done previously, according to how well the artistic form and the moral themes / apologetic concerns are intermingled. In other words, the relevance of art to the religious truth that the artistic / literary work means to convey or embody remains the intended critical target. Such a target certainly needs to be specified in the contexts of the apologetic / theological fantasies concerned. Prior to a specific examination regarding how art and religion, or, literature and theology, are *fantastically* coalesced, it is worthwhile and also necessary to clarify first, even if only generally, the meanings of fantasy and those central issues this criticism attempts to examine—selfhood and reality.

About the definition of fantasy as a special form of creative writing, Lewis in the essay entitled “The Meanings of ‘Fantasy’” offers a brief *aesthetic* and *hermeneutic* explanation: “A story which introduces the marvellous, the fantastic, says to him [the reader] by implication ‘I am merely a work of art. You must take me as such—must

⁸⁷ In her excellent book on Plato, *The Fire and the Sun* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), Iris Murdoch notes, “Plato pictures human life as a pilgrimage from appearance to reality” (Murdoch, 2).

enjoy me for my suggestions, my beauty, my irony, my construction, and so forth.”⁸⁸

In this concise statement addressed directly to the reader, not only is the *artistic* nature of fantasy underscored, but also the reader is clearly guided about how to *enjoy* it. This brief reading map provided by Lewis the literary critic, who is at the same time a fantasy maker, is certainly useful to the readers of Lewis’s own fantasies. In fact, in this study, the separate discussions about *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce* below will basically follow this “fantasist” invitation—to enter into the imaginative world for the fantastic experiences it entertains and to interpret their implications, or “imaginative supposals,” in aesthetic, rhetoric (*ironic*) and textual terms. Moreover, seeing that Lewis’s fantastical and imaginative world is definitely one inhabiting a “divine universe,” as coined by Lewis’s literary and spiritual mentor, George MacDonald, it is therefore appropriate to term his fantastic narratives, *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce* included, “fantasies of theology,” and accordingly a religious or even theological (in a broad sense) perspective is valid and even indispensable.

To make clearer how “fantasy of theology” can be understood, another idea—“theology of romance”—noted by C. S. Lewis’s scholar, Colin Duriez,⁸⁹ and Lewis himself, when speaking of Charles Williams’s versatile enterprise, can be informatively helpful. According to Lewis’s exposition, which Colin Duriez quotes from Lewis’s “Preface” to *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* and rightly thinks applicable to Lewis’s own works, “a romantic theologian” is someone “who considers the theological implications of those experiences which are called romance.”⁹⁰

Indeed, Lewis’s keen observation about what the theology of romance means is

⁸⁸ Lewis, *An experiment in Criticism*, p. 56.

⁸⁹ In Colin Duriez’s *The C. S. Lewis Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide to his life, thought and writings* (Eastbourne: Monarch Publications Ltd., 1990), one of the entries about C. S. Lewis is named “theology of romance.” The following quotation of Lewis is also included in the same entry. P. 202.

⁹⁰ C. S. Lewis, “Preface,” *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. vi.

noticeably referable not only to his own religious narratives but also to the meaning of theological fantasy. Just as the practitioner of theological romance is not romantic about theology but theological about romance, so is the theological fantasist, who, we might follow Lewis to say, is not fantastic about theology but theological about fantasy. In another word, “fantasy of theology,” by the same token as “theological romance,” is absolutely not about the undertaking of theology per se but really the practice of the fantastical imagination endowed with theological implications. Furthermore, as far as the two texts of fantasy treated here are concerned, although much less adventurous and dramatic than Lewis’s scientific trilogy or his popular *Chronicles of Narnia* and unlike the “romantic” journey for Joy allegorized in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, they are still in their own ways full of a *romantic* “mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar”⁹¹ as well as spiritual battles that engage not only the supernatural / divine but also the natural / human.

In terms of literary (certainly not theological) history, Lewis’s theological fantasies undoubtedly pertain to the tradition of “modern Christian fantasy,” or “post-Romantic fantasy,” as held by C. N. Manlove in his excellent book— *Christian Fantasy*.⁹² This is a tradition, according to Manlove’s clear and deep account, marked by its “struggle against” the modern trend of “demythologizing” and “desupernaturalizing” modes of thinking and by its appeal to the revelatory experience of imagination through which the immanence of the divine *in* the universe can be intuited or contemplated. In Manlove’s explanation of the “contemplative”

⁹¹ Cited from the introductory chapter of G. K. Chesterton’s *Orthodoxy* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., 1908), in which Chesterton makes the claim upon his orthodox position by making association between his standpoint and (medieval) romance, saying that “I wish to set forth my faith as particularly answering this double spiritual need, the need for that *mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar* which Christendom has rightly named *romance*” (emphasis added). P. 13.

⁹² According to Manlove, in the chapter entitled “Modern Christian Fantasy,” *Christian Fantasy: from 1200 to the present* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), C. S. Lewis is counted as one of the writers of “modern Christian fantasy.”

quality of post-Romantic (Christian) fantasy,⁹³ perhaps what is most noteworthy and relevant to this study is his shrewd observation that “it always seeks [through its narratives] to portray a *state of being*”⁹⁴ (emphasis added). Such a tendency to represent or reflect on human selfhood is evidently correspondent with what Manlove points out—“a general shift over the centuries, through the Renaissance via the Enlightenment to Romanticism, from a God-centred to a much more man-oriented Christian view of the universe.”⁹⁵ But, on the other hand, this phenomenon of putting considerable concern with the subjective realm of human being can actually be traced as far back as in the writings of early Christian “humanists,” such as Augustine;⁹⁶ even St. Paul’s messages touch upon the issue of the conflicting self in the struggle of living out Christian faith (Cf. Romans, 7: 21-23). C. S. Lewis, in some sense, like the other nineteenth- and twentieth century writers of Christian fantasy, inherits this early, or traditional, Christian “humanist” approach to the problem of religious faith and tends to scrutinize the individual being’s subjective consciousness or state of mind in the (modern) context of encounter or tension or alienation between faith and self, between ultimate reality and subjective experience.

Therefore, in such sophisticated criticism of Lewis’s fantasy as that of C. N. Manlove, there is an unmistakable recognition of “double movement”—outward toward *reality* and inward toward *selfhood*. For instance, in his analysis of *The Great Divorce*, Manlove pointedly and profoundly remarks: “the true sin is the orientation towards *self*—self-advancement and self-protection—that lies under an

⁹³ Aside from “immanentism,” another feature of modern Christian fantasy, according to Manlove, is its contemplative nature: “This concern with contemplation of the divine as it is manifested in the universe distinguishes nineteenth- and twentieth-century fantasy from that written since Dante” (Manlove, 159).

⁹⁴ Manlove, *Ibid*, p. 159.

⁹⁵ Manlove, *Ibid*, p. 157.

⁹⁶ Cf. Doris T. Myers’s “The Context of Christian Humanism,” the fourth chapter of her book, *C. S. Lewis in Context*.

evasion of *reality*”⁹⁷ (emphases added). This association between *self*-orientation and (his / her) estrangement from *reality* is indeed wisely drawn from Lewis’s delineation of the situation of those “self-willed” souls who are destined by their own choices of either refusing or entering into reality / heaven in *The Great Divorce*. In fact, it can also be applied to Lewis’s representation of an individual human’s life- and faith-journey in *The Screwtape Letters*, in which it is manifested that the self, if captivated by his own selfhood, can be just easily falling prey to the hellish temptation of which the foremost task is to enact the alienation of the human self from what is *real / true*. Basically in tune with Manlove’s reading, the following interpretations of the two fantastic texts of Lewis aim to contemplate the relationship between self and reality—a relationship that is to some extent underwritten by the operation of temptation and in some sense determined by the problematic “selfhood” in the individual person’s journey into *either* faith / heaven *or* temptation / hell.

Apparently standing in incompatible contrast with “reality,” which in terms of philosophy of religion or Christian faith, denotes an objective and transcendent order of truth, “selfhood” (to be examined in Lewis’s texts) signifies a totally subjective state of being or mind that is prone to confine oneself within subjective consciousness and lead a way of “living out of one’s interiority” and “autonomy”⁹⁸ rather than living in (Christian) faith, in genuine “communion” with “reality” and with other persons, human and divine. In the discussions below, firstly on *The Screwtape Letters* and then on *The Great Divorce*, such a conflicting but not impossible to become harmonized relationship between self and reality, self and other, will be put into close inspection. Meanwhile, in dealing with this subject of investigation, the significant

⁹⁷ Manlove, *Ibid*, p. 108.

⁹⁸ Cf. John F. Crosby’s book, *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, c1996), in which the author explains “variation on the theme of selfhood,” such as “the theme of independence, autonomy, . . . living out of one’s interiority, acting through oneself, determining oneself” and so on. P. 1.

place of the power of temptation enacted within or upon the selfhood should never be overlooked. It can be demonstrated in both of Lewis's Christian fantasies that "temptation," whether activated by the supernatural force from Hell or originated from the natural weakness in human selfhood, plays an active and nasty role of carrying tension and disunion (or "divorce") in the relationship between self and reality into "remarkable" effect.

The eternal joining between the subjective state of being (self) and the objective order of truth (reality)—is what the devil, *the tempter* in *The Screwtape Letters* endeavours to cause a human soul to avoid and the angel (or Bright Spirit) in *The Great Divorce* looks to help him / her to enter into. But ultimately it is really dependent on every existential self who is responsible for the eternally divergent consequence of either renouncing or choosing faith and heaven, that is, the difference of becoming, as it were, "the devil's delight" in Hell *or* the angel's party taking heavenly delight in (ultimate) reality. That is to say, being a *free* subject, the human self can make his own decision of and accordingly must take responsibility for what it is to *be*. From this perspective, we may infer that Lewis's practice of "fantasizing" the inter-relationships between selfhood and temptation and between self and reality is not simply impregnated with theological sense but also has, to a great extent, a (Christian) *existentialist* touch. In light of this, it seems not far-fetched at all to draw association between C. S. Lewis the modern Christian fantasist and Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), "the most important figure" of Christian existentialism.⁹⁹

In fact, Kierkegaard's philosophical contemplation of the "relationship between existence and Christianity" bears notable congeniality to Lewis's treatment of the problem of faith inter-related with human selfhood. For instance, in one of his

⁹⁹ Cf. David E. Roberts, *Existentialism and Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957). Chapter II & III "Kierkegaard." Pp. 61-144.

“edifying discourses,” Kierkegaard instructs that “the expectation of faith is victory,” meaning that as “eternal power in man,”¹⁰⁰ faith will bring man into spiritual victory in eternity, that is, to be justified in Christ (cf. Galatians, 3:24). However, this great expectation of faith may be overshadowed by the problem of self, who, once “snared” by doubt, becomes no longer *free* as a spiritual being and as a result becomes unable to “appropriate” things that belong to “the spiritual world,” for “all things spiritual are appropriated only in freedom,” according to Kierkegaard. Thus, it follows that “the more the object of contemplation belongs to the spiritual world, the more important becomes the question of what the observer is in his inmost being.”¹⁰¹ In other words, within his discourse on the issue of faith, what Kierkegaard the religious philosopher is underscoring, rather like how Lewis tends to deal with the problem of faith in his fantastic world, is the significance of the inner nature of self, especially the self being tempted by the “cunning passion of doubt.”

Besides their similarity in connecting the matter of faith with the question of selfhood, or personal existence, another connection between Kierkegaard’s religious-based philosophy and Lewis’s apologetics-oriented fantasy can be made in terms of the rhetorical mode of *irony*, which for both, albeit more explicitly in Kierkegaard’s thoughts than in Lewis’s texts, “is essentially and inherently a spiritual phenomenon.”¹⁰² With his noted treatise—*The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard is admittedly a strenuous and profound analyst of irony, more precisely, of the relation between irony and modern existence. As well paraphrased by Harvie Ferguson, in Kierkegaard’s terms, the ironic form—“the indirect communication of the hidden truth of inwardness”—embodies “the very superficiality and deceptive ease of

¹⁰⁰ Kierkegaard, *Edifying Discourses* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943-1946, trans. David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson), p. 34.

¹⁰¹ Kierkegaard, *Ibid*, p. 68.

¹⁰² Harvie Ferguson, *Melancholy and The Critique of Modernity: Søren Kierkegaard’s Religious Psychology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 49.

modern life.”¹⁰³ It is clearly discernible that Kierkegaard combines his discourse on the ironic with his primary concern with the truth about the existential. A fruitful and convincing combination it surely is in the development of Kierkegaard’s religious philosophy. His existentialist approach to irony to some extent brings about some of his incipient but profound reflections, not merely philosophical but also religious, upon the distance and incongruity between truth / reality and self-consciousness / self-understanding (or self-deception).

A veritable “modern Socrates,” Kierkegaard, rather like the essential Socrates, is characteristic of a religious endeavour to pursue knowledge of (ultimate) reality and the epistemic insistence that such a pursuit be premised upon a (dialectical) self-knowing process. The ingenious association Kierkegaard makes between irony and Socratic critique of selfhood (false or deceptive self-awareness) is significantly relevant to Lewis’s ironical representation of the problematic relations between ego and reality. The following interpretation of Lewis’s two fantastical texts intends to argue, through Kierkegaard’s as well as other theorists’ (such as Paul de Man’s) discourses on irony, that the problematic self-knowledge or self-understanding or self-consciousness manifested through the *negating* force of irony signifies a *self-alienating* state of being, or, mode of existence. This “negative” signification about the truth of human existence by means of irony has, at the same time, certain “positive” conveyance, which again is inherent within irony itself, of the spirituality or religiosity of human selfhood, as indicated in Kierkegaard’s treatise, in which the emergence of irony is linked with the classical source of irony—in Socrates.

In Kierkegaard’s understanding, the double-edged function of irony, i.e., the twofold tendency of negating self-claimed authenticity of understanding and of

¹⁰³ Ferguson, *Ibid*, p. 38.

affirming the transcendental being of the self (the knowing subject) has its historical origin in the dialectical venture of Socrates.¹⁰⁴ Counted or configured as a classical “ironist,” Socrates represents a prototypical interrogator who notoriously enjoys and insists on the perpetual negation of the self’s claim to knowledge-acquisition in order for the genuine and presumably endless pursuit of knowledge that pertains to the truth about reality and essentially transcends the limitation of human experience, cognitively and existentially. That is to say, from the Socratic ironic way of life (through dialectical thinking and reasoning), or the “way of self-knowledge,”¹⁰⁵ emerges the recognition of the religiosity of (human) existence—that we are, in nature, religious or spiritual beings in the sense that we are inclined to inquire into the (transcendent) Idea, “which is the discovery of” our selves. In other words, the understanding of our selfhood must be related to the knowledge of transcendent reality. The interpretations of both *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce* provided below intend to show that embedded within Lewis’s texts—his fantastical and “apologetic” manifestation of the relationship between faith and self—is such a dialectical force of irony that serves to expose both the actual alienation and the potential integration between selfhood and reality, both of which in this context are *religiously* defined. Moreover, by probing into the textuality, or to use Professor David Jasper’s intriguing term—“intratextuality” (“the text within the text”)¹⁰⁶ related

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Davie Ferguson’s exposition about the connection between Kierkegaard’s religious ideation of irony and his religious reading of Socrates’ “ironic way of life in the sub-section entitled “The Religious Tendency of Irony” of the chapter, “Irony: the romance of distance.” Pp. 45-48.

¹⁰⁵ The phrase is cited from Lee M. Capel, who translates Kierkegaard’s *The Concept of Irony* (London: Collins, 1966). In “Historical Introduction” written for the version of his translation, mentioning “the Gillileie Journal” of Kierkegaard at his young age, Capel quotes from Kierkegaard’s journal and notes: “[Kierkegaard’s] proper vocation is the Socratic way of self-knowledge, the need for ‘a truth which is truth for me, the Idea for which I am willing to live and die’, the search for ‘the Idea which is the discovery of myself’, of that ‘individuality’ with ‘its own style’ which he likens to ‘the worship of the unknown god’” (Capel, 19).

¹⁰⁶ See David Jasper’s *Rhetoric, Power and Community* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1993), Ch. 8 “Modernism, Rhetoric and Irony: Another Modest Proposal,” in which Prof. Jasper advises the use of the term—“intratextuality”—to manifest the double nature of irony, which according to Jasper, “inherently unstable and destabilizing, happily works against its own narrative discourse and against its

with the dialectics of irony, this study means to demonstrate that C. S. Lewis's texture of writing is not as "flat" as some critics suggest but is actually *dialectical* in a significant sense.

Apparently, this criticism of Lewis's fantastical texts puts much stress on analyzing Lewis's employment of ironical expression, in textual and religious terms. Nevertheless, it is at the same time engaged in reading beyond the art and meaning of irony—into the transcendental vision both of the objective existence of *reality* and of the interaction between human self and reality underlying the mere rhetorical performances (of the "surface texts"). This mixed vision of transcendent reality and its relationship with the human self (as religious being) ought to be understood as a vision, an implicitly apologetic one, of Lewis's that is essentially beyond the subjectivity of human selfhood and definitely beyond the category of rhetoric (i.e., irony). Concerning how the efficacy of rhetoric as a literary means may serve both artistic and apologetic ends in C. S. Lewis's works, for instance, when he writes as a practitioner of irony, or ironic rhetorician, the following illuminating remarks of Bruce L. Edwards are tremendously informative:

Lewis understood "rhetoric" in its traditional, classical sense—a compendium of tools that equipped an artist or essayist with strategies to communicate truth more memorably, to express difficult ideas more accessibly, to appeal to the imagination with greater aplomb and delight, and, certainly, to make confrontation with the deeper facthood of transcendent reality less avoidable.¹⁰⁷

own textuality" (Jasper, 128-129). The later discussion of the textuality of Lewis's ironic fantasies will get back to this intriguing notion of Jasper's.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted from Bruce L. Edwards, an admirable scholar of C. S. Lewis's studies, also the author of *A Rhetoric of Reading: C. S. Lewis's Defense of Western Literacy* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1985), who writes for the entry on "Language / Rhetoric," in *The C. S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998). P. 231-232.

As Professor Edwards' sophisticated observation manifests here, rhetoric, when well utilized, can function as a remarkably *pleasing* and *heuristic* "channel" of what is "true" and "transcendentally real." This understanding of what rhetoric can achieve in writing (not just of literary imagination) must make sense to Lewis not simply at the theoretical level. In fact, it can be demonstrated, for instance, by the texts of *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce*, that C. S. Lewis as a creative writer is also adept at imparting such transcendental categories as "truth" and "reality" to some "fantastic" effect through using rhetorical tools, like irony.

Centered upon interpreting Lewis's rhetorical as well as "imaginative supposal" (Lewis's phrase) of transcendent reality and its interaction with human existence, this study of the two fantasies remains, as in the former chapter, oriented toward investigating into Lewis's inter-mingled enterprises of the literary / rhetorical, the (Christian) apologetic and the "hermeneutical" in Lewis's treatment of such a "supposal." In another word, this will be a study involving multi-faceted topics for investigation, including (1) the suggestions yielded by fantastical imagination and rhetorical expression, (2) Lewis's sustained apologetic concern within his fantasies and, last but not the least, (3) certain hermeneutical signification to be inferred from the distinctive "texture" of Lewis's literary apologetics. The criticism as a whole looks to echo Paul Ricoeur's observation concerning the "possibility that metaphorical discourse [like poem, or narrative or essay] says something about reality," as made in his multi-disciplinary book, *The Rule of Metaphor*. In Ricoeur's terms of "the hermeneutics of metaphor," to tackle the meaning of metaphor is to understand

the *reference* of the metaphorical statement as the power to 're-describe reality . . . to refer to a reality outside of language. Accordingly, metaphor

presents itself as a strategy of discourse that, while preserving and developing the creative power of language, preserves and develops the *heuristic* power wielded by *fiction*.¹⁰⁸

This profound and insightful theory of what Ricoeur calls “the metaphoric reference” could actually be taken as a valuable “reference point” for approaching the two fantasies concerned in the present study. As for why Ricoeur’s theory can be an importantly enlightening “reference” for the present criticism, it is basically because Lewis’s imaginative texts are, in themselves, imbued with a strong sense of metaphorical “truth” about human selfhood and about transcendent reality, the twofold main concern of this study. In fact, as pointed out in the former discussion on “allegory,” Lewis himself underlines the *truth*-revealing quality of metaphorical language, a quality that seems notably in parallel with Ricoeur’s notion of its *reality*-designating power. In addition, Ricoeur’s insight about the metaphoric is particularly noteworthy because of the link existent between the attention given in this discussion to rhetorical expression as some transcendental pointer and Ricoeur’s idea about the capacity of “metaphoric discourse” to give description or reference to a signifier “outside of language,” namely, the metaphoric “power to redescribe reality.” Furthermore, it will become clearly observable that Ricoeur’s hermeneutic notion about metaphor fits well the ultimate purpose of this criticism—to demonstrate that the texts of Lewis’s fantastical apologetics are not merely fantastically creative and rhetorically strategic but also abundant with “heuristic power” that serves for the apologetic fantasist, for his readers too, to envision *beyond* the language of the rhetoric the supernatural and “trans-mortal” *reality*.

¹⁰⁸ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 6.

Ch. IV. *The Screwtape Letters*: Ironic Discourse and the “Triangle” of Human, Devil and God

“The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n.”

--Milton’s Satan, *Paradise Lost*

A true lover of literature himself, with multiple and devoted literary engagements in criticism, creative writing or merely wide reading, C. S Lewis maintains, in quite an imperative voice, that a literary piece ought to be taken, above all, as a work of *art* rather than “a mere vehicle for truth” and not to be confused with “a religion, a philosophy, a school of ethics, a psychotherapy, a sociology.”¹⁰⁹ In the essay, “On Misreading by the Literary,” Lewis proclaims a good reader of literary works as one with

continual awareness that it not only means, but is. It is not merely *logos* (something said) but *poiema* (something made). . . . They are complex and carefully made objects. Attention to the very objects they are is our first step. To value them chiefly for reflections which they may suggest to us or morals we may draw from them, is a flagrant instance of ‘using’ instead of ‘receiving.’¹¹⁰

Obviously, Lewis is putting significant emphasis on the *aesthetic* status of a literary work. Later in the same article, he uses the example of sculpture to support the sense in which it is imperative to prioritize the appreciation of the “shape” of art,

¹⁰⁹ According to Lewis, in “On Misreading by the Literary,” such confusion is the very kind of misreading that “is unfortunately encouraged by the increasing importance of ‘English Literature’ as an academic discipline.” Lewis’s own position is definitely against such a critical trend. See *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 86.

¹¹⁰ Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 82-83.

before appropriating or thinking about the ideas it conveys (i.e., “the sculptor’s view of life”). After all, it is “by the shape that it is a statue. Only because it is a statue do we come to be mentioning the sculptor’s view of life at all.”¹¹¹ For the present criticism on the text of Lewis’s theological fantasy, *The Screwtape Letters* and even for this thesis as a whole about the literary apologetics in Lewis’s religious narratives, this reading guideline sounds tremendously important and meaningful.

For one thing, it can be regarded as the same rationale underlying the present discussion as well as the whole thesis that actually deals firstly with the “literariness,” namely, the aesthetic and formal aspect, of Lewis’s imaginative and religious narratives, before moving to further interpretations of the apologetic concerns and hermeneutical indications embedded within his literary texts. For another, Lewis’s disapproval of the kind of reading that tends to “mistake art either for life or for philosophy” or certain “patterns of belief ideas” provides a persuasive “reference point” for verifying the misreading of some critics who are apt to devalue Lewis’s literary works on account of their too heavy investments with traditional Christian theism.¹¹² Gunnar Urang, at least in some of his critique of C. S. Lewis’s fantasy-writing, is just a good example of such a critical leaning that insistently reads Lewis’s imaginative works, i.e., his fantasies, as but “instruments,” or means, used, or worse exploited, by Lewis to serve his apologetic and didactic ends.¹¹³ However, such didacticism-oriented judgment actually fails to do justice to the literary practice of C. S. Lewis. Perhaps, it is ironically true that the critic is undertaking the problematic exercise of reading through exploiting, or in Lewis’s words, “using

¹¹¹ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 84.

¹¹² Among those “hostile” readers, Harold Bloom can be a representative of “the literary figure” who posits himself as a reader of C. S. Lewis not approaching Lewis’s works in literary terms but basing his dismissive criticism on the fact that Lewis is a Christian writer.

¹¹³ See Gunnar Urang, *Shadows of Heaven: Religion and Fantasy in the Writing of C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1971). Ch. 1 “C. S. Lewis: Fantasy and the Metaphysics of Faith.” Pp.5-50.

instead of receiving,” the object of criticism—essentially a work of literature, i.e. a piece of art.

After paying attention to the construction or the shape of the literary work, a good reader, of course, also needs to mind what is meant or conveyed within the text. After all, in an exquisitely designed literary text, form and content must be inseparably woven together, or in other words, artfully textualized. On this account, although the valid reading of literature relies on following the foremost principle of “art for art’s sake,” it is equally an imperative for a sensible reader of literature to immerse his or her whole class of reading experience in not only the word play or rhetoric performance or formative construction but also the sense and meaning implanted between the lines, or voiced by the text itself. Regarding how to enter into the thematic aspect of the textual space, that is, the realm of meaning invested in the author’s point of view, Lewis gives a relevant suggestion to the effect that the reader sometimes just has to suspend “his disbelief and (what is harder) his belief”¹¹⁴ so that he can prepare himself to “give the highest marks to the telling, felicitous and well-documented expositions of views”¹¹⁵ which the author puts into the text. That is to say, according to Lewis, the “literarily correct” reading should have nothing to do with the “problem of belief”¹¹⁶ but have much to do with the question of the intermingling of meaning and the artistry of its conveyance.

Based on these imperatives for good readers of literature suggested by Lewis, the following investigation into the literary enterprise of Lewis the fantasist within his text of *The Screwtape Letters* is aimed at a temporary suspension of the issue of belief in the first place for the purpose of receiving and probing into not just *what*

¹¹⁴ Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 68.

¹¹⁵ Lewis, “On Misreading by the Literary,” *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 86.

¹¹⁶ In the same essay, “On Misreading by the Literary,” Lewis pronounces that “[i]n good reading there ought to be no’ problem of belief.” Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 86.

imaginative supposal is presented but also, more importantly, *how* it is *textually* and *rhetorically* packaged. As far as the textuality of *The Screwtape Letters* is concerned, although this discussion intends to put much stress on the rhetoric of irony, presumably the most conspicuous rhetorical device of the text, yet it does not mean to approach the fantasy without recognizing other significant components of its textual shape. By and large, Lewis's writing of this fantasy is featured by its particular texture of the intermingling of the elements of the *fantastic* and the *realistic* in the delineation basically of the faith journey—on its daily basis—of an individual Christian, indeed a new convert, who is unconsciously, or, whose consciousness is, under malign and tactical manoeuvre of a diabolic tempter, the character of, so to speak, an under-worldly supernatural soul-minder. Noticeably, the fantastical element is referred to the presence of the supernatural existence of the devils and their dark business—contending for human souls. Besides, in this text on diabolical temptation, Lewis's fantastical imagination is most significantly oriented toward disclosing fictively the spiritual reality of temptation to such an effect that certain metaphysical truth not only about the existence of the devil but also about the identity of human being and even about the reality of the Divine is given expression or alluded to.

But, in Lewis's fictional and fantastical world of temptation, the metaphysical realm of truth does not stand alone in representation or signification. It is, in fact, inter-mixed with the truth, especially in psychological aspect, that pertains to the mundane realities of the human existence, specifically, the real life of faith an ordinary human person leads in the temporal world. In other words, the element of the fantastic, manifested through the presence of the supernatural and the significance of metaphysics, is set against the element of the realistic. The notion of realism brought forth here to counter-balance the textual element of supernaturalism that

Lewis's fantasy is invested with requires further explanation. To clarify what the realistic means, we can, again, turn to the viewpoints of Lewis the literary critic. In "On Realism," another essay included in *An Experiment in Criticism*, Lewis distinguishes two senses of realism as a literary term—"realism of presentation" and "realism of content." Firstly, he disapproves both of the demand of modern taste for "superficial realism," using "truth to life," in a literal and superficial sense, as the criteria of fiction, and of the related tendency to disparage such pre-modern literary categories as "the romantic, the idyllic, and the fantastic." This double objection is followed by his assertion that the criteria of so-called "truth to life" do not rely on the fact that the content has everything that is possible to happen in real life. As for what can be justly named "truth to life" in good fiction, Lewis's own claim is made in the following description:

For those who tell the story and those . . . who receive it . . . [a]ttention is fixed on something concrete and individual; on the more than ordinary terror, splendour, wonder, pity, or absurdity of a particular case. . . .

When such stories are well done we usually get what may be called hypothetical probability—what would be probable if the initial situation occurred.¹¹⁷

From this passage, we may infer that to Lewis, the synonym of just and sound realism in fiction is the "hypothetical probability" manifested by the fictional context that has particularity as its character. This theory about realism in fiction, in fact, is fittingly applicable to the realistic element of the text of *The Screwtape Letters*. Focused upon an individual human's practical life, including both external (involving other persons or worldly affairs, such as the Second World War) and internal (psychological

¹¹⁷ Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 64-65.

and spiritual) activities, Lewis's fantasy indeed represents certain truthful situations regarding a particular self's religious experiences set in the backdrop of his everyday life and the mundane world.

Moreover, related with the realistic respect of this fantastical text is another textual characteristic, namely, the double vision of reality—of the supernatural and of the self. As will be further illustrated in the later part of this analysis, this twofold reality is manifested by a sort of inter-personal relationship involving the human creature, whose state of mind or subjective consciousness is, in *reality* though unknowingly, under certain impact of the temptation of the devil that is engaged in perpetual conflict with its supreme Adversary, the Creator, over the human soul. The scenario of such an inter-relationship, or as it were, the triangle of the human self, the devil and God, bespeaks a dynamic, instead of static, picture of spiritual reality. In view of the interactive relationship between the supernatural and the individual person, it can be held that the double vision of reality, in effect, imbues the textuality of the narrative with a sense of dynamism. As once commented by Chad Walsh, a dedicated critic and admirer of C. S. Lewis's works, within Lewis's "as if worlds," that is, the literarily hypothetical worlds made up through his fantastical or "magical" imagination, "[w]hat had been a static faith [i.e. traditional truth] becomes a dynamic one."¹¹⁸ In fact, not just the textuality of faith-related narratives (not the mere doctrine of faith) but also the textuality of faith per se, especially in terms of its epistemology or empirical applicability, ought to be of dynamism. After all, in the real world, the reality of faith cannot be separated from the subjective and existential experience of the particular individual. The element of the realistic together with the interaction between objective reality and subjective reality in the text of Lewis's fantasy bespeaks the fact that Lewis's fantastical imagination is, on the one hand,

¹¹⁸ Chad Walsh, "C. S. Lewis: Critic, Creator and Cult Figure," p. 79.

fundamentally concerned with traditional belief in transcendental reality out there, and on the other hand, it is significantly oriented to the reality existentially experienced here and now *within* the self.

As regards the textual shape of Lewis's fantasy of temptation in terms of *rhetoric*, the present examination aims to scrutinize a texture of intricacy related with the discourse of irony. Concerning the relevance of ironic discourse to Lewis's fantastical supposal of the reality of temptation, the question could be tackled in various respects. Structurally, the text of *The Screwtape Letters* is apparently written in the epistolary form characteristic of its ironic inversion of representing the "psychology of temptation"¹¹⁹ from the point of view of the devil—the Hellish tempter of human soul—whose agency is predicated on its antagonistic position against God, *the* Enemy of the devil and yet the loving Creator of the human. Textually speaking, the rhetorical form of irony gives rise to a literary discourse (on temptation, on the spiritual triangle and on identity or subjectivity) far more complicated than the reversed perspective and expression of the spiritual reality of temptation. The ironically inversed account of temptation—how it actually works and spiritually means from the evil tempter's eye and mouth—certainly holds up a useful and revealing mirror for reflecting the weak, dark and even absurd sides of human selfhood in an objective way. Just as pronounced by Lewis himself in his new "Preface" for the 1961 edition of the book, the purpose of writing these demonic epistles is "to throw light from a new angle on the life of man." However, it can be evidenced that within Lewis's text the ironic plays a more significant role in the structure of meaning, much deeper and subtler than a mere rhetorical means of

¹¹⁹ In a letter written to his brother, Warren Lewis, dated 20 July 1940 and cited in *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* by Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd, 1974), Lewis told of the ideas he came up with which became the gist and intent of his writing of *The Screwtape Letters*: "I was struck by an idea for a book which I think might be both useful and entertaining. It would be called 'As one Devil to another' . . . The idea would be to give all the psychology of temptation from the *other* point of view." P. 191.

inversion. Lewis's employment of the rhetorical mode of irony actually renders his fantastical invention of these diabolic writings on the art of temptation textually complex in that the whole text is thereby endowed with multi-layered meanings.

Comprising by a series of the infernal correspondence written single-handedly by Screwtape, a retired senior devil, to exhort and sometimes admonish his young nephew, a tyro tempter, the ironically-inversed demon-dominated narrative could be treated textually and rhetorically as a text of ironic discourse, which is, in itself, meaningful at many levels. To wrestle with the manifold signification of the rhetoric of irony or the ironic discourse within Lewis's fantasy-narrative, the most prominent issue, also one of the primary concerns of this study, is the question of subjectivity. It is generally held that subjectivity is a question inherent in the act of irony. Kierkegaard, for instance, approaches the rhetoric of irony in terms of its relationship with the speaking subject. In *The Concept of Irony*, he defines irony as a "determination of subjectivity,"¹²⁰ which according to Kierkegaard is a determination of the subject to be "negatively free" by meaning not or the opposite of what is said so as to retain the subject's independence of any "actuality," including the "relation to others" and the relation to one's self. Noticeably, in Kierkegaard's conception, emerging from the performance of irony is the disjunction not simply between "phenomenon" (words) and "essence" (meaning) but also between the rhetoric (irony) and the existential (the self) and even reality (actuality). Basically correspondent with Kierkegaard's existentialist thinking about irony, Paul de Man proclaims in his noted essay, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," that irony is essentially "a problem that exists within the self."¹²¹ Similarly, to an extent echoing both Kierkegaard and de Man, David Jasper in *Rhetoric, Power and Community* describes irony as "[e]ndlessly

¹²⁰ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, p. 279.

¹²¹ Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1971] 1983), p. 211.

self-reflexive, engag[ing] in perpetual redescription of established beliefs and assumptions in order to break free from their power.”¹²² In this rigorous description, perhaps it is the very notion of “established beliefs” that could distinguish Jasper’s ideation from the theories of the other two, especially de Man’s purely literary perspective. Jasper actually speaks of irony in the context of the tradition of Christian theology; therefore, we could infer that the Kierkegaardian notion of “actuality,” in Jasper’s understanding, is referred, even more directly than Kierkegaard, to the belief system of Christianity. Associated with religious meaning or not, the three thinkers of the rhetoric of irony all underscore the connection between irony and the problem of self, despite their different stresses—with Kierkegaard putting on existential truth, de Man on the question of “temporality” and Jasper on the inquiry into “textuality.” Therefore, their insights on irony in relation to the self / subjectivity are all valuable conceptual references to the present investigation into the discourse of irony within the text(s) of Lewis’s theological fantasy.

Regarding how the self / subject is related to the manifold meanings of the ironical form of Lewis’s exploring the supernatural and existential reality of temptation and also his manifesting the spiritual triangle—the interpersonal relationship between the human, the devil and God, the very important and intriguing question to consider would be: *who* is ironic at all and by virtue of which *subject’s* standard? This is actually a question not only of the rhetoric but also of theological investment and of interpretation. The rest of this investigation is oriented toward dealing with such a comprehensive inquiry. It is mainly because the question is relevant to and indeed crucial to fulfill the threefold purposes of the present study: to

¹²² Jasper, “Postmodernism, Rhetoric and Irony: Another Modest Proposal,” *Rhetoric, Power and Community*, p. 126.

appreciate Lewis's *art* of embedding the ironic discourse within the textuality of his fantasy; to receive the conveyance of Lewis's theological or apologetic ideas through the ironic form of expression; finally, to reflect on the kind of hermeneutical enterprise that the apologetic fantasist may engage in himself or presuppose his readers to engage in the ironical negotiation between supernatural reality and existential self, between art and religion.

As far as the text of those Screwtape's epistles are concerned, it is definitely dominated by the devil's point of view from which human beings, represented by the individual target of temptation concerned, are marked by their physical, mental and spiritual defectiveness and weakness, all the contemptible and vulnerable traits to be exploited for temptation and damnation. In the demonic tempter's eye, the tendency of what they call "human animals" or "earth-born vermins" to fall short of true knowledge of either themselves or of supernatural reality is caused by their being psychologically maneuverable and spiritually blind and as a result ridiculously prone to turn their mind to vicious trivialities while bypassing the point of living out a fruitful life out of (Christian) faith. It can thus be inferred that from the perspective of the devil, the human self exists in an ironical state in the sense that human creatures may think they are leading a life truthful to their existence, but in reality the opposite is often true. Ultimately, it is this ironical state of being of human life that the inverted point of view of the whole text of fantasy, belonging exclusively to the devil, is looking at, or worse, making fun of. Indeed, the tactics of temptation Screwtape admonishes to his inexperienced nephew are based on their human patient's too little understanding (compared with the knowledge of devils, the "pure spirits") of who he really is to build sound relationships with others, including their fellow creatures and their divine Creator, who, according to the knowledgeable Screwtape as well as the revelation of (Christian) faith, is unreasonably loving to the humans.

One example of the ignorance of human beings specified by Screwtape is their ironical fear of death. For the devil, this human phenomenon—the prevalent fear of death—is ridiculously ironical because it evidences the fact that humans are foolish enough to be cheated, indeed tempted, to believe that death is intimidating and thereby become pathetically fearful and unaware that they are created not just as mortals but spiritually as eternal beings as well. The reality that the devil can see while human “amphibians” (“half spirit and half animal”) (44) fail to perceive is actually quite opposite to the mortal’s conception or imagination. According to what Screwtape points out to his junior apprentice, from a spiritual perspective, “to Him [the Enemy, i.e. God] human birth is important chiefly as the qualification for human death, and death solely as the gate to that other kind of life” (145). Compared with the human’s deficient and fallacious understanding of the genuine nature or destiny of their being, the devil, therefore, seems not incorrectly conscious of their perceptual superiority and also of the fact that they stand in a vantage point to blind the human mind to a greater extent and undermine their faith, if applicable, by taking the advantage of the human “amphibian’s” contemptibly insufficient and untruthful knowledge about what they (humans) are (up to) in terms of either the spiritual truth grasped by the devils or the religious faith as revealed to the humans.

In addition to the temptation of fearfulness toward death, humans are, to Screwtape, amusingly susceptible to many other psychological pitfalls, some of which are emotional vices, such as cowardice, hatred or despair. To the infernal tempters, whose “real business” is “undermining faith and preventing the formation of virtues” (30), human vices of this kind, that is, psychological weakness and temptability, are certainly to be made good use of, or in Screwtape’s words, to be guided “into the right channels” (147). For instance, in Letter XXIX, Screwtape instructs his nephew Wormwood that the preferable policy to tempt the English “patient” when he is

situated in imminent danger of going to (the Second World) war to fight against the Germans is to damn his emotional self. To put in another way, the scheme of demonic temptation for such a wartime situation is to deprave the human patient's *selfhood* through manipulating his psychology, which, according to Screwtape, is to be done at the least cost of evoking the patient's conscience or self-awareness. Based on this principle, Screwtape advises his nephew to handle the English man's natural feeling of "hatred of the Germans" as effectively as possible. Besides, to achieve the best effect from manipulating the emotion of hatred is to mix it with fear, e.g. doing away with courage and becoming a coward. In Screwtape's following account of such emotion-mixed tactics of temptation, it is strongly indicated that the human self can just be easily victimized psychologically and spiritually as well under the devil's shrewd scrutiny and manipulation of their feeling hearts:

But hatred is best combined with Fear. Cowardice, alone for all the vices, is purely painful—horrible to anticipate, horrible to feel, horrible to remember; Hatred has its pleasures. It is therefore often the *compensation* by which a frightened man reimburses himself for the miseries of Fear. The More he fears, the more he will hate. And Hatred is also a great anodyne for shame. To make a deep wound in his charity, you should therefore first defeat his courage.

Now this is a ticklish business. We have made men proud of most vices, but not of cowardice. Whenever we have almost succeeded in doing so, the Enemy permits a war or an earthquake or some other calamity, and at once courage becomes so obviously lovely and important even in human eyes that all our work is undone, . . . The danger of inducing cowardice in our patients, therefore, is lest we produce real self-knowledge and self-loathing with consequent repentance and humility. And in fact, in the last war, thousands of humans by discovering their own cowardice discovered the whole moral world for the first time. . . .

It is therefore possible to lose as much as we gain by making your man a coward; he may learn too much about himself! There is, of course, always

the chance, not of chloroforming the shame, but of aggravating it and producing Despair. This would be a great triumph. ... But I fear you have already let him get too far in the Enemy's school, and he knows that Despair is a greater sin than any of the sins which provoke it. (148-149)

Noticeably, in this letter full of subtle understanding of the human mind together with cunning plans to manoeuvre it, a demonstration of Screwtape's tremendous mastery of the psychology of temptation, the human self, specifically its psyche, seems to be reduced by the master-tempter as merely a psychological "plaything" to be manipulated, de-moralized and thereby turned "ungodly." It is also made very plain that from the devil's point of view, the collective impact of the worldly warfare upon the human world counts nothing except on the individual soul's psychic and faithful lives, which are so closely co-related that are meant to be attacked, i.e. tempted, simultaneously.

Furthermore, what is subtly noteworthy and interesting in Screwtape's strategic admonition, though perhaps not particularly so to his hellish reader, is the *ambivalent* undertone of Screwtape, implying that however exploitable and advantageous the emotional malleability of the human self can be to the evil tempter, the whole business of temptation to contend for the human soul still has to face the counterforce from the treacherous devil's Enemy, i.e., God. Such a spiritual contention between the devil and God over the humans bespeaks the signification of the triangular relationship of the human, the demonic tempter and God, who, in the context of morality, is suggested by Screwtape to be the supreme minder of the human soul. In other words, within the very lectures on the know-how of temptation given by the penetratingly strategic and arrogantly perceptive advisor of the hell, there seems to be a sub-text about the facthood of the dynamic drama of tripartite interaction between man, devil and God, of which the script could be just beyond the devil narrator's

control. More specifically, on the one hand, Screwtape confidently assures his apprentice how easily they can channel human psychology to a ridiculous and ironic extent to let human beings make fool of themselves. For instance, humans tend (to be tempted) to mix the vicious feeling of hatred with an ostensible, self-cheating sense of “charity,” which means to believe that their hatred is felt on behalf of others and so exempted from the religious and moral imperative to *forgive* the enemies. Besides, instead of generating a religious sense of humility, their self-loathing feeling is prone to become the demonically favorable yet truly sinful state of Despair. Nevertheless, despite the evidence of the temptability of human psyche, Screwtape cannot but give a hint that the devil’s work, in reality, is either risky or extremely tough due to the Enemy God’s supply of moral antidotes for (hellish) vices to the ironic and vulnerable humans, including (godly) virtues, e.g., forgiveness, courage, humility and so on, and even God Himself. That is why toward the end of Letter XXIX Screwtape stresses the important principle of tempting human’s feeling self—“to keep him feeling that he has *something . . . to fall back on*” (150), be it “superstitions” or “charity” or even himself—in order that he may not turn to or rely on any religious “antidotes” as provided by the Enemy.

In view of this “ambivalence” about the extent to which the devil’s purpose of tempting humans against the Enemy (God) can be successfully achieved, it is tempting for us outside-the-text readers to read these diabolic epistles with some suspicion—mainly about Screwtape’s discourse which is obviously as well as malignly grounded on the devil’s strong sense of superiority over human amphibians. To push this readerly suspicion further, we (human readers) may as well re-approach the text by reversing the upside-down point of view that belongs to the devil. If, when firstly approaching Screwtape’s text—an arrogantly rendered discourse on the contemptibility and temptability of human beings, we follow C. S. Lewis’s advice on

reading literature, namely, suspending our disbelief so as to enter into the devil's self-aggrandizing and human-humiliating discourse on temptation, we now might suspend this initial suspension and re-read the kind of ambivalent Screwtape with such possible interrogations as follows: Are humans alone the substantially ironical beings even in the devil's discourse on temptation? How about the demonic articulator, so proud of its devil-hood (as "pure spirits") and its power to victimize the human patient with the hope of totally, if only gradually, demolishing his Christian faith even if its perpetual, determined struggle against God is but "crippled" in certain sense? In what sense, then, can we read Screwtape, the tactful master of temptation and the very deliverer of the ironic ridicule on the susceptibility of the earth-bound or self-bound human beings to temptation, as another ironic creature (without knowing it,) right in its own "ironic discourse" targeted at the despicably ironic "human animals"? In another word, how can we say the ironic discourse within Screwtape's epistle writing is essentially a discourse of double irony after all?

Textually speaking, "appearing" to be *the text* on the subject of temptation and humanity, the Screwtape letters undoubtedly stand in the position of dominant discourse within which the humans rather than the devils are, rhetorically speaking, ironized. Nevertheless, no matter how revealingly or undeniably, under the devil's penetrating and extremely disdainful scrutiny, humanity bears considerable traces of ridiculous follies or vices or habits of mind, such as the propensity (to be tempted) to make "the World an end and the faith a means" (42) and focus on the "*ordinariness* of things" (14) and thus discard the intangible and invisible realities about their souls and about God, it remains legitimate for us (human) readers to ask a simple, hermeneutical, if not theological, question—*Whose discourse* is such ironic writing? If the authorship is explicitly the devil, then, *who is the devil*, at least within its own text? These are actually different ways to wrestle with the same question—*Who* is

ironic?

From a critical reader's / interpreter's point of view (belonging to humans of course), it is equally indisputable that the discourse about the human's ironic state of being articulated by the devil-character is, in itself, a *man-made* narrative. That is to say, humans, the very object of temptation as well as the laughingstock of the devil, stand at the same time of either writing or reading the narrative outside the text. On the contrary, the identity of the devil as the speaking subject who predominates the discourse of irony within the text of the infernal letters still has to be subjected both to the invention, e.g., characterization, of the behind-the-scene human writer and to the examination and critique of the outside-the-text human readers. Therefore, the question about who is who within the text and context of the ironic discourse is noticeably more complicated than it seems on the surface. Also, by raising such a critical question, a subjectivity-concerned inquiry, the reception of Screwtape's ironic discourse becomes an exercise of double inverting the point of view that the text of irony is dependent on. In this sense, to decide who is the spoken object of ironic ridicule and who is the speaking subject controlling the ironic discourse is clearly not a question merely of textuality but also of literary hermeneutics indeed.

To figure out, at least to approach in literary criticism, the complicated and, in some sense, dynamically unstable situation of the subject-object interchange involved with the ironic discourse which can itself be taken from different points of view, we may turn to some illuminating ideas of Paul de Man the literary theorist, especially his in-depth exposition about the notion of the "plurality of subjects." In one of the chapters of his book, *Blindness and Insight*, dealing with the topic of self-reflective consciousness in the act of literary creation, de Man analyzes the multiple selves in literary studies as follows:

In the study of literature, the question of the self appears in a bewildering network of often contradictory relationships among a plurality of subjects. It appears first of all, as in the Third Critique of Kant, in the act of judgment that takes place in the mind of the reader; it appears next in the apparently intersubjective relationships that are established between the author and the reader; it governs the intentional relationship that exists, within the work, between the constitutive subject and the constitutive language; it can be sought, finally, in the relationship that the subject establishes, through the mediation of the work, with itself. From the start, we have at least four possible and distinctive types of the self: the self that judges, the self that reads, the self that writes, and the self that reads itself.¹²³

This profound theory of de Man's concerning the plural subjects co-existent in the textual space can definitely shed light on, although it reinforces rather than lessens, the complexity of the hermeneutics of irony that the present criticism is engaged with, i.e. the critical task of discussing and determining *who* is ironic according to *whose* say. Just as what de Man rigorously explicates above, there is indeed a multiplicity of subjects or selves at work, even through interplay between each other, to construct the distinctively complex structure of meaning in the context of interpreting *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis's ironically inversed narrative of temptation. In the light of de Man's ideas about the manifold types of literary subject, it is firstly confirmed that the very act of either performance or interpretation of the ironic discourse is inter-related with subjective consciousness. The question, then, goes back to the point of making a decision about *whose* subjective consciousness or self-understanding the play of irony is concerned with, whether in rhetorical, textual or interpretative terms.

Besides, one is reminded of the textual nature of irony as a rhetorical act, what

¹²³ Paul de Man, "Ludwig Binswager and the Sublimation of the Self," *Blindness and Insight*, p. 39.

Jasper observes—“endless self-reflexivity” with a view to setting the self free from the persuasive power of the authoritative text which is stabilized by “established beliefs and assumption.” And it is precisely this “inherently unstable and destabilizing” nature of irony that, according to Jasper, brings into play the “principle of *intratextuality*,” speaking of the “energetically” deconstructive functioning of irony to “work against its own narrative discourse and against its own textuality,” which accordingly brings about “a text within a text” lying in “the deep structure of the text” of the “surface discourse.”¹²⁴ Enlightened by this literary conception of the principle of intratextuality of irony, we, so to speak, the outside readers of Screwtape’s text, may modify our inquiries not simply into this infernal epistler’s ironic discourse but further into the text within or underlying it, by asking such questions: In what sense or terms is the structure of meaning of the devil’s ironic discourse against mankind turned upside down, that is, becoming its own *self-deconstructing* discourse? What does this self-alienating *intra*-text have to do with any theological implication about devil-hood and about the spiritual triangle mentioned above? With these two questions concerning not only textuality or intratextuality but also the theological investment embedded within the ironic inversion of Lewis’s fantasy about diabolic temptation, the discussion would turn more clearly toward combining literary criticism of the rhetoric of irony and hermeneutical unravelling of the ironic discourse with the religious exploration of C. S Lewis’s apologetic enterprise in *The Screwtape Letters*.

That the devil, as agency of either tempting the human self into degenerated or lost faith or constructing an ironic discourse to deprecate humanity, is really a captive of double irony can be testified in more than one sense. In terms of textuality,

¹²⁴ See David Jasper’s discussion on irony and “intratextuality” in *Rhetoric, Power and Community*, p. 126-133.

Screwtape the rhetorician using irony to channel diabolic self-conceit and contempt for human creatures and defiance against the divine Creator, can never escape from being entrapped by the self-reflexivity of the rhetoric of irony. As regards the sense in which the devil himself becomes a self-reflexively ironical figure betrayed by the very textuality of irony Screwtape, in the act of writing on temptation, projects onto the being of the human patient, it is an issue not concerned with the rhetoric alone but invested with theological signification and also involved with a hermeneutical exercise. From a theological perspective, the issue can be approached by asking a simple and basic question—*who is the devil*, the “real” identity of the tempter “collaged” (to readers) between the lines and in the context of the devil’s ironic discourse within the Screwtape letters? As far as hermeneutics is concerned, the theological approach to identifying the devil-hood *underlying* the text is based on the reader’s suspension in the process of interpretation, if appropriate, of *belief* in the devil’s viewpoints or even, when necessary, of *disbelief* in the mere existence of the devil in the spiritual world.

In fact, without suspension of belief or disbelief as such, neither the religious meaning nor the author’s (Lewis’s) apologetic implication can be given rise to in the act of reading Lewis’s or Screwtape’s text of these temptation-concerned letters. After all, textuality, implied or so-called smuggled theology, and the reader’s reception or “hermeneutical exercise” inspired (or maybe enforced) by the text must be inter-related to a well-coordinated extent so that the (artistic) work of literature can be meaningful for enjoyment and also for heuristic or didactic purpose. Actually, the inter-relationship between the literary / rhetorical construction of the work, the surplus meaning yielded by theological association or what this study holds as the apologetic enterprise, and the indispensable element of the reader’s

open-mindedness¹²⁵ can be regarded as a fundamental guideline of the “hermeneutics of art,” as maintained by the two hermeneutical thinkers, Ricoeur and Gadamer. In this regard, Gadamer sounds perfectly convincing and also echoes Lewis’s critical views to some extent when he asserts, “in the experience of art we must learn how to dwell upon the work in a specific way” so that the work of art would “display its manifold riches to us.”¹²⁶ To explain what this means, Gadamer uses the art of architecture as an example (similar to Lewis’s instance of sculpture), suggesting that to fully appreciate it one has to “go up to the building, ... both inside and out,” otherwise there is no way to really sense “what the work holds in store for us and allows it to enhance our feeling for life.” In terms of this Gadamerian hermeneutical principle, we can be confirmed of the validity of dwelling upon the textual space of Lewis’s *The Screwtape Letters* through going both into and outside its rhetoric performance (i.e. irony) and faithfully, if only temporarily, acknowledging its theological preoccupations.

However, it should be emphasized that such a cross-disciplinary approach, literary and theological, to Lewis’s imaginative and religious text does not in the least mean to endorse the critical view of Urang, who criticizes the “pervasive weakness” of C. S. Lewis as a literary writer of Christian apologetics in leaning too heavily on traditional theism and supernaturalism. Not really convincingly, Urang holds Lewis’s “overemphasis” upon the “convictions about transcendence and the supernatural help” as the latter’s, as it were, “creative / literary incorrectness” on account of the tendency not merely to “baptize” but more keenly to “confirm” his

¹²⁵ That “open-mindedness” should be regarded as a fundamental attitude of reading this devil-predominated text of Lewis’s is indicated in the “Preface,” wherein Lewis touches upon the issue of belief or disbelief in the devils and recommends that either the obstinate disbelievers (such as materialists) or the obsessive and “unhealthy” believers (like magic-addicted people) are “ill-disposed or excitable people” and thus not ideal readers of his book. See “Preface,” *The Screwtape Letters*, p. 9.

¹²⁶ Both this and the following citations are derived from Gadamer’s essay “The Relevance of the Beautiful,” *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, p. 45.

readers' imagination.¹²⁷ Yet, whether baptized or confirmed, it must be to some degree dependent on the reader's participation in the whole play of literary imagination / creation so that the literary work can be resonantly meaningful, for entertainment or for persuasion or whatsoever. Rather than any intrusive imposition of traditionalist persuasion based on Lewis's own faith, what is more likely presupposed by C. S. Lewis's authorship and his creative text is the free play of the imagination which demands a certain extent of self-forgetting on either the author's or the reader's part, although it must at the same time involve some kind of subjective preoccupation from the author, the reader and even the text itself. In view of this, Urang's criticism of Lewis's literary apologetic—simplistically focused on "the problem of belief" that Lewis's fantasies are presumably involved with—appears to be too narrow-minded as a reading or critical perspective.

In fact, reductively and heavily relying on the textual and, above all, authorial preoccupation with religious belief, Urang's critique even goes so far as to suggest that Lewis *uses* literary fantasy to serve his end of apologetics just as his devil-character Screwtape's tactic of exploiting the tremendous impact of "fantasy" upon and thereby "manipulating" the mind of the (human) "patient." Such a far-fetched suggestion is explicitly made in the quotation below:

The value of fantasy in relation to belief is hinted at in one of Screwtape's admonishments to the junior tempter. "Think of your young man," Screwtape writes,

As a series of concentric circles, his will being the innermost, his intellect coming next, and finally his fantasy. You . . . must keep on shoving all the virtues outward till they are finally located in the circle of fantasy, and all the desirable qualities inward toward the will [p. 37].

Lewis's way, too, is to work on the fantasy, with the hope of influencing the

¹²⁷ Urang, *Shadows of Heaven*, p. 38.

intellect and thus eventually moving the will.¹²⁸

The association Urang draws here between Lewis the fantasist's apologetic strategy and Screwtape the demonic tempter's tricky way of playing "puppet" of the human patient's mind is worth giving a second thought—in terms of irony. Under the presupposition that the text of *The Screwtape Letters* be read as an ironic discourse concerning human selfhood under the rein of diabolic temptation, Urang's critical proposition in question sounds ambiguously ironical. In one sense, he seems to suggest that Lewis the creator of the devil-epistler is actually of his devil-character's party in fulfilling his apologetic intent of moving the reader's inner being, especially the mindset to believe by means of fantasy. In other words, Lewis becomes really an ironic fantasist of diabolic temptation, because, according to Urang, either his medium—fantasy—or his purpose of writing—apologetic persuasion—are in line with the devil's cheat which Lewis supposedly seeks to warn his readers against. In another sense, we may argue, on the contrary, that it is not the author but the critic who is really ironical. In his attempt to assimilate Lewis with the Underworld admonisher—the devil, Urang simply confuses the different meanings of fantasy for the devil's business of temptation and for Lewis's apologetic enterprise, one signifying wishful thinking while the other refers to a literary form of writing. In Urang's ironical reading, the two senses of fantasy become curiously, perhaps deliberately, identified.

Following his ironical association, Urang goes on his inquiries about the place of fantasy in *The Screwtape Letters*, seemingly from the perspective of literary criticism yet really out of his prioritization of the apologetic meaning within Lewis's fantastical text and also grounded on his assumption that fantasy "enters the story only as a

¹²⁸ Urang, *Ibid*, p. 9.

means for objectifying the forces contending for [the human] soul.”¹²⁹ Nevertheless, he does impressively raise an intriguing question definitely worth thinking over here: “Is the fantasy meant to point only to subjective moral reality, or is it also intended to image objective supernatural reality?”¹³⁰ This interrogation of Urang’s about fantasy as a form of embodying subjectivity or supernaturality sounds tremendously pointed and bears some relevance to the reading this study is engaged with. Although Urang himself does not seem to “bother” to give his answer in his quick review of *The Screwtape Letters*, it can actually be inferred from his general assertion that the power of supernatural entities are highlighted and capitalized in Lewis’s fantastical world, while human subjectivity is relatively belittled, or, underrated. Basically, unlike Urang’s somewhat polarized understanding of Lewis’s (fantastical) treatment of subjective and objective realities, what the present interpretation of *The Screwtape Letters*, as well as later of *The Great Divorce*, intends to thematize is more synthetic as well as sympathetic in orientation. As previously pointed out, this study reads C. S. Lewis’s fantasy as a text concerned ultimately with the relationship between selfhood and reality, between (human) existence and supernaturality, a certain kind of interactive relationship envisioned and manifested through literary imagination and translated through the rhetorical performance within the texts. In other words, the subjective / the existential and the objective / the supernatural—the twofold senses of “reality”—are held to be *correlated* in the fantasy of Lewis without the question of one given a privileged status at the expense of the other.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, the correlation between the double-dimensioned realities, i.e., in Urang’s terms, “the subjective moral reality” and “the objective supernatural reality,” can be illustrated from different angles, just as the ironic

¹²⁹ Urang, *Ibid*, p. 8.

¹³⁰ Urang, *Ibid*, p. 9.

discourse of Screwtape (or of Lewis) is meaningful at manifold levels. One most conspicuous example is the relationship between the subjectivity of human existence and the supernatural reality occupied by the evil force / source of temptation, namely, the existence of the devil. As mentioned previously, this devil-human relationship must be viewed as part of a broader spiritual reality of the triangle among man, devil and God. The category of subjectivity, from this perspective, should comprehend not only human selfhood but also devil-hood and even Godhead. In this sense, what is objective becomes only a relativized term. Indeed, from the devil's angle, the subjective existence of human being, whether in the respect of soul or mind or simply body, is *objectified* as something that can be manoeuvred, tempted and ultimately consumed. According to the infernal viewpoint—a mixture of the devils' sense of being pure spirits and thus superior to human existence and their contemptuous attitude toward various kinds of human fallibilities which in the tempter's eye can be easily turned into lapse or isolation from faith (in God), the subjectivity of humans is, rhetorically speaking, *ironically* defined by Screwtape, the author of the infernal discourse about the art of temptation and also a negative ontology of mankind. In the light of Screwtape's "ironic discourse," humans are ontologically born as amphibians (half spirit, half animal)—an identity that speaks for their ironic nature of being. The sense of irony in humans' state of being can be inferred by the part the human self plays in the spiritual triangle. As disclosed by Screwtape's marvellous spiritual insight, humans are created to be free subjects, spiritually free to respond to the wooing of their loving Creator (God) in their own ways; however, as moral beings or in psychic lives, they can be—to the devil's satisfaction and amusement—vulnerable and malleable to such an extent that existentially they are at the same time not free from becoming the easy targets and victims of diabolic temptation. That is to say, even if they are predestined to be free and become the

lovable sons of their Creator, the Archenemy of the Underworld, human creatures are simply and also ironically subjected to the devil's ridicule and manipulation.

How, then, about the subjective reality of the devil? Is devil-hood an absolutely free entity—free to wage war against God out of its hopeless sense of self-importance, free to make a fool and victim out of a fallible human “patient” and yet free from being caught by the rhetoric of mockery, that is, being betrayed by the very act of irony—the uncontrollably self-reflexive speech act that might backfire to victimize the speech-maker, i.e., the devil itself? From the angle of the human reader, (with of course naturally inferior spiritual perception,) underlying the ironic discourse of Screwtape can actually be detected such a self-betraying double irony. In other words, like any rhetorical practice of irony, Screwtape's contemptuous remarks against humans are inevitably double-edged—not only capable of exposing the truth about human selfhood but also devil-revealing and therefore, in a *heuristic* (and apologetic) sense, entertaining and useful. In addition to the detached reader's angle, the possibility of re-examining the devil's selfhood along with re-reading its ironic discourse in a *deconstructive* approach can be associated with the enterprise of the real author of these diabolic letters, namely, C. S. Lewis the fantasy writer of *The Screwtape Letters*.

In fact, it is discernible that through his ironic inversion of having a senior devil articulating an ironic discourse for revealing certain truths about human life, Lewis, certainly no less sharp-witted than the tactful Screwtape, actually manages to interpolate the surface text belonging to Screwtape with some penetrating ironic twists which aim to provoke rhetorical, theological and hermeneutical backfire against the identity of the devil constructed within Screwtape's letters. In terms of this, we may reasonably surmise that Lewis's intention, not only literary but also apologetic, in making up these infernal letters full of diabolic hostility and contempt toward humans

and even God, is to turn the devil's derision around against its own selfhood "so that," in biblical words, "we may not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs" (2 Corinthians 2:11). This intended double ironic inversion of Lewis's writing is actually hinted at by the epigraphs in front of the whole book, in which Lewis cites both Luther's and Thomas More's suggestions about exorcism—to heap scorn upon the devils, for it is simply unbearable to them.¹³¹

Concerning how devil-hood is defined or deconstructed by the double irony underlying the text of Screwtape's ironic discourse and also how the intra-discourse about the devil's selfhood is related with the apologetic and hermeneutical enterprises that not merely Lewis the fantasy writer is engaged with but the reader should also participate in, the correlation between subjective reality and supernatural / spiritual reality, specifically the triangular inter-relationship between the devil, man and God, is, again, significantly involved. After all, what makes the devil appear *existentially ironical* lies in the very ironic discourse rendered by Screwtape in which the demonic despite against human beings is both based on the most vicious mark of the devil-hood—self-pride—and entangled with the devil's hatred and antagonism toward God. According to Screwtape's theory, it is crucially prompted by so-called love in their Archenemy (i.e. God) for His human creatures, those despicable "earth-born vermins," that their Underworld Father (i.e. Satan) decided to oppose against God. That pre-ordained loving relationship between God and mankind is disgustingly incredible and unacceptably unreasonable from the standpoint of the proudly ambitious and rebellious angels, now called devils, the self-assumed Adversary to God as well as to man. Accordingly, the "object of divine love," which is supposed to be the status of human souls in supernatural reality, becomes the target of preying

¹³¹ The original citations of Lewis are Luther's words, "The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn," and More's, "The devil ...the prowde spirite ...cannot endure to be mocked."

to the devils, now that they are rivals against God. Such a self-justifying theory of Screwtape's, with a view to making plain to its far less acknowledgeable junior the existential meaning of being a devil as well as the philosophy of their agency of temptation, is indeed ironical in the sense that instead of justifying the devils' state of being, the discourse unintentionally yet revealingly exposes the manifold depravities of devil-hood. This is particularly shown in the devil's deceptive self-understanding and problematic dealings with *others*, e.g., human creatures and the divine Creator.

In the context of Screwtape's account, which on the surface is about tactics of temptation and yet at the deeper level speaks of the demonic perception about their own selfhood, the otherness of manhood or Godhead in association with the inter-personal relationship among the three parties, it is evident that Lewis's representation of the devil's personhood hints at the truth that both the devil's cognitive and emotive faculties are at best flawed. In his essay entitled "Evil and God," Lewis, in the terms of Christian theology, identifies the devil precisely as fallen and rebel angel and argues against the doctrine of Dualism about good and evil as equal though opposite entities. There Lewis asserts that evil is to be viewed as a mere perversion of good and it stands in subordination to good both in existence and in perception. On the ontological status of evil, Lewis obviously follows the Augustinian-Thomist tradition, which pinpoints the relation between good and evil, as John Hick in his book *Evil and the God of Love* details: "every existing thing is a good creation of a good God, . . . Evil is thus loss and lack, a deprivation of good, and . . . it tends . . . toward nullity and non-existence."¹³² Based on the teachings of Augustine and Aquinas, Lewis observes: "good should be able to exist on its own while evil requires the good on which it is parasitic in order to continue its parasitic

¹³² John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 179-180.

existence.”¹³³ Lewis’s depiction of the devil in the fantasy of *The Screwtape Letters* is basically consistent with this observation about the devil’s perverted and parasitic state of existence. In spite of this (supernatural) reality about devil-hood, in the mouth of Screwtape, the defiant devil stands in determined opposition against the Creator, who is decried by the hellish view as undignified and irredeemably vulgar, specifically in his inventing and upholding such platitudes as ordinary pleasures and, what is worse, in his activating the policy of philanthropy toward the human selves—those lowly verminous creatures. However eloquently scornful Screwtape may sound, when it comes to the devil’s identity, Screwtape seems to totally and *ironically* dismiss from his understanding of the devils’ selfhood the facthood of their parasitic as well as depraved existence. In other words, what seems beyond Screwtape is the very actuality of his own existence of depravity, a state of being resulting from the Satanic transgression of becoming *the* opponent against God and also from the demonic corruption and subversion of the identity as angelic creation, that is, “the helping spirits” (cf. Hebrew 1:14), or, the “mean between man and God.”¹³⁴

Regarding the parasitic nature of the devil, it is demonstrably manifested by the reality of temptation. As suggested by Lewis in *Preface to Paradise Lost*, the devil “cannot directly attack” the Enemy, (i.e. God,); as a result, it simply engages itself with ruining human beings. Against such a psychological background, Screwtape makes the following under-world utilitarian proclamation to the junior tempter: “To us, a human is primarily food; our aim is the absorption of its will into ours, the increase

¹³³ Lewis, “Evil and God,” *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church*, p.94.

¹³⁴ Quoted from Lewis’s *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1964), in which Lewis introduces the development of the Medieval “Model of the Universe,” a synthetically built system out of multiple sources and elements, Pagan and Christian. On Page 74, Lewis comes to the discussion about pseudo-Dionysius’s appropriating the idea of “The Triad (agent-mean-patient) into his cosmological scheme, of which the key notion is phrased by Lewis as: “the total angelic creation is a mean between God and Man . . .”

of our own area of *selfhood* at its expense” (45, emphasis added). The identity of the devil as a ravenous predator feeding on human souls echoes Dante’s figuration of Satan in *Inferno*, where Satan is represented to be “constantly chewing on the . . . sinners [or “damned souls] in Hell.” In *The Screwtape Letters*, the Screwtape’s straight identification of devil-hood with the “predator” of human beings serves to specify the reality of the correlation among God, humans and devils. But it at the same time becomes inevitably a verbal act of exposing his selfhood to an *ironic* revelation. This is based on the fact that the demonic “predatism” toward human’s exploitability, that is, the diabolic weapon of offense against God, reflects the “infirmities” of the devils’ own, particularly in being both insulated from and ignorant of the inter-personal relationship based on *love*. Discernibly, Screwtape’s hatred toward the humans is connected with his incapacity to make sense of divine love toward humans. This incomprehension on the side of the devil is actually related to the fundamental distinction between heaven and hell regarding the relationship between selfhood and otherness. To use the well-said comment of Clyde S. Kilsby, the author of *The Christian World of C. S. Lewis*, “God loves ‘otherness,’ but hell hates it.”¹³⁵ Indeed, that God “really *loves* the hairless bipeds he has created” (74) is acknowledged by Screwtape as “nonsense” and “the most repellent and inexplicable trait in [their] Enemy” (74) simply because it contradicts the “whole philosophy of Hell,” which may be summed up by “the axiom that . . . one self is not another self [and] ‘To Be’ *means* ‘to be in competition’” (92). In light of the contrast between the hellish philosophy of *being* and the divine mindset of love governed by the principle that the “good of one self is to be the good of another” (92), it seems absolutely reasonable that this love is sheer impossibility and nonsense to the devil.

¹³⁵ Quoted from Kilsby’s review of *The Screwtape Letters* in the chapter entitled “Hell and Heaven,” *The Christian World of C. S. Lewis* (Marcham Manor Press, 1965), p. 41.

Yet, what is more importantly revealing in such contrasted mindsets of heaven and hell is that it manifests the reality of devil-hood, namely, the impossibility of being a devil to acquire the knowledge of love, in mind and in existence.

Furthermore, the sense of irony connected with the devil's incapacity to love is heightened by Screwtape's self-contradictory attempt to justify their devil-hood through devaluing the personhood of the divine Being. In order to make up for his slip of the tongue about the truth of God's love and to rationalize his mental incapacity to grasp the meaning of love in the Enemy, Screwtape, on the one hand, expresses strong suspicion toward the personality of God, specifically his loving nature. Yet, on the other hand, Screwtape himself cannot but admit, in a sort of undertone, that the ground for his dismissing the impossible love is really the impossibility of the devil's mind to unravel its secret. In this sense, the very act of Screwtape's inferring the divine love as nonsense can be regarded as the reflection of the nonsense of his own mental faculty. That is to say, the inference, in itself, is *self-reflexively* derived from the absurdity in the selfhood of the devil himself rather than the otherness of the devil's Enemy.

Such a self-betraying irony is further reinforced by Screwtape's advocacy to his apprentice about the grand scheme of their moral assault on foolish human beings—by “darkening [the human] intellect” (106). In light of the Devil's intellectual, not to mention his moral, flaw, Screwtape's advice cannot but sound ridiculous and ironic. Full of malign ingenuity as well as a contemptuous attitude, the worldly-wise senior tempter simply ignores the essential part of the destiny of devil-hood, that is, its fallen and depraved state of being. Specifically, the irony of Screwtape here rests on his blindness to his own intellectual defectiveness. The devil's depravity in the intellectual aspect can be referred to Lewis's critical review about the fallen state of Satan dramatized by Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In *Preface to*

Paradise Lost, Lewis notes: “the same rebellion which means . . . corruption for the will means Nonsense for the intellect.”¹³⁶ This notion about the devil’s “Nonsense intellect,” in fact, echoes Augustine’s doctrine of evil as Non-being, i.e. a being of no substance, absolutely void of goodness. Also, it is a claim correspondent with the observation of the greatest medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas, who too identifies demons as Fallen Angels possessing only “darkened minds” and thus completely lacking “the knowledge that produces love and wisdom.” Aquinas’ insightful viewpoint exactly explains Lewis’s representation of devil-hood, that is, the knowledge of love is simply beyond the reach of the devil’s “Nonsense intellect.”

But, the depraved nature of the devil is of course not limited to the intellect. Theologically, according to Aquinas, the selfhood of Fallen Angels is marked by two predominant states of mind: Pride and Envy. “Pride means insubordination, not submitting to one’s superior. Envy means sorrowing over another’s good, in this case, Mankind’s.”¹³⁷ Actually, underlying the devil’s spiritual discrimination against human beings can be a blending of these two mentalities. As pointed out in the discussion above, Screwtape’s grudge against the human creatures on account of the Enemy’s desire to “fill the universe with a lot of little replicas of Himself” (45) is intermingled with his proud sense of superiority over humans, who Screwtape holds in contempt as “amphibians—half spirit and half animal” (44). Throughout *The Screwtape Letters*, the presumptuous devil postures as always ready to heap scorn on the human “patient.” Nevertheless, Screwtape’s satanic laughter can be found subject to Lewis’s satirical fight-back.

For instance, reading closely into Screwtape’s disputation against the divine condescension happening in human prayers despite the poverty and even absurdity of

¹³⁶ Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, p. 97.

¹³⁷ These words are Aquinas’s derived from his *Summa Theologica* (1.63.2), quoted by Henry Ansgar Kelly, author of *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 244.

the human perception of the transcendence, we could discern how ironically superficial the arrogant and jealous devil's sense of superiority actually is. Extremely absorbed in the consciousness of his being pure spirit, Screwtape even goes so far as holding himself as dignified as the Enemy God. On the one hand, it is entirely natural that Screwtape would acknowledge his state of being as the *equivalent* position to that of God, since "the essence of the demonic is the aspiration to be godhead." On the other hand, such self-assertion is in reality a *lie*, full of self-deception and inappropriate self-belief. Compared with human beings, the devils may seem reasonably proud of their powerful perception. However, it is equally preposterous for the devils to make such a self-claim since their nature as spirit and their intellect have both become blemished. Otherwise, how come the very knowledge of God can be "permanent pain" and "stabbing and searing glare" to the fallen, dark-minded angels when it is both permanent joy and embraceable and enriching lightness to the good angels and to the "poor-sighted" yet obedient humans alike. In view of this sharp contrast, Screwtape's blindness to his own degradation and his insistence on the stupidity of humans, once again, make him a fool of himself.

Furthermore, Screwtape the devil is characterized as hopelessly defective in emotion as well as in intellect. Aside from his failure to understand the possibility of love, emotionally, this demonic character is depicted to be an impossible *lover* as well. As a matter of fact, all demons are doomed to fall into the state of mind incapable of loving as well as understanding "love," because, as Stanley Fish explains in *Surprised by Sin*, "[f]or the agent who loves, love is the affective complement of what the intellect discerns."¹³⁸ In spite of this genuine incapability, Screwtape nevertheless reiterates in all his letters how "truly affectionate" he is to his nephew apprentice.

¹³⁸ Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: the Reader in Paradise Lost* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997, second edition), p. 335.

This certainly is a lie, and an intriguing lie, because of the ironical effect of how Screwtape twists the conception of love. Essentially, love in Screwtape's infernal dictionary is nonsense. In the mouth of Screwtape the old-hand deceiver and tempter, who maliciously admits his love for his demon-nephew as "dainty a morsel as ever he grew fat on" (156), the very notion of love is appropriated as a deceiving smoke screen for covering his devouring desire to increase his own self by means of the incorporation of other selves. In view of the self-interested nature shared by the two devils and the fact that they really hate each other, the mere reiteration of love from one devil to the other effectively adds into the whole representation of the devil's perverted selfhood some cunning sense of diabolical fun and irony.

In addition to the sense of black humour instilled by Screwtape's recurrent trick of twisting the idea of love, Lewis's satire on the devil contains another more important black parody—concerned with the subject of death. The treatment of the death of the human soul concerned, from the perspective of Screwtape or in the hand of C. S. Lewis, is perhaps the most excellent example of a *double-edged* rhetorical twist in the whole book of *The Screwtape Letters*. To Screwtape, the very subject of death is one of the best weapons for the demonic tempter's job of darkening the human mind by making humans pathetically scared of death so that humans would not live to perceive the true spiritual meaning of life and death. Concerning what human birth and death signify for a human soul in the eye of God, Screwtape sounds like one full of spiritual insights: "It is obvious that to Him [the Enemy] human birth is important chiefly as the qualification for human death, and death solely as the gate" (145) into "the new life" (157). That is the main reason why Screwtape strongly admonishes the junior infernal agent to fight against time and not to risk losing his patient before it becomes too late to take him into captivity once he dies. Accordingly, Screwtape makes a serious yet interestingly twisted admonition that the

tempter ought to guard his patient “like the apple of his eye.” What renders such advice laughably strange lies in Screwtape’s act of parodying the biblical idea of the Heavenly Father guarding His people “like the apples of His eye” and twisting it into the diabolic guideline of sustaining the human life within their control. From a critical perspective, Screwtape’s rhetorical twist, or black parody, can be seen as deliberately devised by C. S. Lewis to caricature his demonic character as a malicious and meanwhile farcical *imitator* of Providence, including His will and His image.

The devil’s double scheme of manipulating the significance of “death”— by propagandizing death as the prime evil to mortals and meanwhile endeavouring to keep mortals from dying to enter into the highest good—at last, backfires. The patient concerned finally dies his untimely death and thus gets free from the captivation of his infernal lifeguard / predator and indeed enjoys a new life and the ultimate spiritual enlightenment in Heaven. So, the whole mission of temptation ends with total failure to the devils. Devastated by his great disappointment, Screwtape bursts out his loser’s pathos in the final letter, which is marked by an unusually self-doubting pessimism in the self-confident Screwtape. Unmistakably, the ultimate defeat of the devils dramatically precipitates the collapse of Screwtape’s self-illusion. Rhetorically speaking, it avails Lewis the fantasist to turn all the elemental falsities in the devil’s knowledge of his selfhood inside out and upside down, mainly through portraying the reversal of Screwtape’s self-experience: from self-belief to self-doubt, from belief in self-sufficiency to admitting the necessity of being empowered by the knowledge of the Enemy, and from the consciousness of superiority to the awareness of powerlessness.

Despite such a hint at the positive growth of the devil’s self-knowledge, the basic tone of this ending, nevertheless, remains ironic. In fact, it serves to underscore, to a greater extent, the ridiculous flaws in the devil’s understanding of either his selfhood

or the otherness of humanity. With the devils' failure in the end, Lewis tactfully endows the whole text with a sense of religious optimism. It is denoted by the indication of certain truth directly opposite to the devilish lie about spiritual reality, namely, a true possibility that superior as the devils' intellect can be, the ultimate victory may come to the inferior humans, who have good chances not to be consumed by evil but hopefully to overcome it—even through death. That is to say, from such an ironic inversion of having the devil's tactics of temptation backfire at devils themselves emerges a sign of hope for human victory over the devil's temptation. Of course it does not mean that Lewis's writing aims to *underestimate* the power of evil. On the other hand, Lewis's satirical treatment of the double irony in Screwtape's speech act or mindset indeed rings like an apologetic reminder that it is equally unnecessary to *overestimate* the power of the devil. Through characterizing the outstandingly ingenious admonitor on temptation like the devil Screwtape as ultimately an ironic creature, Lewis seems to propose to his readers that we amphibian humans might not be necessarily outwitted by the Devil and tricked and tempted by his lies, supposing that we know better what the Devil is and is not up to, namely, to grow more knowledgeable to the truth about devil-hood as Lewis's book invites us to.

More importantly, the apologetic significance is conveyed through the ultimate survival of the human "patient" *in* faith. As indicated within the devil's lament over their failure, what brings about the human patient's liberation from the grip of evil at the point of finishing his journey of faith on earth is really the promise of the human pilgrim's Christian faith in Christ, who alone is the very person to deliver the human soul from evil and from damnation. In biblical terms, Christ represents for human believers a "merciful and faithful high priest," who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" and promised to "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil"—"through death" as well (Hebrew 2: 13, 17, 4:14, King James

Version). Death, in this theological sense, becomes a most paradoxical and complex term abundant with religious meanings. In *reality*, it is death that empowers the Christ to fulfill the divine scheme of salvation, although it equally empowers the devils in their enterprise of temptation. “Through the fear of death” human beings are “all their lifetime subject to bondage (to the devil)” (Hebrew 2:14); on the other hand, death also serves as the very channel of freeing human souls from that bondage, supposing that their faith in Christ persists all their lifetime too.

Thus, it is strongly though implicitly advised that against the bondage or temptation enforced by evil the very antidote lies in (Christian) faith, by which the human “patient” eventually manages to escape the infernal tempter’s control. To further this apologetic reading of Lewis’s fantasy, we may think more deeply about the textual implication of the significance of religious faith in the spiritual battle at least between the human person concerned and the devil. In a theological sense, faith stands for the redemptive promise of overcoming the fearfulness of death for human existence and demolishing hellish temptation which is aimed at disrupting the prospective fruition of faith, that is, the eternal union of human souls with the Ultimate Reality, i.e. the Divine Creator and Redeemer. In view of this, the happy ending, of the human patient in *The Screwtape Letters*, indeed, makes the whole text a persuasively apologetic case.

From a rhetorical perspective, *faith* plays a crucial role too in distinguishing the different destinies of humans and devils, two distinct sorts of creatures yet both existentially trapped by the sense of *irony*. As discussed above, within Screwtape’s epistolary discourse on temptation, what is recurrently and derisively underlined is the temptability of human animals whose state of existence is ironically defined by Screwtape. In the eye of the devil, it is, in some sense, precisely the ironic state of human being as simultaneously the object of divine love and a fallen creature that

makes humans both enviable and exploitable targets of temptation—indeed, a good prey to be victimized and ultimately consumed in the rivalry of Hell with the “Enemy” in Heaven. In this context, the human patient ends with spiritual survival by virtue of his Christian faith, which ultimately safeguards his soul from the damnation intended and enacted by demonic temptation. Besides, the same faith that serves as the human self’s spiritual safeguard functions also as the key or solution for transcending the ironic selfhood of human existence. This rhetorical significance of faith, in Lewis’s text of apologetic fantasy, is connected with the theological meaning that underlies the reality of temptation. Owing to faith, not only could the human patient’s earthly pilgrimage, which is consistently overshadowed by the impact of evil temptation as well as Screwtape’s verbal humiliation, come into fruition, but the human being may also be ontologically restored to the created, primordial and pre-ironic state and thereby be saved from the ironic sense inherent with his existence and imposed by the demonic mocker—Screwtape. The salvation contributed by faith of both the spiritual and the ontological status of human selfhood bespeaks the dependence of human beings upon a salvation from beyond themselves so that the internal void of human lives resulted from their “estrangement from God as the ground of [their] being”¹³⁹ can be existentially remedied, as held and believed by such Christian existentialists as Pascal and Kierkegaard.

Regarding the relationship between irony and being, specifically how the subjective being can manage to transcend its ironic predicament, Paul de Man too refers to Kierkegaard, together with Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), the German art historian and critic in the Romantic period, as representative of resorting to religious faith to *free* the subject yearning for self-transcendence yet inescapably entrapped

¹³⁹ The quotations are derived from John Hick’s expository passage about how Christian existentialists propose to deal with the problem of “non-being” in human existence. See John Hick’s *Evil and the God of Love*, p. 183-184.

within the closed system of ironic language:

the rhetorical mode of irony takes us back to the predicament of the conscious subject; this consciousness is clearly an unhappy one that strives to move beyond and outside itself. Schlegel's rhetorical question "What gods will be able to rescue us from all these ironies?" can also be taken literally. For the later Friedrich Schlegel, as for Kierkegaard, the solution could only be a leap out of language into faith.¹⁴⁰

It is observable that the implied apologetic appeal of Lewis in this fantasy is basically correspondent with the Kierkegaardian (Christian existentialist) recognition of faith as the extrinsic, the sole and the ultimate solution to unravel the entanglement between selfhood and irony. In fact, faith could be viewed as the single most decisive factor in the distinction of "destiny" between the human believer and the devil; eventually they embrace totally different *realities of being*. For the human patient it is the reality of the redemptive order grounded on his Christian faith that awaits him when he passes from his mortal ironical life to eternity. As for the devil-hood, the situation is unsurprisingly the opposite: their reality of being is, from a subjective point of view, self-willed and self-doomed, which would come to nothing and end with being condemned by the eternal circularity of irony. In other words, the devils' is a destiny beyond redemption, for they would simply sneer at the very idea of rescue from outside their conceited selfhood, which can be easily inferred from Screwtape's reiteration of the demonically haughty and disdainful disapproval of the divine act of condescension. Rejecting even the mere idea of love, the devil-hood certainly will have nothing to do with the so-called free gift of incomprehensible love and saving grace from God the Creator through His beloved only Son, Jesus Christ, except doing

¹⁴⁰ Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, p. 222.

everything, deceptive and disruptive, to tempt humans away from the reality of divine love. Therefore, the double vision of subjective reality concerning not only manhood but also devil-hood serves to carry the ironic sense of the devil's existence as well as their agency of temptation to incorrigible extremes, while it at the same time subtly touches upon a religious promise of eternal bliss for faithful humans and accordingly turns the devil's malicious laughter at others around to the devil's own selfhood. Apologetically as well as rhetorically, Screwtape's devil-hood is, so to speak, taken captive by double irony to a limitless extent, a result certainly far beyond the control or expectation of Screwtape, whose very act of irony is explicitly meant to devalue and victimize humans.

However, even if it is deducible that Lewis to some extent attempts to follow the advice of Luther and More to heap scorn on the devil so as to expel it or resist its temptation, Lewis's writing does not intend to engage his readers to laugh at the devils *merely*. In fact, it would be no less simplistic to think of the whole text as simply a play of double irony for the sake of satirizing devil-hood than to identify Lewis the fantasist with his devil-character with the assumption that Lewis, like Screwtape, is textualizing his "low estimate of man, a certain disgust at man's creaturely limitations and his fallen wickedness."¹⁴¹ In other words, Lewis's rhetorically intricate and dialectical treatment of the reality of selfhood cannot be easily explained away by a hermeneutically narrow-minded and reductive reading focused on the depravity of one single party, either manhood or devil-hood. Against such a one-sided kind of interpretation failing to do justice to Lewis's work, this study proposes that a reading of this ironically (double) inversed text about diabolic temptation involves not only awareness of the nature of evil temptation but also better understanding of "human lives." After all, we should not forget the

¹⁴¹ Urang, *Shadows of Heaven*, p. 309.

acknowledgement of C. S. Lewis, the real author of Screwtape's text of ironic discourse, that it is through his own heart that he can come so close to the reality of devil-hood. In the 1961 "Preface," he proclaims:

Some have paid me an undeserved compliment by supposing that my *Letters* were the ripe fruit of many years' study in moral and ascetic theology. They forgot that there is an equally reliable, though less creditable, way of learning how temptation works. "My heart" –I need no other's –"sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly.

In the same vein, in *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942), Lewis holds it unjust to view Satan as a comic, simply laughable figure on account of the commonality shared between manhood and devil-hood. To use his well-put explanation, "all of us, in our measure, share the Satanic . . . blindness," and "[a] fallen man *is* very like a fallen angel."¹⁴² In light of this, instead of naively responding to the ironic ridicule of the devil without simultaneous *self-reflection* on human selfhood, what seems more sophisticated and justifiable is to exercise a hermeneutic of irony no less *dialectical* than the "textuality" of Lewis's apologetic fantasy. That is, Lewis's dialectical text of Screwtape's ironic discourse demands a dialectical act of interpretation which recognizes, on the one hand, the ironic selfhood commonly possessed by (pre-redeemed) humans and devils alike and on the other hand, the distinction between the hope of self-transcendence for humans, namely, restoration into the pre-ironic or de-ironic state of existence through faithful relationship with the loving Creator / Redeemer and the irrecoverable self-deprivation of such a hope in the devil-hood. Notably, the crucial element that ultimately determines whether or not a creature stands in an "ironic" status of existence lies in the sole source of power

¹⁴² Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, p. 101.

capable of overcoming and transcending the doom caused by evil temptation into irony, that is, the salvation of the Divine. Without such a comprehensive reading, one cannot re-experience what is fantastically imagined and apologetically envisioned by Lewis—the twofold reality of selfhood in the context of the spiritual, or supernatural, reality of the triangle of humans, devils and God.

Ch. V. *The Great Divorce: Irony and the Free Choice of Either Heaven Or Hell*

“But heaven is closed to such presumptuous speech, and it is written that God is tempted of no man.”
--Kierkegaard, *Edifying Discourses*

As far as the question about the relation between irony and selfhood, or, irony and human existence within the snares of temptation, is concerned, *The Great Divorce*, another fantasy of Lewis conveying also a Christianity-related “imaginative supposal” of supernatural reality, appears to be a text even more poignantly suggestive of the ironic existence of the human self than the preceding work of *The Screwtape Letters*, published about four years earlier. This is to a great extent owing to the (textual) fact that unlike the apparently mono-voiced discourse of irony in *The Screwtape Letters*, textually predominated by the devil’s point of view, the text of *The Great Divorce* consists of many a dramatic conversation¹⁴³ between *self* and *other*. Generally speaking, these conversations are made in the context more complicatedly dramatized, with the subjective reality of human existence split into two realms, i.e., the hellish and heavenly realms, which are respectively connected or bound together with the objective reality of *either* evil temptation *or* divine redemption. Specifically, the conversations are mainly between the “ghosts” from Hell taking a so-called *Refrigerium*¹⁴⁴ excursion to the outskirts of Heaven and the “spirits” of Heaven, including angels and the redeemed souls who are these visiting ghosts’ earthly familiars sent to welcome them with the mission of persuading these lost and damned

¹⁴³ On *The Great Divorce*, Lyle Smith, Biola University, makes a similar observation, holding that conversation “is the essence of this novel.” See *C. S. Lewis’s Encyclopedia*, p. 186.

¹⁴⁴ According to Manlove’s explanation, in *C. S. Lewis: His Literary Achievement* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), *Refrigerium* is the doctrine “under which on rare occasion souls from Hell may visit Heaven and have the chance to repent” (Manlove, p. 97).

souls into a conversion from their state of being so that their insubstantial phantom-body might be solidified and thus able to enter into “Reality,” meaning to stay in Heaven for good. Against this setting, to be or not to be converted seems the core issue upon which not only does the significance of the very journey rest, but the whole drama of conversation between Hell and Heaven is also centered. However, so far as the theme of conversion is concerned, the journey as a whole does not turn out as promising as it is supposed to be. Most of the ghosts, except for one, refuse to be spoken into any change, primarily of *mind*, and consequently almost all of the conversations end with the ghosts turning down the celestials’ invitation and turning back to where their old selves belong, that is, Hell.

It is observable that the text of *The Great Divorce* gains its intense poignancy significantly from the dramatic tension within such conversational but conflicting encounters between the infernal ghosts and the celestial spirits. These encounters are indeed fantastic—extra-terrestrial, trans-mortal and thus quite surreal and yet also very real especially regarding the conversational issues all about human affairs and mindsets which are in direct connection with earthly lives, such as different kinds of personal relationships and various self-aggrandizing or self-snaring “businesses” of theology, art, sensualism and so on. Moreover, the conversations conducted by the souls coming from two divided realms of being—hell and heaven—are most intriguingly featured by an inevitable clash of points of view which are so different that the communication itself is rendered almost impossible, or at least becomes permeated with a strong sense of irreconcilable conflict. In fact, that the communication between heaven and hell can be *really* difficult and even impossible is grounded on the very first principle governing C. S. Lewis’s imagination of the whole drama of the meeting between beings from two separate realms, namely, Lewis’s personal *belief* in the existence of, precisely the demarcation between, heaven and

hell.

The very title of the book, *The Great Divorce*, expresses plainly the way Lewis envisages the realities of good and evil, heaven and hell, which may sound *like* a direct opposition to William Blake's poetic piece, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. But, Lewis himself in the beginning of the preface (indirectly) denies the inter-textual relation between his *Great Divorce* and Blake's poem.¹⁴⁵ Though neither really meaning to contradict Blake nor attempting to compose an opposing piece of literature against Blake's poetic invention, Lewis, however, does pronounce his antagonism toward the "perennial attempt to make that marriage" (of heaven and hell), which he explains in his "Preface":

The attempt is based on the *belief* that reality never presents us with an absolutely unavoidable 'either-or'; that, granted skill and patience and (above all) time enough, some way of embracing both alternatives can always be found; that mere development or adjustment or refinement will somehow turn evil into good without our being called on for a final and total rejection of anything *we* should like to retain. This *belief* I take to be a disastrous error. ... Evil can be undone, but it cannot 'develop' into good. *Time* does not heal it. The spell must be unwound, bit by bit, 'with *backward* mutters of disserving power'—or else not. It is still 'either-or'. If *we* insist on keeping Hell (or even earth) *we* shall not see Heaven: if *we* accept Heaven *we* shall not be able to retain even the smallest and most intimate souvenirs of Hell. (VII—IX, emphases added)

Lewis's exposition here makes very clear that what he is against is the problematic assumptions underlying the belief of the marriage of heaven and hell, some ways of thinking which obviously point beyond the bounds of the literary making of reality to

¹⁴⁵ This is indicated in Lewis's own explanation about his writing of the Divorce of heaven and hell. In the very beginning of the preface, he writes: "Blake wrote the Marriage of Heaven and Hell. If I have written of their Divorce, this is not because I think myself a fit antagonist for so great a genius, nor even because I feel at all sure that I know what he meant." P. VII.

certain world-views and philosophies of life. According to Lewis's argumentation, the naively optimistic credo about the hopeful convergence of good and evil together with its suggestion or tendency to welcome both categories is totally misleading. Against such an erroneous belief, Lewis's arguments above help to illuminate his own notion of their divorce and thus make a good, informative introduction to his fantasy too. Perhaps, the best and simplest expression that can sum up both Lewis's belief in the "great divorce" and his fantastical vision of reality based on this belief is the reiterative phrase of Lewis within his arguments—"either-or." To Lewis as well as to traditional, or if you like, dogmatic, Christian believers, good and evil, heaven and hell, are essentially incompatible and irreconcilable (and unequal) entities. Therefore, it is strongly suggested by Lewis that existentially and ultimately, they cannot be double alternatives but "either-or" options to *us* humans. Besides, as wrongs must be righted to stop being wrong, so evil can never be self-corrected but needs backward tackling so as to dispel its disserving power, that is, to undo or heal the harm and damage caused by evil to the human life. In this sense, it could be inferred that Lewis's religious outlook on good and evil puts considerable stress on the role the human self plays or has to play in coping with the impact of evil or in making such ultimate choices, on an everyday basis, between Heaven and Hell. In other words, what concerns Lewis is not simply the *objective* reality of the antagonism between good and evil but also the importance of the *subjective* element in the meeting of human existence with good and evil.

That is to say, both in his belief and in his work(s) of fantasy, Lewis perceives and treats reality in a composite way—by taking into account not only the supernatural existences of good and evil but also the interplay or interaction between the subjectivity of human beings and these countervailing forces *out there*. In fact, it can be demonstrated that the fantasy of *The Great Divorce* manifests Lewis's

attempt to combine the supernatural with the existential, or the objective with the subjective, into his, so to speak, *three-dimensional* view of the truth about the inter-relationship between reality and the self, including good / heaven, evil / hell and human selfhood. In the previous discussion on *The Screwtape Letters*, the focus of investigation is on the reality of the triangle of humans, devils and God, a spiritual inter-personal relationship involving also *three* subjects, with the demonic being contending against the Divine for the human being. As has been pointed out above, although fallen and vulnerable to evil temptation and therefore in possession of a devil-amusing trait of ironic existence, the human self, spiritually as well as existentially, may embrace the ultimate (religious) hope of getting *free* from the bondage of evil temptation as well as the infernal tempter's ironic ridicule—with the supernatural aid derived from faith in the heavenly Redeemer. Basically, *The Great Divorce* could be viewed as a fantastical variation on the same theme about the supernatural contention for human souls and also about the ironic state of being reflected in human selfhood.

But, there is still fundamental distinction between the two texts of fantasy. Perhaps, the most conspicuous change in *The Great Divorce*, the fantasy about the (human) souls' holiday visit to Heaven, is that the character of the devil no longer appears on the scene. Also, the irony of manhood is not verbalized as a discourse (delivered by the devil) but dramatized via the conversations between those hellish phantoms, or, settlers in Hell, and the sacralized and therefore solid spirits, who are the permanent inhabitants of Heaven. Furthermore, compared with the narrative of the devil's ironic discourse on temptation and on man's temptability and contemptibility, the text of *The Great Divorce* appears keener on spotlighting the perverted and (therefore) ironic selfhood of the humans. Indeed, it can be evidenced that this later Christian fantasy of Lewis's puts tremendous focuses on the ironic truth

about human existence—born to be *free* beings or subjects and yet prone to abuse the divine gift of freedom, which, in practice, only too easily becomes the evil tool for empowering the subjectivity of the empirical self to reject Heaven—the ultimate *locale* for the communion between human existence and Reality. In view of this, despite the seeming disappearance of the devil in the fantastical drama of the encounter between (human) self / subject and supernatural reality, evil and the power of temptation are not absent after all, but become *really* possessed by the human self. As if being modelled on the devil-hood characterized by its self-determination to rebel against God and reject Heaven, all the souls who make self-willed choices of Hell instead of Heaven in *The Great Divorce* are not just temptable beings but substantially beings of tempting selfhood. To put in another way, their selfhood becomes their own temptation. In this sense, it is thus justifiable to say that the souls who would rather remain hellish inhabitants than become paradisaal dwellers share with demonic creatures the similarly fallen, perverted and ironic state of existence.

From a dramatic point of view, the text of the fantasy displays, as it were, a platform that gives each ghost “a go” to live out (again) his / her own subjectivity in the sense that each of them plays out a certain character according to the individual personhood which is manifestly shaped by a particular background and corrupted by some specific passion(s). Among such ghostly characters, we are presented with a great variety of highly personalized figures, including: a self-conceited “Tousle-Headed Poet” (7) who belittles the level of his fellow villagers as well as their hellish surroundings where he himself is actually a part and thus contributes to define; a Communist-tempered fellow once “singularly ill-used” (7) by the Capitalist world and desperately yearning for “Recognition” and “Appreciation,” while too much self-pity seems to incapacitate him to appreciate anyone around him as well; a self-righteous and shameless “Big Man,” (25) who strenuously although vainly heaps

shame-provoking accusation against a redeemed spirit, once a murderer on earth, condemning the other party's paradisaal situation as unfair misplacement while proudly refusing to follow the celestial "like a dog" but preferring to "be damned" in Hell with no sense of shame; a seemingly *broad*-minded and intellectually enthusiastic theologian, indeed, an Episcopal Bishop on earth, full of "sincere," highbrow and "original" insights about Christianity yet totally unwilling or unable, spiritually as well as mentally, to recognize and acknowledge the reality of the mere existence of Christ; then, a "lean hard-bitten" (51) old man gripped by a hopeless cynicism toward the celestial offer which is believed to be no "free choice" but "all propaganda" (52) of a "cruel comedy" (58); still, a cruelly affectionate and willfully manipulative mother wanting her son (now in heaven) so as to satisfy her monomaniacal motherhood, an instinctive but smothering passion which makes her not only a disastrous mother and wife but also a self-contradictory believer in the God of Love seeing that she is both unlovable and ready to bluntly reject the love of God pronounced by His angel.

Still another addition to this long list of examples is an irremediably embittered husband, perhaps the most dramatically vivified character on account of his theatrical manner of conversing with his wife, now a bright Saint full of joy and invincible love, through *acting* as two phantoms chained together—a Dwarf Ghost and a Tragedian Ghost. The co-acting of this double identity in the scene of his meeting and communicating with the wife-spirit revealingly exposes the ghost's split personality. On the one side, he is a cowardly, crippled and pathetically repressive lover, the silenced ego but possessing the seed of love within and thus the only one (of the two) that the wife-spirit minds and addresses. On the other side, he is simultaneously a miserably demanding, aggressively distortive and, above all, really loveless husband with a domineering ego which is *ironically* nourished and even reinforced by his

self-pity—the powerful yet self-imprisoning and ultimately self-destructive passion preoccupying his split and indeed tragedian self—desiring for and resisting love at the same time. It is not totally unpredictable that the conversation, in such a *polarized* case, between the loveless and the loving, between self-destroying resentment and exuberant joy, between dark lies and bright truth, that is to say, between hell and heaven, carries itself only to reach the *incommunicable* impasse, with the self-chained double ghost's co-working but really conflicting selves vanishing altogether at last—as if vapourized into nothingness.

Noticeably, despite their varied personalities and the related tendencies to denounce the spirits or refuse their offers of help for different reasons, these ghostly performers all exhibit a clear sense of irony in their characters. In other words, they do share a commonly characterized selfhood which is evidently ironic in one way or another. About the commonness in these ghostly characters, we are actually given a vivid description by the narrator Lewis, who within the fantasy primarily plays the role, at first, of a co-passenger on the touring bus from Hell to Heaven and then of an onlooker overhearing the conversations going on between the evil-oriented, rejecting ghosts and the assuring, inviting spirits. According to the narration of the witness-ghost Lewis, his ghost companions all possess fixed faces, full not of possibilities but impossibilities, some gaunt, some bloated, some glaring with idiotic ferocity, some drowned beyond recovery in dreams; but all, in one way or another, distorted and faded” (17). Such ghostly images profoundly delineated here of the hellish tour-takers on their *Refrigerium* bus to Heaven can be treated, in a retrospective sense, as a foretelling account for the failing of the very journey itself for most of the ghosts. After all, the journey for these fix-faced ghosts is supposed to mean a heavenly chance for their rebirth and thereby re-location, i.e. to be transposed from Hell to Heaven. But, as “Lewis’s” gloomy depiction seems to

foresee, the supposedly hopeful journey may not possibly turn out to be promising at all seeing that the whole group (including the narrator himself perhaps?), in spite of their willing participation in such a journey, manifests a depressing trait not just in (facial) appearance, but in the state of mind and in *selfhood* which is strongly suggestive of their impossibility to be altered, even if situated in the redemptive Heaven. Therefore, besides their self-contradictory mindsets and reactions disclosed in their encounters with the celestial beings, the very act of taking the promising trip to Heaven is doomed to be betrayed by their defective, indeed depraved personhood, which again reinforces the sense of *irony* underlying both the journey itself and the subjectivity of these hell-bound souls.

Furthermore, the ironic selfhood of these damned souls could be sensed even more deeply from an *ontological* perspective. To make an ontological investigation into the sense of irony underlying, or inherent in, the existence of this group of ghosts, we may inquire—*what* is the *general* nature of being pertaining to all human beings and indeed performed or exercised by every individual among these ghosts who determine themselves to stay or not to stay in Heaven? To be more specific, what on earth is the most fundamental and intrinsic quality of being shared by all these hellish phantoms, coming from a place of no essential / substantial reality and yet struggling somehow against the help offered by those Solid Spirits who are in the role of, as it were, substantiating catalyzer commissioned to convert their phantasmagoric existences to become adjusted and ultimately transposed to the solid state of Heaven? In other words, what is the predominant feature that characterizes the collective selfhood of these ghosts, *personally* different as they are, and also capacitates them to come or resist coming into that conversion? In fact, the answer could be deduced right from the actual happenings in the encounters and mostly in the conversations between the damned souls and the celestials. Absolutely self-obsessed,

provocatively stubborn and hardly negotiable, the hellish ghosts are, in “reality,” not *mere* or *passive* receivers of the invitation of Heaven at all. As a matter of fact, they all sound and behave themselves as absolutely autonomous beings, which is manifested in the ways they converse with the good-intentioned spirits—either *actively* confronting them or readily turning them down at “will” or with pride. In other words, they can all be termed *free* subjects who are endowed with rights to make their own choices between stepping into the heavenly otherness or sticking to their own selfhood, however hellish it *is*. That is to say, underlying these hellish ghosts’ presentation of their “ironic” selfhood is actually the reality of *freedom*—the inherent and fundamental property of human existence and also the crucial part of human subjectivity that determines how the selfhood of human individuals functions and orients itself—toward *either* Hell / Self *or* Heaven / Faith.

In effect, this notion regarding the immediate relationship between human freedom and the destiny of the human self in eternity is not simply dramatized by the confrontation, or better, negotiation between the hellish ghosts and the Bright Spirits but also didactically conveyed by the mouth of the redeemed George MacDonald, who plays within the fantasy the character of guiding and teaching “Lewis” as the latter tours in the Valley of Heaven with the company of souls from Hell. In the tone of a sage and also like a father, “MacDonald” explains to “Lewis” about two ways of viewing human freedom—in *existential / temporal* and *eternal / trans-temporal* terms:

Time is the very lens through which ye see—small and clear, as men see through the wrong end of a telescope—something that would otherwise be too big for ye to see at all. That thing is Freedom: the gift whereby ye most resemble your maker and are yourselves parts of eternal reality. But ye can see it only through the lens of Time, in a little clear picture, through the inverted telescope. It is a picture of moments following one another

and yourself in each moment making some choice that might have been otherwise. Neither the temporal succession nor the phantom of what ye might have chosen and didn't is itself Freedom. They are a lens. The picture is a symbol: . . .Ye *cannot* know eternal reality by a definition. Time itself, and all acts and events that fill Time, are the definition, and it must be lived. The Lord said we were gods. How long could ye bear to look (without Time's lens) on the greatness of your own soul and the eternal reality of her choice? (140-141)

According to "MacDonald's" truth-revealing teaching about eternal reality from the perspective of heaven (contrary to the infernal point of view on which Screwtape's admonition of deceptive tactics of temptation is dependent), human beings are not merely endowed with but also *defined by* the divine gift of freedom—their innate freedom bespeaks their identity as, so to speak, divine mortals because the nature of being free within humans, in reality, pertains to divinity. However, as mortals, humans cannot cognize what freedom or being free *really* means in terms of eternal reality, which is referred not merely to the natural, mundane and physical but also, in a more exact sense, to the supernatural, transcendental and metaphysical. The only access to the knowledge of freedom as well as "eternal reality" for mortals, as advised by "MacDonald" of profound wisdom, is to live it out existentially and empirically within time, which means to make the *free choices* their mortal lives bring them to. Ultimately, these choices made out of free will are of eternal significance; they become significant determinants for defining the eternal destiny of human selves (with the divine nature of freedom). Basically, the whole fantasy of *The Great Divorce* attempts to center its mimetism (imaginative and realistic representation) and didacticism (moral within and behind the text) on this revelation concerning human freedom or self-will that brings about not simply ordinary choices but decisive choices for what or where human selves eternally *are*. As asserted early on by

“MacDonald” with insightful acuteness: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell” (75).

What is brought to light by “MacDonald” the spiritual and heavenly teacher and actually communicated by the whole fantasy is precisely the important and crucial role of self-choice in making “the great divorce” between heaven and hell, or in other words, causing the ultimate contrast between the damned souls and the saved ones, who *separately* become in eternity either “immortal horrors” or “everlasting splendours,” to use Lewis’s expressions in his sermon article, “The Weight of Glory.” In view of this, Clyde S. Kilby, the author of *The Christian World of C. S. Lewis*, indeed rings very true in his well-said commentary about the gist of *The Great Divorce*—“the cleavage between heaven and hell with eternal destiny contingent upon the soul’s own choice.”¹⁴⁶ Also, it is definitely pertinent when C. N. Manlove goes further to pinpoint the human self as exactly the real “agent of ‘the Great Divorce’,” and based on this he concludes, “Lewis shows us Hell making itself, severing *itself* from Heaven.”¹⁴⁷ What is most intriguing in this brief yet rightly put conclusion of Manlove’s is the straight identification strikingly made between the human self and the very existence of Hell. Indeed, rendered by the fantasy of *The Great Divorce* is Lewis’s astounding manifestation of the direct connection between human selfhood, defined by the individual soul’s *free* and therefore subjective choice, and the objective reality which is split into two opposing and conflicting *states of being*, i.e., hell and heaven.

Through the exposition of “MacDonald,” Lewis’s fantastical mouthpiece, and

¹⁴⁶ Kilby, *The Christian World of C. S. Lewis*, p. 50.

¹⁴⁷ Manlove, *C. S. Lewis: His Literary Achievement*, p. 109.

also by means of the individual ghost's dramatic encounter, precisely conversation, with the heavenly spirit, it is made plain that "Hell" in *The Great Divorce* signifies a state of mind which is absolutely *self*-oriented. It is indeed such a mindset that prompts those ghostly characters to choose *naturally*, namely, in accordance with the nature of the self, the grey town where everyone of them could stick to their own selfhood regardless of the fact that it is a place overshadowed by a strong sense of hostile alienation and the terribly imminent aura of darkness. Moreover, these phantasmal ghosts' hell-bound mindset is also revealingly exposed in their psychologically mixed reactions—cynically suspicious, scared, evasive, repugnant and resistant—to the otherness of "Heaven," which in their experiences is featured by its unbearable prevalence of solidness, lightness and the most exotic abundance of the passion of *joy*. In fact, considering the contrasting incompatibility between "Hell" and "Heaven," in physical dimension or in heart, there is no wonder that the state of mind of "Hell," personified by the ghosts who are hopelessly seized by an overt self-consciousness and over-preoccupation with their own self, can neither stand nor appreciate, not to mention accept, what "Heaven" means and passionately offers. Of the distinction, even contrast between "Heaven" and "Hell," the following clear-cut clarification is provided in one of the dialogues between "Lewis" the narrator-ghost and "MacDonald":

'Then those people are right who say that Heaven and Hell are only states of mind?'

'Hush,' he [MacDonald] said sternly. 'Do not blaspheme. Hell is a state of mind—ye never said a truer word. And every state of mind, left to itself, every shutting up of the creature within the dungeon of its own mind—is, in the end, Hell. But Heaven is not a state of mind. Heaven is reality itself. All that is fully real is Heavenly. For all that can be shaken

will be shaken and only the unshakeable remains.’ (70-71)

In this dialogue, it is clearly stressed by “MacDonald” that Heaven and Hell should not be confused as both pronominal signifiers for such subjective signified as the state of mind of human self: Hell is, while Heaven is not. Moreover, what is significantly emergent out of “MacDonald’s” theory is the equation between reality and “Heaven,” side by side with the identification between state of mind / selfhood and “Hell.” Clearly, the perspective “MacDonald” here speaks from is grounded on Christian theology, which proclaims the transcendence, God Himself, as the fully real, the absolutely unshakeable truth and the ultimate meaning of what “Heaven” pertains to.

Yet, even if the idea of reality, or “Heaven,” ought to be defined in Christian theological terms, certainly, also with a clear touch of Platonic transcendentalism, one may still be curious about how to relate such a theological and Platonic notion of reality with the drama about the self-choice of human beings that the whole fantasy undertakes to manifest? Is reality in such a dramatic context referred to the *objective* world only—a world *out there* for the human soul to know and to experience so that it may be transcended beyond its natural bound and get involved with the existence of a universal and supernatural order? Or, does reality also refers to the *subjective* domain—comprehending also the world *within the self*, the epistemic, empirical and the religious / spiritual self? Actually, in “MacDonald’s” theory about “Heaven” or in the overall context of the drama about the ghostly selves choosing to be (reigning) in Hell rather than stay (and serve) in Heaven, reality is not a word of any singular meaning but a compound idea with multiple meanings to be grasped—at least, in two senses. In one sense, it is *subjectivity*-concerned; that is to say, reality, or, subjective reality, discloses the truth regarding the nature of the (human) self or the state of

(personal) being. In another sense, it also signifies a comprehensive view of what is *objectively* real, including both the natural and the supernatural. To think of reality in this objective sense, the scope of what is real or objectively true is not to be restricted within the domain of a personal being, such as personhood or subjective consciousness. That is to say, objective reality refers to the reality *beyond the self*. However, this does not mean that so-called objective reality has nothing to do with its counterpart, subjective reality, namely, truth about what is *inside* the self. They are actually not just co-existent but also connected with each other to such an extent that they may even be cross-referential notions. That is to say, the hell-oriented self and the self-oriented hell can really mean the same thing. In other words, the self and “Hell” can simply be interchangeable names. Likewise, the significance of reality can equally be interchanged with the meaning of the redeemed self, the self that severs itself from the old, tempted, hell-bound, in a word, *ironic* selfhood and re-orient its free will to receive the divine grace, that is, to become a convert and enter into “Heaven,” a regenerated state of being and also the state of being restored (back) to union with *Reality*. Within the fantasy, the very term—“eternal reality”—coined by “MacDonald” and indeed by Lewis the Christian apologetic fantasist to speak of the eternal destiny of human existence, must be associated with both of the two possibilities of cross-references—identifying the (one) self choosing Hell instead of Heaven as “Hell” itself and the (other) self becoming part of Heaven and never turning back to Hell any more as what reality signifies (to humans).

In light of this interchangeability between “Heaven” / “Hell” and the state of existence the self is willingly oriented to be, “MacDonald’s” equation between what is Heaven and what is real is, therefore, inseparable from the reality of the self or the interaction between reality (the objectively real) and the self (the subjective existence). Just as observed earlier in this discussion, Lewis’s treatment of reality is not

mono-dimensional but compositely involved with both subjective and objective dimensions and their existentially meaningful interplay. To further illustrate Lewis's twofold vision of reality, the evidence could be derived from the contextual fact that the whole fantastical drama about the hellish ghosts' journey to heaven is not confined within a single setting—simply of either “Hell” / self or “Heaven” / other / reality. The “dramatic arena” actually consists of “settings” that are both *within* and *beyond* the self. It is exactly through a series of dramatic encounters and collisions between the subjective being and the objective truth (regarding what is heaven and what is hell), between selfhood and otherness, and between evil and redemption that “the Great Divorce” between “Hell” and “Heaven” is effectively manifested and thematized. In terms of this, (eternal) reality and “Hell” and “Heaven” can all be compound referents in the sense that they are notions both subjectively and objectively meaningful.

Thematically (and also apologetically), what is at the core of Lewis's dramatic fantasy is the truth that from (human) selfhood can “Hell” or “Heaven” be seen, and vice versa. From the rhetorical perspective, this truth is largely conveyed in the voice of an ironist, a manner of expression adopted by Lewis mainly for characterizing the hellish ghosts whose performances of their individual personhood become, as it were, the very scenario for the whole fantastical drama of “the Great Divorce.” Lewis's approach to manifest the irony of these hellish beings is basically through portraying how these ghosts are addicted to their inconvertible habits of mind which are full of tempting blindness of different sorts. Some typical examples include the intellectual passion, as shown in the liberal theologian's endless seeking after knowledge and yet stubborn evasion from acquiring any definite answer to his highly intelligent inquiries, and the extremely self-centered love with the tendencies either of indulgence in illusionary self-sacrifice yet genuine oppression and

domination over others, like the emotionally frenzied and willfully domineering mother, or of overwhelming obsession with self-pity and the sense of being victimized in relationship, like the resentful and truly loveless husband, or even victimized by the whole world, such as the suicide ghost. Noticeably, these blind souls are blind precisely because they do not have authentic awareness of what they are really after—not any object of pursuit or desire they themselves claim, such as knowledge, motherly affection or (sexual) love or recognition whatsoever, but their own aggrandized selfhood. It is their self-aggrandizement, which *ironically* makes them so self-imprisoned (135), that their selfhood ultimately becomes as constricted and insubstantial as “Hell.”

Moreover, a keener sense of irony in which Lewis attempts to depict and expose the truth about these hellish ghosts’ existence as well as their selfhood could be detected from the fact of their being *irredeemable* souls—inconvertibly hell-bound and at the same time hopelessly heaven-repellent. To be more specific, these hellish beings are considered ironic not merely because they all lack true self-understanding and possess a commonly hell-like nature but also in the sense that their blind egotism makes them so self-willed and unchangeable that they are simply unable or unwilling to believe what they are offered in Heaven, e.g., Christ the Saviour, the answer to the earthly theological quest, and true love that yields liberty, joy and life. As a result, they would rather be bound to Hell than be saved and enabled to move to Heaven. Such a choice, in itself, reflects their state of existence, blind, depraved, resistant to reality, and in a word, ironic. As pointedly observed by “MacDonald,” “[t]here is always something they insist on keeping even at the price of misery. There is always something they prefer to joy—that is, to reality” (71). Ironically, this something, whatever it is supposed to be, is, in nature, nothing but “Hell.”

Evidently, irony is a convenient rhetorical tool for Lewis the fantasist to do a

perspective drawing of human selfhood—to lay out the problems of the self, especially self-centeredness and self-illusion and the related moral ills that tend to veil reality and consequently orient the self toward the darkness of Hell. Yet, within the textual space that features not only the fantasist's practice of literary imagination but also his apologetic enterprise, irony actually serves as more than a useful tool for dramatic depiction. In effect, it also functions to impart the Christian writer's *moral* reflections on the nature of the self and his /her choice displayed in his fantastical drama of the meeting and "divorce" of heaven and hell. From the close link between irony and the moral sense of the fantasy, we could go further to hold that significantly through his *ironic* representation of the self-imprisoned and morally impaired beings' orientation toward Hell does Lewis manage to make his dramatic fantasy an implicit yet persuasive case of Christian "apologetics." To explain more clearly what Lewis's apologetic investment is about and how it is mediated through irony in *The Great Divorce*, we may once again turn to Kierkegaard, particularly his thinking of irony as a meaningful vehicle for imparting existential truth. The reference to Kierkegaard can be proved justifiable on account of the congeniality between Kierkegaard's philosophical conception of irony and Lewis's employment of irony as his important medium of reflection. As far as Lewis's apologetic reflection underlying *The Great Divorce* is concerned, Kierkegaard, as an existentialist thinker about irony, discernibly shares with Lewis (the apologetic fantasist) the similar concerns with such important issues as human existence / self, reality, and the ironic truth about their relationship.

As we can see within the following illuminating discussion of Kierkegaard's ideas made by D. J. Enright, the author of *The Alluring Problem: An Essay on Irony*, these key issues, namely, irony, existence and reality, are significantly combined in Kierkegaard's thinking. In terms of Kierkegaard,

it might seem that irony is a cure for all moral ills, in that it ‘limits, renders finite, defines, and thereby yields truth, actuality, and content’, and moreover ‘chastens’ and punishes and thereby imparts stability, character, and consistency’, . . . he [Kierkegaard] penetrates to the heart of irony in submitting that, when mastered (i.e. not merely employed in passing or casually), it ‘actualizes actuality’: which is to say, it dispels illusion, hypocrisy, and deceit, and brings the reality of a situation into focus.¹⁴⁸

Enright’s accurate and penetrating statement quoted here captures the double, potentially dialectical characters of irony—negativity and transcendence—informed by Kierkegaard’s formulation of irony. In *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard describes irony as “infinite absolute negativity,” a Hegelian formula which Kierkegaard expounds as follows: “[Irony] is negativity because it only negates; it is infinite because it negates not this or that phenomenon; and it is absolute because it negates by virtue of a higher which is not. Irony establishes nothing, for that which is to be established lies behind it.”¹⁴⁹ In this explication, definitely influenced by Hegel’s Idealistic point of view, Kierkegaard defines irony according to its double-edged qualities or functions: on the one side, irony is fundamentally subversive, ceaselessly engaged in disrupting any reference of mere “appearance” to “essence”¹⁵⁰ through laying bare the “non-reality” of objects (or subjects) existent within “phenomena”; on the other side, it is “essentially transcending,” capable of “pointing toward a ‘higher and as yet undisclosed reality,’”¹⁵¹ that is, the “essence”

¹⁴⁸ D. J. Enright, *The Alluring Problem: An Essay on Irony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 9.

¹⁴⁹ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, p. 278.

¹⁵⁰ Earlier in his treatise, *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard infers that emerging from the ironic speech act of “say[ing] the opposite of what is meant” is “a determination present in all forms of irony, namely the phenomenon is not the essence but the opposite of the essence.” P. 264.

¹⁵¹ This phrase is borrowed from Harvie Ferguson, who remarks, “for Hegel, the essentially transcending character of irony, which always points towards a ‘higher’ and as yet undisclosed reality.” See his *Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity: Søren Kierkegaard’s Religious Psychology*. P. 41.

behind “appearance.” In this double-sidedness lies observably the “dialectical spirit” of irony, which means that the act of irony involves the double dealing of *negating* the reality of phenomenal existences, owing to which the concealments of reality, like blindness and moral ills, may be dissipated, and on the other hand, *revealing* or at least acknowledging the very existence of reality. To put in another way, the dialectic of irony works through transcending its own negativity, which eventually enables irony to actualize actuality, to cause, as it were, a *possible* removal or transference from nothingness to reality to happen to the beings who are de-actualized by deception, illusion or simply “assertive subjectivity”¹⁵² and therefore subject to perpetual negation.

From a religious perspective, how can irony, with such dialectic characteristics, channel the replacement of the existential subject’s “being-in-itself” into a state of actuality, which, in Christian sense, means a redeemed state already residing in Ultimate Reality, or Heaven, as suggested in Lewis’s fantasy of *The Great Divorce*? In fact, this “replacement” back into reality / Heaven is the very expectation, at least from the heaven’s angle, that the occasions of the meeting between the hellish and the celestial, the self-enclosed beings of non-substance and the solid existences of reality, look to fulfill but mostly fail. What (the hell) is going wrong? And how can the wrongs be possibly right again if given a chance? These may be the questions that the apologetic fantasist would like to ask and tackle. But, as readers of the religious fantasy featured by Lewis’s ironic reflection upon separation *or* union between (subjective) beings and reality, we may wonder how his apologetic response to this “either-or” situation has to do with the ironic way of showing it. To figure out the

¹⁵² According to Kierkegaard, “assertive subjectivity” is a crucial causation of irony, a notion derived from his following statements: “when subjectivity asserts itself, irony appears. Subjectivity feels itself confronted by the given actuality, feels its own power, its own validity and significance” (*The Concept of Irony*, 280).

connection between irony and religion, specifically apologetic or theological investment, exhibited in Lewis's fantasy, Kierkegaard undoubtedly also has great insights to offer.

For instance, in the quotation below from *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard most insightfully draws association as well as distinction between irony and "religious devotion." Kierkegaard's distinct and profound understanding of the meaning of religious piety as a most "adequate" mindset of the self toward reality (i.e., God) and his perspicacious analysis of how irony can be near to yet also very far from becoming such a devout mind can surely illuminate our apologetic reading of *The Great Divorce*, which also means to inspect the ironic beings' problem of faith reflected in their want of an adequately receptive mind for the actuality given by reality / Heaven. In fact, it can be demonstrated that Kierkegaard's comparison and contrast between irony and the faithful self's religious bond with reality is in great kinship with the correlation between selfhood and the problem of faith manifested in Lewis's dramatic fantasy. Beginning with the religious quality of irony, the following passage shows Kierkegaard's ingenious comparison between irony and "religious devotion" firstly in terms of their (seeming) similarity and then through an elaboration of how the devout mind relates itself to God, the "absolute reality" and how it "locates" its own subjectivity or "personality" in this relationship and lastly by emphasizing the essential quality of the "ironic subject," namely, the "infinite absolute negativity" which sets its own subjectivity vacuously free, to manifest the striking contrast between the two sets of mind:

insofar as irony becomes conscious of the fact that existence has no reality, thereby expressing the same thesis as the pious disposition, it might seem that irony were a species of religious devotion. In religious devotion, if I may be permitted to put it this way, the lesser actuality, that is to say, the

relationship to the world, also loses its validity; but this only occurs insofar as the relationship to God at the same moment asserts its absolute reality. The devout mind also affirms that all is vanity, but this is only insofar as this negation thrusts aside all interference and allows the eternally existent to become manifest. Add to this that when the devout mind perceives all is vanity, it makes no exception regarding its own person, makes no fuss respecting itself; on the contrary, this, too, must be thrust aside so the divine will not be impeded by its resistance, but pour itself out in the mind made receptive by religious devotion. Indeed, we see from the more penetrating writings for edification that the pious mind regards its own finite personality as the most wretched of all. With irony, on the other hand, when everything else becomes vain, subjectivity becomes free. And the more vain everything becomes, so much the lighter, more vacuous, more evanescent becomes subjectivity. Whereas everything else becomes vain, the ironic subject does not himself become vain but saves his own vanity.¹⁵³

Noticeably, Kierkegaard's penetrating exposition concerning the similarity and dissimilarity between irony and the "religious devotion" puts tremendous stress on the relationship between subjectivity and reality. Though both ascribe non-reality to existence, a sort of transcending, or if you like, Idealistic, reality-beyond-existence awareness, the devout and godly one willingly gives away subjectivity to Ultimate Reality (God) and thereby becomes being of (eternal) "actuality," while the ironic subject is, by contrast, faithful to no reality outside its own subjectivity and out of self-will and vanity perpetuates its absolutely negative freedom and also its "being-as-nothingness." This clear and poignant contrast, in another word, is a contrast between faith and self-belief or self-worship. Kierkegaard's insight is obviously associable with Lewis's polarized depiction of the godly spirits in Heaven, who are of course the faithful party with religious devotion, and the ghostly group from Hell, who are rendered as nothing but victims or captives of their own

¹⁵³ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, p. 274-275.

subjectivity seeing that their self-consciousness or self-interest or self-pride or even their free will simply makes them insubstantial, hell-bound, and perpetually ironic.

Indeed, Kierkegaard's examination of irony, or ironic subjectivity, against devotional sensibility on existential and religious levels, is most enlightening to an apologetic reading of the ironic selfhood represented by those self-determined beings *of Hell* in Lewis's fantasy. Evidently, in either Kierkegaard's discourse or Lewis's ironic characterization, existence and irony are treated or can be considered as a joint issue. Besides, another important commonality shared by Kierkegaard's philosophy of irony and Lewis's irony-mediated fantasy lies in the fact that both of them are imbued with a sense of (Christian) theology. In Kierkegaard's case, this is definitely true at least in the previous quotation wherein ironic subjectivity is probed into against the faithful mind's actuality which is gained through self-emptying piety toward Reality / God. This philosophically ingenious observation about the contrast between ironic and religious states of mind is clearly invested with deep theological significance. As pointed out previously, Kierkegaard's contrast is made on the basis of the religious meaning, indeed, a theological understanding, of the relationship between subjectivity and absolute reality. In terms of Kierkegaard, this relationship is fulfilled in the *faithful* self with religious devotion yet unrealized in the ironic subject whose trust is not to be put in any otherness, including that of divine reality, but absolutely saved for the selfhood—of negativity, vanity and non-reality. The same distinction figured out by Kierkegaard's religion-concerned philosophy of irony could be seen in Lewis's Christian fantasy about the ironic selfhood preferring hell to heaven. Lewis is most akin to Kierkegaard precisely in the theological presupposition shared between them that subjectivity is void of substance or actuality unless the (free) subject is spiritually integrated by turning away from the self toward God, *the Reality*, which is a *free* move and self-choice of *converting* to faith, even if it

means undergoing the death of the self, or in Lewis's milder phrase, "farewell to the self."¹⁵⁴

Noticeably, not only Lewis but also Kierkegaard puts serious emphasis on the divorced state in the relationship between human existence and God, i.e., *the* ultimate / absolute reality. In fact, both of their practices in reflecting upon such a relationship at either existential or religious level could be associated with a certain sense of Christian existentialism,¹⁵⁵ which, far from the existentialism upheld by nihilistic and atheistic thinkers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, is basically a "Christian mode of thinking" about the relationship between the individual person and reality from "a subjective point of view" *and* within the frame of Christian faith, as exemplified by Pascal and Kierkegaard and could even be linked with St. Augustine's spiritual and theological exercise of "confessions" as well. C. S. Lewis too, to some extent, can be regarded as a (literary) practitioner of Christian existentialism, which is most conspicuously reflected in his literary motifs, such as the individual self's state of mind / being in the midst of spiritual struggles and the necessity of regenerating the (finite) self, that is, undergoing, in a religious sense, the spiritual death and rebirth of the self in the process of wrestling with subjective experiences, in intellect, heart or emotion, of the conflict and disunion between the disintegrated (e.g., ironic) selfhood and the divine other (i.e., reality). These subjective issues are indeed recurrently treated in many a text of Lewis's apologetic literature, like the allegory of *The*

¹⁵⁴ This phrase of Lewis's is derived from his book, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954). In the passage about Protestant theology, Lewis writes, "The man who has passed through [the religious experience of catastrophic conversion is] like an accepted lover, . . . feel[ing] that he has done nothing, and never could have done anything, to deserve such astonishing happiness . . . All the initiative has been on God's side; all has been free, unbounded grace . . . It is faith alone that has saved him: faith bestowed by sheer gift. From this buoyant humility, this farewell to the self with all its good resolutions, anxiety, scruples, and motive-scratchings, all the Protestant doctrines sprang." P. 33.

¹⁵⁵ The attempt here to define the term "Christian existentialism" used in the present discussion of the similarity between Kierkegaard and Lewis is based on the ideas developed and explicated by David E. Roberts in his book, *Existentialism and Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957). The following quotations are derived from the "Introduction" of the book. Pp. 3-11.

Pilgrim's Regress or the mythic novel of *Till We Have Faces* as well as the irony-mediated fantasies of *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce*. Underlying all these texts is a repeatedly underscored moral given by the allegorical or mythic or ironic or simply existentialist Lewis concerning how to grapple with the lack of actuality or integrity of the self. As to the healing or ultimate resolution of such a not merely existential but also religious problem, that is, in Kierkegaardian terms, the key to “actualizing actuality” of the self, Lewis’s answer, in his apologetic undertone, is again focused on the free subject. In other words, it is still a matter of self-choice—between the self and the “leap of faith” (out of the self) into reality. Obviously, such an apologetic indication within a variety of Lewis’s literary texts is touched by an undeniable sense of Christian existentialism.¹⁵⁶ That is to say, both Lewis’s literary theme about the severed relationship between subjectivity and reality and his implied apologetic attempt at reintegrating the self, or re-actualizing ironic subjectivity through underlining the significant role of faith for its fulfillment are, on the one hand, governed by an existentialist manner of thinking and on the other hand fundamentally informed by Christian theology.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, for instance, within the “devil-viewed” text that subjects human existence to the malign and ironic scrutiny and devaluation of the devil-tempter, Lewis implicitly and persuasively embeds his apologetic and definitely theologically-based idea that the identity of humanity can hopefully, indeed, actually, escape from being pinned down by the devil’s ironic discourse, if the human self remains faithful throughout his earthly pilgrimage. Especially toward the end of the whole (theological) fantasy, it is strongly suggested that this very hope of being

¹⁵⁶ It can be evidenced that the theme and approach of Lewis are both in line with the contents of existentialism, as stated by David E. Roberts: “the most basic, inner problems” that existentialism deals with include “what it means to be a self” and “how we ought to use our freedom;” also, the objective of the existentialist approach, namely, wrestling with these problems from “a subjective point of view,” is to bring the individual self-growth “into personal authenticity” and a “deepened” and “clarified” relationship with reality. See *Existentialism and Religious Belief*, p. 4, 7-8.

liberated from either the demonic decry of irony or evil temptation is only fulfilled through the salvation promised by Christian faith. This apologetic idea of being saved out of irony (or ironic existence) through faith is reiterated subtly and more dramatically in the “moral” of Lewis’s another equally theologically informative fantasy, *The Great Divorce*. The moral of this dramatic fantasy can be summed up by such a simple fact: the (human) self *either* lives by self-dependent and self-enclosed subjectivity, which means ultimately a “non-reality” (or hellish) state of existence, *or* chooses to step out of the insubstantial selfhood to become substantiated and actualized as a (heavenly) being *of* Reality. The latter option means, in another word, to leave ironic subjectivity behind and become a *convert* to Christian faith. From an existentialist standpoint, to make this option work depends on the self-choice of the free subject, i.e., the human individual. Yet, from the theological perspective, it is absolutely justifiable for Lewis, a (Protestant) *Christian* fantasist, to counterbalance this *subjective* factor with the *objective* truth that salvation is really initiated and worked out by divine grace even if it cannot be enacted without the subjective assent made by the willing, receptive and believing self. After all, one is saved not only “through belief in the truth” but also “through the sanctifying work of the Spirit” (Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 *NIV*).

In other words, it is impossible to approach a religious issue, such as salvation, simply in existentialist terms, namely, from an exclusively subjective point of view. Rather, the principle proclaimed by religious faith, i.e., Christian theology, is significantly indispensable. In *The Great Divorce*, Lewis, in a comprehensive manner, depicts how the redemption of the hellish being is carried into effect—by means of both the subjective volition and the divine aid of sanctifying, e.g., solidifying and transforming, the (phantasmagoric) self. This is shown in the only one scene with the Bright Spirit successfully talking the sensualist ghost into

conversion. Consumed, manoeuvred and unduly tempted by his lust, which is symbolized by “a little red lizard” sitting on his shoulder and “twitching its tail like a whip and whispering things in his ear” (107), this sensually gripped ghost firstly undergoes what could be called a pretext of salvation, that is, the spiritual struggle of giving consent *either* to the temptation of sin *or* to the agency of sanctification. At last, out of his *free* choice of the latter, the ghost becomes the sole “fruit of salvation” in the whole fantastical drama of the encounter between hell and heaven. The following tripartite conversations among the ghost, the “lizard” and the spirit lucidly and dramatically demonstrate such a pretext and the dynamic process of redemption:

The Angel’s hands were almost closed on the Lizard, but not quite. Then the Lizard began chattering to the Ghost . . .

‘Be careful,’ it said. ‘ . . . He can kill me. One fatal word from you and he *will!* . . . He doesn’t understand. He’s only a cold, bloodless abstract thing. It may be natural for him, but it isn’t for us. . . . I’ll give you nothing but really nice dreams—all sweet and fresh and almost innocent. You might say, quite innocent . . .’

‘Have I your permission?’ said the Angel to the Ghost.

‘I know it will kill me.’

‘It won’t. But supposing it did?’

‘You’re right. It would be better to be dead than to live with this creature.’

‘Then I may?’

‘Damn and blast you! Go on, can’t you? Get it over. Do what you like,’ bellowed the Ghost: but ended, whimpering, ‘God help me. God help me.’

Next moment the Ghost gave a scream of agony . . . The Burning One closed his crimson grip on the reptile . . . and then flung it, broken backed, on the turf. (110-111)

So far as salvation is concerned, what is theologically meaningful in this conversion

scene is Lewis's imparting of a dynamic picture of salvation—involving a cooperative process with the self *determining* to receive the divine grace mediated and executed by the surgeon-like Angel. In charge of sanctifying the Ghost through exterminating the damned creature, i.e., the Lizard (symbol of his lechery), which is exactly the sinful and hellish mark of his soul, the Angel, according to Lewis's depiction, would not take action until it is granted by the self wanting out of the old, depraved selfhood and into faith, which means re-orientation of the self to salvation and Reality. That is to say, it is strongly suggested that redemption of the self really takes the co-working of the subjective (*willing* act of faith) and the divine (operation / action of grace).

Moreover, in the same scene of the damned ghost becoming a convert seeking for divine salvation through the aid of the Angel, Lewis also displays dramatically what makes a convert a convert—in psychological terms. Evidently, the moment this ghost decides that “to be dead” is even better than “to live with” “the damned thing [or sin]” (109) which preoccupies, predominates and even defines his personhood as well as his old, *natural* state of being, he comes to the very point of *converting* his mindset from doubt to faith. From this coincidence, it could be inferred that the meaning of being a convert to faith is more than simply determining to cease listening to doubt, which is a consequence, merely the effect, of conversion. The cause as well as the real motive of becoming a convert actually comes from a suicidal state of mind, or more specifically, a desire for the death of the natural, fallen and sinful state of the self. To put it more positively, this desire for self-death can be simultaneously a desire for self-transcendence. To fulfill such a (possibly ambivalent) desire, Lewis's ghostly convert, therefore, comes to put his faith in *supernatural* salvation. This may explain *how come* this sexually obsessed and captivated ghost finally allows the Angel to deal with the Lizard and set him free from

its allurements and bondage —by killing it, even at the risk of having himself killed as well.

For the convert-ghost whose mind has been reset to prefer death to a life of sin and become accordingly re-oriented from indulgence in the hellish habits to seeking for salvation offered by Heaven, to be dead is certainly not the ultimate destiny of his self. What happens next after he chooses death for his life-bond with the Lizard (the symbol of carnal pleasures), after the Angel's drastic work uproots his damned soul out of Hell, while silencing once for all the damned reptile's whispering of doubt to dissuade its enslaved master, the ghost himself, from conversion to Heaven? In fact, upon receiving the divine operation (of killing the sinful selfhood), this ghost also undergoes a *fantastic* transformation from a damned, insubstantial and phantasmal being to a redeemed, solidified and totally "new-made man" (102). Such a metamorphosis is absolutely *supernatural*, since it is all done "by divine grace"¹⁵⁷ to re-make the *natural* state of existence—hellish and with no substance and reality, as a result of being *ironically* de-materialized and de-actualized by the evil of indulgence in fleshly lust. Thanks to divine sanctification and salvation, the ghost gets re-materialized through a process of "*actual* completing of a man" (111, emphasis added). His restored manhood is described as "immense" in size, "not much smaller than the Angel" (111), and full of glowing brightness and celestial solidness. In Kierkegaardian terms, his ironic subjectivity is now de-ironized seeing that it has been endowed with actuality in place of "absolute infinite negativity." To put in another way, this ghost's ironic state of being is definitely *transcended* and replaced by the redeemed selfhood; growing into a complete man and shining with heavenly glory, he

¹⁵⁷ In his book, *Studies in Words* (Cambridge U. P., 1960), Lewis gives a "theological" definition of the word "supernatural:" "whatever a man is enabled to receive or do by divine grace, and not by the exercise of his own *nature*, is *supernatural*" (Lewis, 61). This definition definitely fits in with the theological significance of his fantastical drawing of what supernatural salvation does to a human soul.

has also grown out of the ironic selfhood—hell-bound and heaven-repellent and eternally damned by evil temptation—and become, so to speak, a new creature of Reality. The glorious and self-transcending rebirth of the convert-ghost, theologically speaking, signals the fulfillment of what Kierkegaard terms, the “expectation of faith,” that is, *victory* in eternity.¹⁵⁸

More than that, the fantastic and amazing metamorphosis happens even to the Lizard as well—being turned into a magnificent “stallion,” “silvery white but with mane and tail of gold” (111). The last scene of the transformed pair, the “new-made man” and the “new horse,” is tremendously meaningful, especially regarding Christian salvation: “In joyous haste the young man leaped upon the horse’s back. Turning in his seat he waved a *farewell*, then nudged the stallion with his heels” (112, emphasis added). In such a farewell scene, what is most striking is not simply the physical metamorphoses of both the ghost and his reptile companion but also, more significantly, the qualitative change in their relationship. Before redemption, the ghost was situated within a hopeless predicament of being totally unable to keep a tight rein on the Lizard sitting on his shoulder, the embodiment of irresistible temptation of carnal desires without control. But now the post-redemption situation is quite a sharp contrast. Empowered by divine salvation, the convert-ghost appears no longer under the domination of temptation. On the contrary, we are given a victorious picture with the redeemed man riding on and fully controlling the transformed creature, a beautifully conveyed image of the concord, even harmonious union between the new man and the new horse. Undoubtedly a product of salvation, such a state of harmony is absolutely beyond Hell (and irony) but pertains to the realm of everlasting joy, peace, and love, namely, Heaven and Reality. Moreover,

¹⁵⁸ According to Kierkegaard, in *Edifying Discourses*, faith is “the eternal power in man,” and the “expectation of faith” is “victory.” P. 34.

the very gesture of the convert-man bidding farewell on his horse, ready to move ahead to enter into deeper Heaven, is subtly but strongly suggestive of the twofold status of his new existence—both a genuine “divorce” with Hell, his pre-redeemed ironic selfhood and a (restored) union with Heaven, which is, in the sense of Christian faith, the Ultimate Reality. In the light of this understanding, this farewell to the self scene could be regarded as summing up the apologetic significance C. S. Lewis embeds within the whole fantasy of *The Great Divorce*: the eternal reality of the “great divorce” between heaven and hell reflects not just the religious truth about the supernatural and the objective but also the *existential* truth about the ultimate self-choice of the human subject.

Needless to say, to interpret the fantasy in accordance with Lewis’s apologetic intent as such requires the willing suspension of disbelief of the non-Christian readers as well as the exercise of the theological pre-understanding of the believing readers. Yet, to both kinds of readership, there are actually similar hermeneutical principles to follow in approaching a literary text, like fantasy, not just its theological subject. Perhaps the most basic and important hermeneutical rule is to remain *open-minded* to be the right reader of fantasy and allow it, including its form and sense, to work upon the mind. In his essay, “Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What’s to Be Said,”¹⁵⁹ Lewis, in the voice of a literary critic, makes the following lucid and sophisticated explication about the power of the *art* of fantasy, which to some extent touches upon the issue of appropriate reception or readership of fantastic or mythical literature:

The Fantastic or Mythical is a Mode available at all ages for some readers;

¹⁵⁹ See *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories*. Ed. Lesley Wamsley. London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000. Pp. 118-120. The quotation below appears on p. 120.

for others, at none. At all ages, if it is well used by the authors and meets *the right reader*, it has the same power: to generalise while remaining concrete, to present in palpable form not concepts or even experiences but whole classes of experience, and to throw off irrelevancies. But at best it can do more; it can give us experiences we have never had and thus, instead of ‘commenting on life’, can add to it. I am speaking, of course, about the thing itself, not my attempts at it. (Emphasis added)

Even though Lewis modestly dissociates these elucidative ideas about how powerful the fantastic mode can be from his own literary attempts at making fantasy, it is actually fitting and illuminatingly helpful to apply Lewis’s views about what fantasy can do to readers to the reading experience of his fantasies. Indeed, in *The Great Divorce* as well as in *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis’s fantastic manifestation of the interactive relationship between the objective / supernatural and the subjective / existential, on the one hand, exhibits representatively and symbolically the realistic and even ironic truth about human selfhood. On the other hand, owing to its “metaphoricity”—the essential nature of these fantastical texts deeply informed by Christian theology and imbued with some significant sense of Lewis’s “apologetic” response to the problematic self-choice of evil / hell rather than faith / heaven, Lewis’s portrayal of the interaction of human subjectivity with either evil temptation or heavenly salvation is pointing to a reality which is spiritually and eternally true, that is, beyond the merely existential and temporal.

In other words, in Lewis’s fantastic world, the realistic and the fantastic, subjectivity and supernaturality, co-exist and even correlate with each other. Furthermore, within Lewis’s fantastic imagination, their co-existence and correlation are not only realistically true but also supernaturally real. This is to a great extent because Lewis’s Christian fantasy is abundant with what Paul Ricoeur terms the

power of the metaphoric to “redescribe reality.”¹⁶⁰ However, regarding the question about how persuasive the meaning of reality imagined or redescribed by it, it is again a hermeneutic issue about right readership. Therefore, it is worth reiterating that without the reader’s *willingness* to follow the Christian fantasist to enter into his imaginative world with the structure of meaning metaphorically located within the domain of Christian faith and theology, he or she could not really share Lewis’s apologetic vision of Reality and the implied answer to transcend the irony of human selfhood subjected to the temptation of Hell. Only if Lewis’s vision as well as his answer is seriously, or better, positively, taken, the reader may feel that the experience of *seeing* through Lewis’s art of fantasy-making, as he does in *The Great Divorce* and *The Screwtape Letters*, is something like embarking on a pilgrimage, not just in a pagan, e.g., Platonic¹⁶¹, sense of the word, but, more precisely, in the sense of Christian faith, from appearance (of ironic and non-actuality selfhood) to Reality.

¹⁶⁰ This idea is derived from Ricoeur’s insightful remark on the power of metaphor to impart “reality” in his influential book, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello). In the “Introduction” Ricoeur states the gist of this book, saying that the “most important theme” of the work is that “metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality.” P. 6.

¹⁶¹ The Platonic sense of “the pilgrimage from appearance to reality” here is borrowed from Iris Murdoch’s work, *The Fire and the Sun* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977). In her concluding exposition and in some degrees, critique, of Plato’s philosophy, particularly Plato’s opposition to art as legitimate conveyor of “truth,” Murdoch makes her acute observation, which is illuminatingly relevant to the present discussion about the correlation between art and reality to be detected in Lewis’s theological fantasies: “Art is about the pilgrimage from appearance to reality (the subject of every good play and novel) and exemplifies in spite of Plato what his philosophy teaches concerning the therapy of the soul.” *The Fire and the Sun*, p. 80.

Ch. VI. Myth, (Jungian) Psychology of Religion and the Mystical Sense in *Till We Have Faces*

“If God chooses to be mythopoeic—and is not the sky itself a myth? —shall we refuse to be *mythopoeic*? For this is the marriage of heaven and earth: Perfect Myth and Perfect Fact: claiming not only our love and our obedience, but also our wonder and delight . . .”

--C. S. Lewis, “Myth Became Fact”

The observation that the reader can be, if willingly, existentially engaged with a textual pilgrimage from appearance to reality in Pagan (i.e., Platonic) or Christian sense is verifiable in the experience of almost all of C. S. Lewis’s religious narratives. Undoubtedly, it can be validated in one way or another by all the texts treated in this research. Also, it is detectable that the central and recurrent motif of Lewis’s narratives is the inter-relationship between individual existence and transcendence. The interpretations offered above are, in fact, aimed at elaborating this important motif of Lewis’s apologetic literature. Indeed, there is strong evidence that the issue of union or disunion between the self and the divine preoccupies either Lewis’s allegorical concretization of a modern individual’s *Joy*-initiated journey toward conversion (*The Pilgrim’s Regress*) or his fantastical imagination about the human subject’s orientation towards either Heaven or Hell (*The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce*). Within these texts, the everyday and existential is co-existent and even interconnected with the eternal and universal. This important concern of Lewis’s is associated with an essential quality of his literary apologetics in content, if not in form, namely, the *mythopoeic*, which, according to Lewis, is relevant to “the predicament of humanity” (or simply to “humanity”) and essentially concerned with

“the permanent and inevitable.”¹⁶² Discernible in Lewis’s apologetic allegory and theological fantasies dealing with the encounter of the human self with the trans-mortal and trans-temporal, the mythopoeic element can also be profoundly sensed in his myth-rewritten novel, *Till We Have Faces*, with its in-depth treatment of the entangled problem of the self and the truth about the divine, not to mention its close connection with a Greek myth, the ancient tale of love between Cupid and Psyche.

Evidently, the twofold concern with human subjectivity and supernaturality is fundamental to a close understanding of the kind of reality envisioned within the texts of Lewis’s literary apologetics and also the calling forth of our existential response in the process of reading these texts. What is exactly this reality that both the textual space and the hermeneutical experience of Lewis’s religious narratives inhabit or involve? Actually, it is one of the central ideas this study attempts to maintain and demonstrate that what is *real* in the context of Lewis’s literary apologetics pertains not only to the metaphysical / spiritual universe but also to the individual self and furthermore to the relationship between the two. Indeed, without this double and compound notion of reality in mind, one can neither appreciate profoundly the mythopoeic quality of Lewis’s narratives nor carry out rigorous analyses of how Lewis the imaginative and apologetic writer tackles and probes into the existential problem of faith. Lewis’s approach, on the whole, can be viewed as partaking in a Christian existentialist endeavour to “diagnose” and wrestle with the spiritual phenomenon of the human self’s alienation from, or worse, antagonism against, the Ultimate Reality, i.e., God—through penetrating into and digging out the covered truth about the self, in intellectual, moral and psychological respects.

¹⁶² Lewis’s essay, “The Mythopoeic Gift of Rider Haggard,” *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories*, p. 153, 154.

Such an enterprise of creating multi-faceted religious narratives is crossing the boundaries of disciplines, which basically include literature (in varied modes), religion (of many an aspect—theological, epistemological, ethical, psychological) and also philosophy (regarding existential and sometimes ontological questions). In terms of this, the interpretative approach to Lewis's apologetic literature (or, literary apologetics,) must be accordingly multi-disciplinary as well. The interdisciplinary study undertaken in the discussion below about the text of *Till We Have Faces* will cover such special areas as mythopoeic literature, the psychology of religion, and a certain kind of mysticism (particularly related to psychological and theological understandings of religious experience).

Following the comparative study between Lewis and Kierkegaard in terms of Christian existentialism and the rhetoric of irony done in the previous chapters, the present task of exploring Lewis's last imaginative work, *Till We Have Faces* (1956), intends to focus on its depth psychology in characterization alongside its profound and ingenious portrayal of an unbelieving individual's self-growth in personality and spirituality as an intertwined experience. Apologetically speaking, this mythic text carries its own distinctive core message, different from, say, what the fantasy of *The Great Divorce* purports to communicate—substantiation (i.e., redemption) of the hell-bound self's ironic being is premised on the existential subject's willingness to be restored by Heaven, that is, to be re-united with Ultimate Reality, i.e., God. Centered upon the leading character's double estrangement from her self and the divine other, the narrative of *Till We Have Faces*, on the one hand, does give expression to the dominant theme of Lewis's religious literature—the interaction and meeting between reality of the self and reality of the divine—shared by the other three texts discussed formerly. However, the key import of this mythic novel is still distinct from Lewis's other books of literary apologetics. Its focal concern is about

the heroine's development of personality through a double journey to the self of integrity—psychic and spiritual. This, of course, is not an explicitly, or straightforwardly, apologetics-related concern. However, in a broad sense of the word apologetics, we can still sense, if not argue, that a Christian outlook and mindset is governing and underlying Lewis's mythic conveyance of the warring situation of a human mind against the religious meaning which is subjectively or existentially real as well as against the spiritual reality which is objectively true. To Lewis, as indicated by this mythic text and other religious narratives, the problem of faith or belief is not a problem of supernatural reality after all, but a problem of the human self's own.

Continuing such a significant theme of Lewis's apologetic literature, this myth-retelling work still stands out in content as well as in form. This last (wholly) imaginative work of Lewis's¹⁶³ is the first book in which the thematic focus is put upon an individual self's internal confusions and struggles. Gradually but penetratingly, the text itself becomes a documentation of the process of the central character's coming to know her true self, which is followed by her knowing what is true about the transcendent and eventually her achieving reconciliation in personal relationships. As regards the form of expression, the critic, William Gray, makes the following convincingly pointed comments: "*Till We Have Faces* is in form . . . almost unrecognizable as Lewis's work . . . having that most characteristic device of the modern novel, an unreliable narrator."¹⁶⁴ Indeed, that the whole narrative is structured as the heroine's writing down her life-experience of love and hate, which turns out to be not merely a writing but a self-discovering process, does

¹⁶³ Three years later than the publication of *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis's wrote *A Grief Observed* after the death of his wife, Joy Davidman, although the latter is arguably an autobiographical work rather than a real fiction.

¹⁶⁴ William Gray, "*Consummation Est: Tales of Love and Death*," *C. S. Lewis*, p. 91.

mark this mythic novel out among Lewis's other fictions. It is thus a sensible observation that with such a first-person narrative which invites interpretation on different levels, such as the questions about the authenticity of writing itself, subjective (sub)consciousness, self-understanding or self-deception, C. S. Lewis demonstrates his novel writing technique not really out of tune with modern literature after all.

Nonetheless, it is equally undeniable that through using a Greek myth as the source tale of his mythic fiction, Lewis shows, perhaps more consciously, not just his love for this classical story-telling form but also his attempt to re-awaken the long, universal and for Lewis, indestructible, enjoyment of myth. Concerning Lewis's engaging himself in inter-mixing the ancient mythology with his imaginative writing of Christian literature, Doris Myers observes that Lewis's first purpose in writing this myth-refashioned novel is to "vindicate the classical literature he loved so much by giving it a place within the Christian explanation of the universe."¹⁶⁵ It is absolutely certain that C. S. Lewis is always a strong lover and even defender of myth and its value, whereas the link between the mythic storyline in the novel and the Christian worldview is quite another issue. In some sense, it remains a controversial point about how far the novel, even its mythical element, is to be taken as an embodiment of Christian belief. Colin Manlove, in his book, *Christian Fantasy: From 1200 to the Present*, includes Lewis's *Till We Have Faces* in the category of what he names "modern Christian fantasy," referred to the works of those Christian writers, including George MacDonald, Charles Kingsley, Charles Williams, J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. According to Manlove's concise definition, "Christian fantasy" means "a fiction dealing with the Christian supernatural, often in an imagined world."¹⁶⁶ In

¹⁶⁵ Doris Myers, *C. S. Lewis in Context*, p. 213.

¹⁶⁶ In further details, Manlove goes on explaining that their works are characteristic of "giv[ing] substantial and unambiguous place to other worlds, angels, devils, Christ figures, miraculous or

addition, Manlove acknowledges that modern Christian fantasy, following the traditional trait of fantasy demonstrated in Spenser's works (such as *Legend of Holiness*), alludes to Christianity "as it were heavily disguised."¹⁶⁷ Taking Lewis's lion Aslan as an example of fairy tale version of the Christ figure, Manlove furthermore makes a very pertinent observation: "the Christian truth in [Lewis's] retelling of the Cupid and Psyche myth in *Till We Have Faces* (1956) is still more deeply hidden."¹⁶⁸ In this sense, supposing that there can be any associations between Lewis's mythic novel and his Christian belief, the making of that association, more possibly relies on the readers than on Lewis the author of the novel.

Next, Myers makes another assertion that Lewis's novel also serves to counter the modern trend of demythologizing the Gospels, fostered by some Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century biblical critics who assume that the Gospels are made up of historically unverifiable, essentially mythical and most importantly non-factual narratives. The anti-demythologizing position and practice of C. S. Lewis is discernible in his mythic work, which, in terms of Myers, is written to reverse that assumption by "showing how the myth of Psyche could be based on historical fact;"¹⁶⁹ "historical" here certainly speaks of the context within the imaginative text. Myers' assertion about Lewis's counter-demythologizing attempt could be deemed valid if we take into account Lewis's far more explicit endeavour, albeit not exactly by literary means, to counter-argue the "demythologizing theology" which dominates biblical hermeneutics at Lewis's time. For example, in a paper entitled, "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism," originally a speech delivered to theological students at Cambridge, in 1959, Lewis robustly disputes New Testament critical

supernatural events (biblical or otherwise), objects of numinous power, and mystical relationship with some approximation of the deity; and all under the aegis of Christian belief" (*Christian Fantasy*, 5).

¹⁶⁷ Manlove, *Ibid*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁸ Manlove, *Ibid*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ Myers, *C. S. Lewis in Context*, p. 213.

scholars' demythology by pointing out that their criticisms are suspect because the Gospels cannot be explained away by a purely *symbolic* reading with its dismissal of the *literal* sense of the historical account within the biblical texts. Besides, Lewis finds their treatment of the Gospels as romances or legends totally unacceptable; to Lewis this exposes the fact that these biblical critics simply "lack literary judgment" and are "imperceptive about the quality of the texts they are reading."¹⁷⁰ Based on his understanding and reading experiences of "poems, romances, vision-literature, legends, myths," Lewis maintains that the narrative of the Gospels are far from *mere* literary texts. This is expressed clearly in the essay "What Are We to Make of Jesus Christ?" wherein he says, "as a literary historian, I am perfectly convinced that whatever else the Gospels are they are not legends. I have read a great deal of legend and I am quite clear that they are not the same sort of thing."¹⁷¹ Even though the Gospels as narratives are in themselves inadequate truth-conveyors, yet, Lewis retorts, "how if we are asking about a transcendent, objective reality to which the story [of the Ascension] is our sole access?" To our own inadequate understanding of the transcendent, the miraculous or even the historical, the truth can be both spiritually *and* historically true, whether it being reported, recorded, or symbolized, or mythologized or whatsoever. To make final, even genuine, instead of imaginary or wishful, judgment, even verification of that truth—including its spirituality and historicity—for us mankind, Lewis asks in his conclusion, "Had we not better wait?"

In Lewis's another essay entitled, "Myth Became Fact," he makes the following apologetic statements, more directly relevant to the subject of myth, to re-affirm Christian faith as both myth and fact:

¹⁷⁰ "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism," *The Seeing Eye and Other Selected Essays from Christian Reflections* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1967, ed. Walter Hooper), p. 206.

¹⁷¹ Lewis, C. S. *Lewis Essay Collections: Faith, Christianity and the Church*, p. 40.

What flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always *about* something, but reality that *about which* truth is), and, therefore, every myth becomes the father of innumerable truths on the abstract level. . . .

Now as myth transcends thought, Incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of Dying God, *without ceasing to be myth*, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. . . . By becoming fact it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle. . . . To be truly Christian we must both assent to the historical fact and also receive the myth (fact though it has become) with the same imaginative embrace which we accord to all myths.¹⁷²

What Lewis is suggesting in this clear, forthright and comprehensively insightful statement is, so to speak, perfect compatibility between mythical truth and historical fact co-existent in the core message of Christianity, namely, the Incarnation of Christ. On account of this, who can deny that as a Christian thinker Lewis is not even more *liberal* than some liberal theologians of modern time, whose obsession with a modern, more precisely, scientific way of thinking makes them so narrow-minded that myth or fact becomes an absolutely either-or question. In contrast with these bigoted disciples of modern science, C. S. Lewis exemplifies a liberal Christian thinker, capable of recognizing the marriage rather than the contradiction between the mythic qualities and the historical elements within the Gospels. This evidences that his is a broad mind—remaining open to the mythic qualities, e.g., the unverifiable, the miraculous and even the imaginative parts of the accounts and at the same time without abandoning his firm belief, or willingness to believe, in and spiritual perception of the fact-hood of the Gospels. Moreover, Lewis’s myth-become-fact or

¹⁷² Lewis, “Myth Became Fact,” *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church*, p. 141.

fact-also-myth conviction is grounded on his acknowledgement that both myth and Christianity are pointed at reality—what is real about humanity and the universe. The failure to embrace both, that is, to recognize and give assent to the supernatural, miraculous revelation of Reality via the coordination of myth and fact, both being ascribed to the Word, is an error not on the side of the divine but, rather, on the side of the human. Take Orual, the heroine of *Till We Have Faces*, for example. Her failure to believe in the divine revelation is a disability caused crucially by her blindness to the hard *fact* about either her self or other humans or the divine being and also significantly by her refusal to acknowledge the mere existence of transcendence, which is *mythical*—imaginary rather than logical, not to mention factual—to her.

Noticeably, it is the subjective and substantially untruthful viewpoints of Orual, the ugly sister of Psyche, that Lewis's retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche rests upon. Structurally, the whole novel consists of Orual's texts of writing to voice her personal accusation against the god to whom Psyche was sacrificed in a religious rite. The sacrifice turned out to be a celestially blissful *marriage* for Psyche, but for Orual all of it was utterly unbearable and unbelievable, and her writing was full of her passion of grief over the loss of Psyche and her hatred of the divine intrusion into her life by "stealing" Psyche, her only love, away. Despite the fact of once gaining a glimpse of Psyche's Sacred Palace, Orual persistently hardened her heart and chose not to believe in it. In the name of true love, but actually driven by the passion of jealousy and possessive desire, Orual fiercely forced Psyche to betray her unseen god-husband; as a result, not only was Psyche's happiness utterly destroyed, but the loving relationship between the two sisters was also tragically ruined. Noticeably, in his re-fashioned story, Lewis attempts to put great efforts in the characterization of the central figure of his fiction. The most remarkable twist in Lewis's fiction is perhaps the fact that the heroine's self-reflective narration of her life-long antagonism towards

the god turns out to become a documentation of her life-journey into a gradual grasp of authentic self-understanding, that is, the reality of her self.

My discussion of the novel aims at analyzing the heroine's psychological and spiritual struggles and developments within such a journey, looking especially to explore Lewis's sophisticated portrayals of the heroine's estrangement from her real self, her experiences of religion, and her ultimate growth in personality and spirituality. In fact, the gist of this interpretation is pointing at the primary concern underlying Lewis's mythic narrative, the idea that the precondition of coming to terms with religious belief, e.g., truth about divinity, is to ascertain the genuine voice, or *face*, of one's self. This significant idea is revealingly suggested by the very title of the novel, *Till We Have Faces*. To this intriguingly meaningful title, Lewis himself makes the following illuminating footnote in a letter to one of his readers:

How can they (i.e. the gods) meet us face to face till we have faces? The idea was that *a human being must become real* before it can expect to receive any message from the superhuman; that is, it must be speaking with its own voice (not one of its borrowed voices), expressing its actual desires (not what it imagines that it desires), being for good or ill itself, not any mask, veil, or persona.¹⁷³ (Emphasis added)

In this explication, it is made very clear that only the self with a "bareface,"¹⁷⁴ that is, the real face / self without in-authenticity in any forms of disguise, could possibly meet with the divine, which means that the reconciliation between self and belief will thereby become possible. In other words, reality of the self is *where* religious

¹⁷³ These words of Lewis are derived from Lewis's letter to Dorothea Conybeare [collected in *Letters to a Sister from Rose Macaulay*, 1964, ed. Constance Babington Smith, p. 261], cited and put in the entry about the title of *Till We Have Faces* in Walter Hooper's *C. S. Lewis: A Companion & Guide* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), p. 252.

¹⁷⁴ "Bareface" is the original title Lewis gave to his book that was not accepted by his publisher.

meaning and experience can become real, or realistic, to the self.

This study, on the one hand, is oriented toward reading the novel from a psychological perspective—investigating into the psychic process Orual, the heroine, undergoes to discover and even transcend the true *face* of her being. On the other hand, equally indispensable to my approach is the religious point of view because my reading is based on a critical assumption that in Lewis's revision of the mythic story, the heroine's psychic process toward the integrity of her psychological self is significantly intermingled or inter-related with her spiritual progress toward the regeneration of her religious self. Methodologically speaking, psychological analysis and religious study, or, an exploration of religious psychology, are viable as well as valuable channels to get to the heart of Lewis's (or Orual's) narrative. To probe into the heroine's double-faceted journey to the self, both in psyche and in spirit, the following three critical avenues will be applied: firstly, Jungian psychology of religion is employed to probe into the mythic construction of the heroine's self; secondly, Evelyn Underhill's psychological approaches to mystical studies is another informing tool in mapping out the mystical construction of the self in the heroine's psychic and spiritual journey; lastly, Rudolf Otto's conceptions about the impact of the numinous experience upon human consciousness are also valuable references for an in-depth understanding of the nature of religion and how it can affect the construction of the self. These theoretical references actually echo each other in one way or another, and they are valuable and illuminating mediums for a psychological and religious interpretation of this novel.

Needless to say, to undertake such a mixed exploration is a reasonable approach to Lewis's narrative, which is essentially about the interplay between development of personality and experience of religion. However, one may still wonder whether or not the religious experience and meaning within Lewis's mythic text is necessarily

associated with Christian faith, or even “Christian myth.” If this is the case, then to what extent is the literary narrative about the historically realistic life of Psyche becoming a myth related with the myth-become-fact faith (i.e., Christianity)? Or, is it simply an overstatement that the religious significance of Lewis’s mythic novel is supposed to be explained within the framework of Christian theology? Can *Till We Have Faces* be counted as one of Lewis’s works written “in symbolical or mythopoeic forms” for the purpose of “embody[ing] [his] religious belief,”¹⁷⁵ like the fantastical text of *The Screwtape Letters* and what Lewis himself calls “theologized science-fiction”? These are important questions to think about if we are interested in knowing how in Lewis’s mythic novel, literature and religion or even theology become, as it were, “married.”

After all, set against the background of a pre-Christian state, the transcendental experiences or existence in this mythic text are of no viable identification with Christian theology. Therefore, Myers, who grounds her criticism of the novel on the observation that Lewis’s rewritten text of the ancient myth is meant to validate the factuality of the Christian “myth,” must at the same time remind the readers of the writing tactics of Lewis aimed for avoiding direct association between his mythical imagination and the Christian faith. In terms of Lewis’s tactfulness in this respect, Myers, on the one hand, attempts to read *Till We Have Faces* as a fictive manifestation of the purpose of myth espoused by Lewis himself, that is, “to foreshadow the coming of Christ and to build up metaphors and mental pictures through which pagans can understand the significance of the Incarnation when they hear of it.”¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, she is sensitive to the critical fallacy of grounding any religious meaning on a

¹⁷⁵ This is quoted from one of Lewis’s letters in which he said he was motivated “to embody my religious belief in symbolical or mythopoeic forms, ranging from *Screwtape* to a kind of theologized science-fiction.” See *C. S. Lewis Collected Letters Volume III: Narnia, Cambridge and Joy 1950-1963* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, ed. Walter Hooper, 2006), p. 517.

¹⁷⁶ Myers, *C. S. Lewis in Context*, p. 210-211.

clear identification with Christian theology, e.g., Christology, as shown in the following critical remarks of Myers:

Orual's final vision, a meeting with the Divine Bridegroom, is an encounter with the grace of Christ, even though Lewis tactfully avoids describing the god. He is careful to remember, as some critics are not, that *Till We Have Faces* is a work of "(supposed) historical imagination." It is impossible for Orual to see the Divine Bridegroom as the historical Jesus.¹⁷⁷

Myers's disagreement with the straight identification of Lewis's literary work / world with Christianity is actually a rejection of a naïve tendency of sticking to *allegorical* reading of Lewis's literature. As far as literary criticism is concerned, this is, no doubt, a more convincing position. Moreover, on this point, Myers also touches upon, though not directly, the issue of the textuality of Lewis's mythic fiction.

It is unquestionably valid to hold that the text of *Till We Have Faces* is, in an unequivocal sense, characteristic of the mixture of two dimensions—literature and religion. However, the apparent blending of Lewis's literary undertakings and religious meanings does not make his works of literary imagination, in a strict sense, practices of Christian allegory or, in Myers's well-expressed phrase, "a forthright defence of Christianity"¹⁷⁸ even though there is unmistakably close relationship between Lewis's literary practice and his Christian worldview. Concerning how Lewis's reading and writing of literature are related to his Christian belief, W. E. Knickerbocker, in his "From Fairy tales to Fairy Tale: The Spiritual Pilgrimage of C. S. Lewis," makes such general but perceptive remarks:

¹⁷⁷ Myers, *Ibid*, p. 212.

¹⁷⁸ Myers, *Ibid*, p. 213.

for Lewis, the myth-bearing fairy tale of Jesus Christ, which is also fact, becomes the key to a deeper understanding of other literature and all of life. . . . [The] central truths of Christianity, proclaimed in the true myth-bearing fairy tale of Jesus Christ, also provide the basis for Lewis's imaginative writing.¹⁷⁹

Knickerbocker indeed rings very true when he claims that Lewis's belief in Christianity forms the very foundation of not only his view of life but also his literary practices. Still, this only paves out the basis on which we can definitely make the association but not necessarily the identification between Lewis's religious writing and his religious belief.

The issue of textuality, specifically referring to Lewis's literary texts that are fundamentally interfused with his religious outlooks, is important not just for a true understanding of *what* Lewis's texts inherently and perhaps implicitly signify but also *how* we can appreciate the texture of Lewis's imaginative writings. Take *Till We Have Faces* for example. The structure of this fictive text is featured both by the mixture of fiction with religious meanings, even apologetic ideas, and explicitly by its mythic elements. In other words, not merely religious significance but also the mythic way of representation is most essential to the textual discussion of the novel. With the attempt to describe the characteristics of myth, C. S. Lewis the literary critic in the article entitled "On Myth" provides a list of six "mythical qualities:" (1) what is mythical is "extra-literary;" (2) the "pleasure of myth" depends hardly on "any narrative element;" (3) "Human sympathy is at a minimum;" (4) "Myth is always 'fantastic;'" (5) "The experience is always grave;" (6) "The experience is

¹⁷⁹ Knickerbocker, W. E., "From Fairy tales to Fairy Tale: The Spiritual Pilgrimage of C. S. Lewis," *Essays on C.S. Lewis and George MacDonald: Truth, Fiction, And The Power of Imagination* (Lewiston, N. Y.; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1991, ed. Cynthia Marshall), p. 110-111.

awe-inspiring.” “We feel it to be numinous.”¹⁸⁰ This list of the essential elements of myth may be valuable for us readers of Lewis’s own mythic novel at least in two ways: it gives us a kind of interpretive orientation toward discerning the “mythic qualities” represented in such a mythical narrative as *Till We Have Faces*; secondly, it helps us appreciate the distinctively mythical elements that are indispensable components of the overall structure of this fiction-narrative, which is at the same time greatly preoccupied with religious concerns.

Nevertheless, these mythical qualities in Lewis’s list are neither sufficient nor fully applicable to *Till We Have Faces*, his fiction-myth, basically because of the textual fact that after all, Lewis is writing not exactly a myth but a mythic novel. Besides, Lewis explains definitely in the same article that the “value of myth is not a specifically literary value, nor the appreciation of myth a specifically literary experience.”¹⁸¹ However, as we approach the *literary* text of *Till We Have Faces*, we could actually take pleasure not only in its mythical qualities, such as the fantastic and the numinous feeling, but also in its narrative attractions like suspense or surprise¹⁸² and most subtly in some *empathetic* response quite contrary to the experience of reading a myth. In other words, the overall experience of reading the fictional as well as mythic book of Lewis is really a literary experience, not the same as what Lewis describes the experience of a myth.

To put the *genre* of myth into our consideration of the novel’s textuality, perhaps Jungian psychological conception about myth can also be of good service. In fact, Lewis himself finds Jung’s psychoanalytical theory rather appealing. In his article, “Psycho-Analysis and Literary Criticism,” Lewis makes some approving comments

¹⁸⁰ The summary of this list of the mythical qualities made by Lewis in his “On Myth” is based on Lewis’s own wording and phrases. See pages 43-44 of the article in C. S. Lewis’s *An Experiment in Criticism*.

¹⁸¹ Lewis, “On Myth,” *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 46.

¹⁸² Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 43.

on Jung, describing his “interpretation of myth and imagery” as “much more civil and humane” (in comparison with the rival psychologist Freud). Besides, Lewis admits that sometimes he himself has slipped into Jung’s theory, specifically his most noted idea of “collective unconsciousness.” In Lewis’s paraphrase, Jung most insightfully, at least highly poetically, recognizes that “myths, or at any rate the older and greater myths, are such images recovered from the collective unconscious,”¹⁸³ which is commonly shared by all mankind. Indeed, it is not surprising to learn that Lewis is much attracted by this “doctrine of Primordial Images or Archetypal Patterns,”¹⁸⁴ theorized by Jung. As evidenced in the quotation above of Lewis’s thoughts in “On Myth,” Lewis himself puts great emphases upon myth as representation of reality, or in other words, concretization of “universal principles,” when myth, the story itself, is “tasted” as concrete images rather than “known” as “abstract meaning(s).”¹⁸⁵

To be further informed by Jung’s not just psychology- but also religion-related and to an extent anthropological study of myth, the following quotation from Hans Schaer’s book, *Religion and the Cure of Souls in Jung’s Psychology*, can be of tremendous help, in which some of Jung’s basic principles are stated as follows:

What we find pictured in the myths of various peoples and religions is . . . the projection of the unconscious inner world. . . . Myth is primarily the experience and expression of what happens in the soul. For those to whom myth is a living thing, it conveys a meaning as shattering as that which is given to us in the experience of revelation. It is experienced as such by the primitive mind. . . . It voices the aspirations, the struggles, and also the horror and terror that are inevitably bound up with human existence.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Lewis, “Psycho-Analysis and Literary Criticism,” *Selected Literary Essays* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969, ed. Walter Hooper), p. 297.

¹⁸⁴ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 296.

¹⁸⁵ Lewis, “On Myth,” p. 141.

¹⁸⁶ Hans Schaer, “The Psychic Bases of Religion,” *Religion and the Cure of Souls in Jung’s Psychology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1951, trans. R. F. C. Hull), p. 69-71.

From this passage, it is elucidated that according to Jung, there are abundantly informative contents in myth pertaining to the abyss of human psyche, from whatever perspective myth is approached, anthropological, philosophical, religious, or certainly psychological. Specifically, the Jungian understanding of myth is significantly related to the “psychic reality” of human beings. It is exactly at this point that Jung’s psychology of religion, not limited in the subject of myth, can have a good dialogue with and serve as an illuminating tool of exploring C. S. Lewis’ characterization of his heroine in the mythic novel, *Till We Have Faces*. In effect, Orual the heroine can be viewed as a mythical figure for various reasons. For one thing, as a (leading) character, her life is depicted as part of the myth on which the whole structure of the novel’s storyline is based. In addition, Orual is also mythical as a human being since her life story is indeed a personal document as well as existential self-account of what Jungian narrative of myth highlights—“the aspirations, the struggles, and also the horror and terror that are inevitably bound with human existence.” In this respect, Orual’s “psychic contents” could be said, in Jung’s terms, to epitomize the psychic reality of mankind.

This is basically why the psychological approach, particularly Jungian analytical psychology, may be regarded most applicable to Lewis’s mythic figuration of Orual. It is illuminatingly helpful, for instance, to put Orual’s self-expression into perspective and further into an in-depth analysis of her personal problems at different levels—with love, religion / faith, her body and her soul—disclosed not just *within* but more importantly *behind* her first-person narration (/ narrative) of her life-story. Noticeably, Orual’s development of personality as a whole is to a great extent related to the process of her spiritual growth and has very much to do with the inter-personal relationship in her life, namely, her individual situatedness of experiencing and

understanding love, the profane and divine kinds, and the confliction between the two and ultimately their assimilation at the climatic stage of her life. In other words, the inter-relationship between the psychology of love and the psychology of religion is elemental to our investigation into the question of Orual's self-growth. For that matter, Jung's psychological theory, including his insight into the inter-connection between the psychic process and religious experience, is most fittingly applicable to our exploration of the psychic and spiritual reality / realities of the character of Orual.

Jung is certainly not the only theorist to put great concern with the necessary association between religion and psychology. Evelyn Underhill, the author of the prestigious book, *Mysticism* (1912), may be counted as another outstanding example, for she also endeavours, to a certain extent, to orient her mystical studies to psychological inquiries. For instance, in the second part of *Mysticism*, entitled "The Mystic Way," Underhill offers a profound examination of the psychological development that the mystic's life is involved with. Expounding her psychological approach, Underhill notes that her attempt is "to set out and justify a definite theory of the nature of man's mystical consciousness: the necessary stages of organic growth through which the typical mystic passes; the state of equilibrium towards which he tends."¹⁸⁷ Underhill's psychological perspective sounds justifiable indeed as she applies it to theorize "the nature of man's mystical consciousness." Besides, her theory about the mystic's stages of life, as cited above, is equally informing and sensible for a study of Lewis's novel taking seriously the development of Orual's religious consciousness.

Furthermore, in her "Preface" to *Mysticism*, Evelyn Underhill makes such an insightful observation: "The metaphysician and the psychologist are unwise if they do

¹⁸⁷ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (London: Methuen, 1912), p. ix.

not consider the light thrown upon the ideas of the mystics by their attitude toward orthodox theology. The theologian is still more unwise if he refuses to hear the evidence of psychology.”¹⁸⁸ What Underhill is advocating here is a general mindset that she holds appropriate for either metaphysician or psychologist or even theologian, which is also the very theoretical position Underhill herself puts into practice in her ingeniously excellent studies of mysticism—a position that validates the integration of metaphysical and theological and psychological dimensions. If we take this position as a touchstone of the validity of a theory or the sensibility of a theorist, then we might say that C. G. Jung is definitely a theorist, a psychologist of course, who satisfactorily meets the criteria set by Underhill.

Actually, there are remarkable affinities between Underhill’s mindset and that of Jung’s in the sense that Jung the psychologist adheres very much to the conception of the integrity of humanity, meaning that the human being is not simply a being with a *mind*, but also by nature a *spiritual* being. In “Freud and Jung--Contrasts,” one of the articles in Jung’s *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Jung makes the following claim, interestingly corresponding to Underhill’s appeal:

[M]an’s advance toward a spiritual life which began with the primitive rites of initiation, must not be denied. . . . [The psychotherapist] must not allow himself to forget that the ailing mind is a human mind, and that . . . it shares in the whole of the psychic life of man. The psychotherapist must even be able to admit that the ego is ill for the very reason that it is cut off from the whole, and has lost its connection with mankind as well as with the spirit.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Underhill, *Ibid.*, p. viii.

¹⁸⁹ C. G. Jung, “Freud and Jung—Contrasts,” *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1984, trans. W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes), p.141.

To follow Underhill's line of thinking, we may confirm that Jung, with his theoretical mindset substantially concerned with the spirituality of psychic phenomena, is indeed wise enough to gain some light from theological reflection and combine with it his psychological investigation. Perhaps, such a psychological position preoccupied with spiritual thinking is, in some sense, the key reason why Jung's psychology outgrows the biology-bound doctrines of Freud the atheistic psychologist.

To justify his psychological position on acknowledging the significance of the spiritual life within the whole being of man, Jung "confesses":

Because of [the position] I am accused of mysticism. I do not, however, hold myself responsible for the fact that man has, everywhere and always, spontaneously developed religious forms of expression, and the human psyche from time immemorial has been shot through with religious feelings and ideas. Whoever cannot see this aspect of the human psyche is blind, and whoever chooses to explain it away, or to "enlighten" it away, has no sense of reality.¹⁹⁰

In this confession, Jung provides a clarified vision of the universal truth of the anthropological phenomenon that religiosity is essentially an intrinsic "aspect of the human psyche." On the basis of this vision, Jung develops his distinguished religious psychology, a psychology concerned with religious experiences of the individual human being or (presumably) the collective religious (un)consciousness of the whole mankind. Jung's insight in this respect, together with his admonition about the ignorance of man's spirituality being equal to blindness to reality, is of great value and good sense, especially when we think about the predicament of Lewis's heroine in *Till We Have Faces*. In view of Lewis's great efforts in depicting subtly

¹⁹⁰ Jung, *Ibid*, p. 140.

and profoundly Orual's problematic experience of the Holy and her psychological and spiritual progresses from darkness to lightness, we might infer that Lewis must to a great extent agree with Jung. The kinship between Jung and Lewis, again, justifies the choice of Jung's psychological ideas as appropriate theoretical support for interpreting *Till We Have Faces*. In Jung's analytical psychology, probably his notion about "self-experience" inter-related with the individual's religious experience is particularly helpful in bringing to light the abyss of Orual's *psyche*. Moreover, they can illuminate the dynamic development of Orual's personality, which gradually brings about some turning points for her spiritual growth. The twofold progress, in *psyche* and in spirit, ultimately enables her to encounter with "the numinous" *face to face*.

As well phrased by Hans Schaer, the elemental idea of Jung's psychology is concerned with psychic experience of the self: "All experience passes through the *psyche*"¹⁹¹ and "all experience, that of extraneous life included, is always bound up with self-experience."¹⁹² To dig out the psychological depth within Lewis's characterization of the heroine of *Till We Have Faces*, the Jungian conception of "self-experience," no doubt, would be a remarkably handy and enlightening tool. In Jungian terms, *self* "serves as a symbol of wholeness," the total integration of the human being developed or achieved through a process of "individuation," that is, the process of synthesizing "the conscious and unconscious in the personality."¹⁹³ This conception, in a sense, serves to sketch a psychological overview of Orual's psychic

¹⁹¹ In "Translator's Note" of the book, there is a quotation of Jung's definition of "Psyche": "Psyche is the totality of all psychic processes, conscious as well as unconscious ("Psychological Types, *Definitions*)." Schaer, p. 1-2.

¹⁹² Schaer, *Ibid*, p. 57.

¹⁹³ See the footnote of R. F. C. Hull, the translator of *Religion And The Cure of Souls in Jung's Psychology*, in "Translator's Note," about the meaning of "self" in Jungian terms: "[Self] serves as a symbol for wholeness, for the synthesis of the conscious and unconscious elements in the personality, which is achieved through the process of individuation. The 'self' is both this individuating process and the goal towards which the individuant is developing." p. 3.

life, as displayed in and between the lines of her personal account of her own lived experiences. Indeed, as Orual's autobiographical writing lays bare by degrees her internal world, including her spontaneously inward voices, interpolated into the description of her extraneous life, we readers of her text appear to be naturally invited to read into the psychic process she as well as her writing comes to get involved with. It is, therefore, necessary and worthwhile to adopt a myth-relevant, religion-concerned psychoanalytical perspective to approach Orual's text and Lewis's mythical dramatization (through her act of writing) of her life-journey into self-experience which goes along with her mystical journey into the spiritual reality.

Ch. VII. *Till We Have Faces: Writing, Self and Sacred Space*

“The bad psychological material is not a sin but a disease. It does not need to be repented of, but to be cured.” -- C. S. Lewis, “Morality and Psychoanalysis”

“To some, God is discoverable everywhere; to others, nowhere. . . . Much depends on the seeing eye.” -- C. S. Lewis, “The Seeing Eye”

“Spirit is the living body seen from within, and the body the outer manifestation of the living spirit—the two really being one.” -- C. G. Jung, “The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man”

C. S. Lewis’s retelling the myth of Cupid and Psyche in his peculiar fiction, *Till We Have Faces*, creates a re-fashioned text, not less mythic, but meanwhile imbued with or even more complicated by its own intricate fabrics—the intermingling and interplay among multiple dimensions, predominantly, the textual, the psychological, and the spiritual. Thus, the textuality of Lewis’s rewritten story is endowed with some unique, mysterious feeling and depth. To appreciate or contemplate the peculiarity of Lewis’s version of the mythic fiction, we might gain some light from Lewis’s own statement concerning his attempt to re-adapt the source story from the ancient Latin writer Platonius’s *Metamorphoses*. In the “Note” of his novel, Lewis writes: “The central alteration in my own version consists in making Psyche’s palace invisible to normal, mortal eyes . . . This change of course brings with it *a more ambivalent motive and a different character for my heroine* and finally modifies the whole quality of the tale.”¹⁹⁴ In this short yet significant and meaningful statement of Lewis’s, not only is the distinctive element of the rewritten text made clear—the invisibility of the sacred locality—but the focal point that is accordingly shifted in his text is also indicated—the psychological complexity and the character of the heroine

¹⁹⁴ Lewis, C. S. *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1984), p. 313.

displayed in her response to the ambiguity of religious meaning, or the incomprehensibility of metaphysical reality.

In light of the framework of Lewis's revision as suggested above, we may further infer that what Lewis thematically puts efforts to centre upon within his text and ultimately re-shapes the texture of the whole story is his characterization of the central figure of his fiction, the ugly, doubting, self-centered and yet pathetically self-ignorant Orual with her life-long struggles against the deprivation of her beloved sister, the physically and spiritually beautiful Psyche, by the divine. In terms of this, it is apparently Orual's struggles to come to terms with her life-experiences of love, of religion, and ultimately of the reality of her *self* that invite and demand our focused and in-depth exploration. Basically, this interpretation of *Till We Have Faces* is oriented toward exploring the characterization of Lewis's heroine in these respects.

That the novel deals with the inter-relation between personality and religious experience is generally recognized, but few of the critics of this mythic novel really treat it as a major critical issue. Almost all the readings of *Till We Have Faces* touch upon, in one way or another, the key issue of the wrestling between the problem of the intelligibility of the divine and the subjective experiences of the human person as a cognitive and conscious being. The most conspicuous example is of course the critical approach based on the perspective of religious epistemology. Among the criticisms done through this approach, Robert Holyer's "The Epistemology of C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*" offers an excellently sophisticated study of the novel. In his critical attempt to treat the novel as one that "offers us the most complete account of Lewis's religious epistemology,"¹⁹⁵ Holyer, however, does not fail to acknowledge the close relation between the epistemological issues and Orual's

¹⁹⁵ Holyer, Robert, "The Epistemology of C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*," *Essays on C.S. Lewis and George MacDonald: Truth, Fiction, and The Power of Imagination* (Lewiston, N. Y.; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1991, ed. Cynthia Marshall), p. 53.

personal predicament, as can be seen from his observation—“What Orual has to report is not leisured and dispassionate theological reflection, but events that are highly charged personally.”¹⁹⁶ Toward the end of his sophisticated discussion of religious epistemology Holyer comes up with an impressively insightful conclusion that the epistemological questions in Orual’s religious experience cannot be resolved unless she achieves “self-knowledge.” In the same vein, he makes an equally remarkable observation: embedded within Lewis’s representation of Orual’s predicament is Lewis’s idea that metaphysics “inevitably involves a projection of the being of the metaphysician and is to an important degree a matter of fashioning ultimate reality in his or her own image.”¹⁹⁷ In spite of this insight of the strong association between “our grasp of ultimate truth” and “a grasp of the truth about ourselves,”¹⁹⁸ Holyer, nevertheless, does not substantially put his critical concern with the process of the latter as he does emphasize the “know-how” of the former. In fact, the development of Orual’s personality, or, to be more specific, the psychological process through which Orual finally discovers and transcends the true *face* of her being deserves our focal attention, if we intend to understand genuinely and completely her life-long antagonism toward the gods and her ultimate spiritual progress. In other words, simply investigating the epistemological problems of religious perception without serious analysis of the perceiver’s mind is not really a comprehensive and thorough discussion about the correlation between personality and religion, at least in *Till We Have Faces*.

Furthermore, there is also a textual justification for the argument that Lewis’s mythic narrative is centered upon the question of Orual’s self-growth in personality

¹⁹⁶ Holyer, *Ibid*, p. 55.

¹⁹⁷ Right before making this remark, Holyer cites this idea of Lewis’s from Lewis’s another book, *Reflections on the Psalms*, and he paraphrases it as follows: “as Lewis commented in *Reflections on the Psalms*, there is a real connection between what the metaphysicians and myth-makers of the past thought and what they ‘most deeply are’ (90).” P. 79-80.

¹⁹⁸ Holyer, *Ibid*, p. 80.

and spirituality. As a narrative recounted by Orual's first-person point of view, the whole novel appears to be manifestly *the* text of the heroine's autobiographical *writing*. The subjective narration of the heroine's life-story evidently confirms the central position of Orual in the whole story. But, surely, the significance of her autobiographical writing is far beyond this sheer confirmation.

As a medium of voicing her accusation against the god of the Grey Mountain, to whom Psyche was sacrificed in a religious rite, which turned out to be a marriage of blissful happiness for Psyche, but for Orual all of this is utterly unbearable and unbelievable, Orual's writing of the most traumatic experience in her life—the loss of her only love, Psyche, and her charge against the god because of it, signifies or functions far more than Orual herself intends it to be. Through the process of writing, Orual actually expresses her subjective feeling and understanding of her lived experiences. From a psychological perspective, her writing process could actually be taken as a gradual disclosure of her subjective consciousness, or even more deeply, of her unconsciousness. Furthermore, this “writing as self-expression,” in effect, serves as a presumably authentic channel for not only the heroine but also the readers of her text to probe into her problematic selfhood that is intertwined with her religious struggles in believing the invisible existence of the divine. In view of this, it is thus sensible to hold that the first-person point-of-view narration about the heroine's own life is indeed the best medium for Lewis to represent the psychic process his heroine, whose life-journey as a whole is depicted as one of grappling with the double mystery –not just of the sacred but also of her own selfhood.

However sincere Orual intends it to be, her complaint, mostly, should not be taken *literally*, which means to take her words at their face value, since we readers are not just the neutral third party but the supposed judges of her written charge. Instead, on account of the simple fact that the accuser's narration of *her* story is probably not

the *whole* story, we must judge her case as fairly and rightly as possible—with the piercing eye. For instance, our judgment or understanding of Orual's full-heartedly passionate love for Psyche, her sister of fascinating beauty and virtue, must not be simply based on Orual's confession. Love in Orual's case is one of the central issues, problematic ones, but Orual's problems with love are not actually in line with her own understanding of them. It is noticeable that there is a tremendous discrepancy between her subjective awareness of her love toward Psyche, which Orual herself holds as perfectly authentic and the very meaning of her life, and the objective truth about the real problematic qualities of this love, as can be perceived in close reading. Moreover, the complexities of the psychology of Orual's passion for Psyche and her strong sense of deprivation are definitely lying under the surface of her conscious feeling and subjective cognition. Orual is, so to speak, extremely blind, simply ignorant of the truth about herself as well about love.

The first and foremost blindness in Orual is that her so-called true love for Psyche is, in essence, full of egotism and possessiveness. Her egoistic and possessive desire is manifestly shown in all her intense resentment toward Psyche's being victimized in a religious sacrifice and her overwhelming grief over their separation. Orual's sense of bitterness is subtly conveyed within her narration, which rather honestly reveals, "amid all [her] love," even the feeling of bitterness or repulsion toward Psyche, for her possessive ego cannot help grudging against the courage and comfort shown in Psyche in the face of approaching death and unpredictable fate. With her own overwhelming self-centered passion and without Psyche's spiritual leaning and calmness, Orual simply cannot tolerate Psyche's willingness and readiness for the sacrifice with the prospect of fulfilling her secret death-longing, which means, to Psyche, "the sweetest thing in all [her] life," "the longing—to reach the Mountain, to find the place where all the beauty came from"

(75). Blind to the nobility in Psyche's dealing with death and separation from her beloved and the spirituality in her transcendent yearning for being united with the transcendence through death, Orual is only up to interpret them as indication of an iron-hearted, cruel, unloving treatment of their parting. This unfair and false-headed judgment strongly evidences Orual's possessiveness—how she is in desperate need of feeling being loved by Psyche as well as getting her full attention. Indeed, inside Orual's mind she would like Psyche to treat her as the central passion of Psyche's life, just as she herself does to Psyche. Therefore, she cannot bear listening to Psyche "as if someone or something else [even the god] had come in between [them]" (75), nor can she even bear hearing Psyche's description of their relationship as "loving friends." "Why must she say bare *friends*?" (69) is Orual's inner cry, as her confessional narration discloses.

What Orual fails to confess or recognize is her own possessive mentality, which defines both the nature of her love and her personality. It is primarily her egoistic narrowness in love and in character that hardens her heart and blinds her perception; as a result, she becomes unable either to share Psyche's spiritual vision and strength or to know about the meaning of true love. Controlled entirely by her self-centered passion, it is actually no wonder that Orual is not in the least like Psyche. She also shows no willingness to heed or capacity to grasp the wise advice of Fox, the enslaved Greek intellectual and also her father-figure mentor, concerning the virtue of love: "To love, and to lose what we love, are equally things appointed for our nature. If we cannot bear the second well, that evil is ours. It did not befall Psyche" (86). In the mouth of the wise Fox, Psyche appears to be the very personification of the virtue of love spontaneously pouring out of her pure nature. In the sense that this *natural* type of virtuous love is exactly what Orual is in lack of, we might assume that Orual, by contrast, is the representative of the *evil* party.

The contrast between Orual and Psyche is somewhat acknowledged by Orual herself. In narrating her second meeting with Psyche in the sacred valley, Orual depicts how their different states of mind are reflected in their appearances—"We might have been two images of love, the happy and the stern—she so young, so bright face, joy in her eye and limbs—I, burdened and resolute, bringing pain in my hand" (157). The joy and brightness shown up on Psyche's body are notably the natural revelation of the true love within her and also the reflection of the lightness of her spirit. To Orual, who shows up with a storm-clouded face, Psyche remarks in an assuring tone: "You do not think I have left off loving you because I now have a husband to love as well? If you would understand it, that makes me love—why, it makes me love everyone and everything—more" (158). It can be easily inferred that Psyche's sense of the enlarged love is perceived from her right and blessed spirit. However, Psyche's idea about the enlargement of love is absolutely something beyond the narrow-minded Orual's perception and experience; her love, to a great extent, is comparatively an egoistic and wrong-spirited output. The correlation between love and spirit reinforces the double contrast between Orual and Psyche—in their experience and conception of love and in their spiritual levels. The essential differences between them are not really what Orual is capable of reflecting on and perceiving after all.

Aside from her incapability of recognizing the close relation between love and spirit, Orual is equally ignorant of the truth that her narrowness and possessiveness have sown the evil seed in her spiritually unsound soil of love and that her overpowering passion would consequently turn out to be some pathetically uncontrollable vile monster within her. Ironically, she is far better at judging the vileness or blindness in others than discerning the unrighteousness of the hidden desire in herself, as all those who have no self-awareness do. Despite the *fact* that on

her first journey to the sacred valley she has gained a view or glimpse of Psyche's Sacred Palace, Orual persistently hardens her heart and *chooses* not to believe in it but to fantasize a foul story about Psyche's marriage and to rationalize her presumptuous speculation about the foulness of Psyche's unseen "god"-husband. The following is her seemingly logical but explicitly ironical theory:

Nothing that's beautiful hides its face. Nothing that's honest hides its name. No, no, listen. In your heart you must see the truth, . . . There's your lover, child. Either a monster—shadow and monster in one, maybe, a ghostly, un-dead thing—or a salt villain . . . Child, has his vile love so turned your brain that you can't see the plainest thing? A god? Yet on your own showing he hides . . . (160, 161)

However reasonable she tries to sound in order to persuade Psyche to leave her husband, the viewpoints Orual makes here ring really ironical in that she is absolutely unconscious and unaware of the real fact that the ill will and vile desire and blindness are all hers. Obviously, her willing and feeling heart as well as her knowing mind is indeed malfunctioning, which results in her unbelief in the existence of either the god or the palace of the god (and Psyche), despite her real though temporary vision of the not so material building. Orual's skepticism, or more precisely, her refusal to believe, is not at all a common-sense decision but really a moral choice. According to Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, it is one's "psychological outfit," including "various feelings, impulses and so on," that makes the very "raw material"¹⁹⁹ of his or her choice—to believe or not to believe, to love or to undo love . . .

The hard fact about Orual's distorted thinking and twisted nature and mind has been plainly and kindly pointed out to Orual by Fox, before her second visit to

¹⁹⁹ The citation is from Lewis's "Morality and Psychoanalysis," in *Mere Christianity*. P. 89.

Psyche's valley to carry out her willful plan of dragging Psyche out of the "shame and danger" of being a monster's or villain's bride. As Orual speaks out her horribly destructive attempt—"If there is no other way, I will kill [Psyche]" (148), Fox, in spite of his definite scepticism toward the supernatural being of Psyche's husband, yet still full of wise judgment of a mundane sort, bursts out his warning against Orual's devastating plan: "Daughter, daughter. You are transported beyond all reason and nature. Do you know what it is? There's one part love in your heart, and five parts anger, and seven parts pride" (148). The Fox's view is of course pointedly true, while the passion-controlled and self-righteous Orual simply could not listen. She would not heed any dissuasion of Fox or the inner counsel out of her conscience but obstinately try to convince everyone including herself that she could and would do anything to save Psyche for the sake of "love." This arrogant justification is not justly grounded at all since it is very clear that her love is in reality close to non-love; to borrow the words from C. S. Lewis's famous book on love, *The Four Loves*, it is at best "a very imperfect sort of Affection," taking liberties only "spitefully in obedience to resentments or ruthlessly in obedience to egoism."²⁰⁰

Besides, that the fierce resolve to force Psyche to abandon her happiness with her so-called god-husband is love-motivated is truly a self-deceiving justification of Orual's. On the surface, all is based on Orual's belief that Psyche's bridegroom must be either a horrible creature or a despicable soul instead of some unseen divine being and that if anyone should end Psyche's "shame and danger" Orual herself is the one because she loves Psyche full-heartedly. Yet, underlying both the pseudo-rational speculation and the emotional justification is actually an attempt to camouflage her possessive desire. The genuine ground for Orual's speculative belief is not merely

²⁰⁰ See "Affection" in C. S. Lewis's *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1988), p. 44.

an epistemic grappling about the personality of Psyche's husband, but, more importantly, a psychological one. Deep in her grief-afflicted and embittered heart, she simply hates the fact that Psyche now belongs to her god-husband and enjoys in her married life a state of happiness apart from Orual herself. In this sense, what is inherent in Orual's real motive and resolve is basically this hatred, which takes its root in the emotion of jealousy. Undoubtedly, the passion of jealousy is one of the "fatal" blind spots in Orual; its impulsive and dark power indeed causes tremendous harm and impairment to almost the whole being of Orual, including her emotional, rational and spiritual life.

The dark power of the passion of jealousy serves to make Orual a manipulative monster and her love toward Psyche, as it were, her demon's weapon. Although she does take notice of the self-questioning voices inside her conflicting mind, such as the lines of her inner voices written down in her book—"I was half frightened when I perceived what I was resolving" (137) and "I ask myself, . . . how will you bear to wipe out Psyche's happiness?" (138)—Orual, however, refuses to yield to these temporary internal struggles but entirely allows herself, with a hardened and conceited heart, to obey the vile and impulsive passion and determines herself to overrule Psyche by all means. At last, Psyche gives in to Orual's threat of killing her and then Orual herself and takes an oath of following Orual's command to betraying the god-husband—committing the forbidden act of bringing light to "the holy darkness" of their meeting chamber. "Tortured into [her] disobedience" of the god's command by Orual's violent threat, Psyche is really willingly victimizing herself for the sake of Orual's life and sacrificing her sacred marriage of happiness in obedience to Orual's deadly manipulation. As a result, Orual's victory in overruling Psyche causes great affliction to both of them; not only is Psyche's happiness utterly destroyed, but the loving relationship between the two sisters is also tragically ruined. Psyche finally

makes the following remark on this tragic occasion:

You are . . . teaching me about kinds of love I did not know. . . . Oh, Orual—to take my love for you . . . and then to make of it a tool, a weapon, a thing of policy and mastery, an instrument of torture—I begin to think I never knew you. Whatever comes after, something that was between us dies here. (165)

These words express how the heart-broken Psyche comes to her despairing realization of the truth about Orual in terms of love. To put in another way, Orual, dominated by her heart of darkness, is embodying the definition of the most vicious kind of love, just as defined by Lewis himself—“Love, having become a god, becomes a demon.”²⁰¹

To investigate into what such an embodiment signifies in the characterization of Orual, perhaps we should ask with Psyche the same and indeed the very key question: “how—or why—[Orual] can have blackened and tormented [her] soul with such thoughts?” (160). Along with this pointed question, there are also other intriguing and more specific interrogations to make: What’s the meaning of her central accusation of the gods: “They gave me nothing in the world to love but Psyche and then took her from me” (249)? Or, why does Orual love Psyche so much that Psyche seems to become her second self and that Psyche’s god-husband becomes her great Rival, the ultimate object of [her] jealousy²⁰²? And, in what sense could Orual be counted as a *vulnerable sinner* in terms of love and religion? Lastly, what then is the hope of enlightening and also curing a pathetically *blind creature* like Orual in

²⁰¹ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, p.56.

²⁰² See C. S. Lewis’s relevant observation on jealousy-laden Affection: “For Affection is the most instinctive, in that sense the most animal, of the loves; its jealousy is proportionately fierce. It snarls and bares its teeth like a dog whose food has been snatched away . . . his second self” (*The Four Loves*, p. 46).

personality and in spirit? It is noticeable that these questions have much to do with Orual's personal relationships, and besides they point to her personal problems behind those relationships, too.

As mentioned above, the writing of Orual's book is centered on her grief over the loss of Psyche and her hatred of the divine intrusion into her life by stealing Psyche from her. In other words, the central issues of her complaint are concerned with how she is unjustly treated by the god. However, Orual's claim that she herself is the real victim may sound rather unconvincing on account of the imperfection of her love and her ignorance of true love and of the real problems in her own personality. On the other hand, if we re-examine the psychological predicaments Orual really undergoes that can be detected from her confessional writing, we might hold a more sympathetic position toward Orual's claim. We may even understand the meaning of her victim-hood better than Orual herself. Reading into her personal expression of her life-experiences, including the happenings in her *exterior* life and the inward voices going on within her *interior* consciousness, we are invited not merely to share her subjective experiences but also to explore or interpret those experiences so as to know better the author as well as her text. For that purpose, it appears most intriguing and necessary for her readers to probe into the psychological truth underlying her emotional experiences on the one hand and her spiritual struggles to come to terms with the religious meaning concerning those experiences on the other.

For example, from the way as well as the devastating degree in which Orual goes through the experience of bereavement, it is not hard to discern that the very experience of bereavement in Orual is pregnant with psychological meaning. In addition to her egoistic character and her jealousy, there is still another crucial element underneath Orual's passion of grief and her strong emotion of hatred toward the god, the stealer of Psyche—the element of *fear* deep in Orual's soul. Orual is

fearful primarily in the sense that she is extremely reluctant and afraid to lose Psyche because, according to Orual's confession, she sees her life without Psyche is one without the cause of living and thus is analogous to "deadness" (89), a hopeless sense of emptiness and would make the rest of her life "the dead desert" (89). Yet, why must Orual's life without her beloved Psyche be "the dead desert"? How come Orual cannot love like Psyche, embracing different loves with the sense of enlargement instead of deprivation? To these questions, Orual herself, in the process of her "sincere" writing, doesn't seem able to give right answers.

Reflective as she is, the best truth Orual the writer could come to grasp about her traumatic experience of losing Psyche is that she loves Psyche truly with her life and with all her heart and that she is ugly and thus unlovable, so Psyche is her only love. The interrelationship between ugliness and undesirability is a cruel and hopeless fact that Orual herself consciously acknowledges and believes in. This is exactly what she replies to the mysterious voice as she is located in the enlivened landscape of the god's secret valley and delighted by the "strange and beautiful things" (96) all around her: "Why should your heart not dance?" "My heart to dance? Mine whose love was taken from me, I, the ugly princess who must never look for other love"(96). On the one hand, Orual's response here makes very plain that her fundamental mentality in dealing with human relationship, like with Psyche, is grounded on the hard, indeed cruel, fact that she is ugly. On the other hand, the narration is also significantly suggestive of Orual's problem with establishing her personal relationship with the transcendence. It is strongly hinted that Orual cannot help but let her preoccupation with her bodily ugliness hinder her heart from dancing to the fascinating presence of the numinous beauty, as her intuition or the divine voice is telling her to. In fact, with or sometimes without her recognition, Orual's bitter preoccupation with her ugliness is indeed a huge burden in her mind and soul; consciously or unconsciously,

it becomes a tremendous and hopeless mental obstacle to the welfare of her whole being. It is definitely a significant contributor to the narrowness and blindness of her mental, emotional, and spiritual outlooks. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the significance of her complex of ugliness—its comprehensive and harmful influence—and more importantly, how she can embrace any prospect of getting rid of its spell are really not within Orual's grasp.

Actually, not only for Orual but also for every human being, to envisage the authenticity and potentiality of one's self-image must be a tremendously difficult task to undertake. In this sense, Lewis indeed shapes his heroine as an archetype, which is a very significant element that Lewis the literary critic, probably very much under the influence of the psychologist C. G. Jung, ascribes to the *mythopoeic*.²⁰³ As we can learn from depth psychology, it is largely in one's *unconsciousness* wherein lie one's deepest or most real nature and motives, including hidden desires and vulnerabilities, which are either unacknowledged or simply rejected by the conscious realm of one's psyche. That is to say, without truly diving into the realm of darkness inside her psyche to attain the unknown part of the truth about her self, Orual, like anyone else, can never meet with the genuine face of her being no matter how hard her conscious reflection or how sincere her self-expression means to be. Lewis's representation of Orual's case, specifically her living experiences of the problematic cognition of her self-image and the spiritual problem, greatly corresponds with his description of the phenomenology of conversion, based on his personal experiences of reaching the Christian God, of which the pretext is a self-knowing process. In "The Seeing Eye," Lewis writes:

²⁰³ In his article, "The Mythopoeic Gift of Rider Haggard," Lewis writes that the "hatred [toward the mythopoeic] comes in part from a reluctance to meet Archetypes; it is an involuntary witness to their disquieting vitality." *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories*, p. 154.

[I]t is significant that this long-evaded encounter happened at a time when I was making a serious effort to obey my conscience. . . . One of the first results of such an effort is to bring your picture of yourself down to something nearer life-size. And presently you begin to wonder whether you are yet, in any full sense, a person at all; whether you are entitled to call yourself 'I' (It is a sacred name). In that way, the process is like being psycho-analysed. . . . You find that what you called yourself is only a thin film on the surface of an unsounded and dangerous sea. But not merely dangerous. Radiant things, delights and inspirations, come to the surface as well as snarling resentments and nagging lusts.

One's ordinary self is, then, a mere façade. There's a huge area out of sight behind it.²⁰⁴

According to Lewis's explanation here, there is apparently a close relationship between one's encounter with the truth about Him and one's exploration of the knowledge of "I" ("a sacred name") through undergoing a continuous journey into "the depth behind the façade . . . the ordinary, conscious I."²⁰⁵

Such a journey, which, in Jungian terms, is a *psychic process*, is indeed what Orual should go through so that her heart could be enlightened and unburdened and her spirit be renewed as well. Besides, Lewis's ideas about the self-knowing process clearly echo the Jungian notion of "individuation," which

consists essentially in recognizing and assimilating the unconscious. Therefore a new center of personality must come into being, which is not bound to consciousness like the ego but is capable of taking equal account of both consciousness and the unconscious. . . . This new center Jung calls the "self," and individuation is the way to the self.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Lewis, "The Seeing Eye," *C. S. Lewis The Seeing Eye and Other Selected Essays from Christian Reflections* (New York: Ballantine Books, [1967] 1992, ed. Walter Hooper), p. 228.

²⁰⁵ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 229.

²⁰⁶ The quotation is Hans Schaer's summary of Jung's conception of "individuation." See "Religion as a Psychic Function," *Religion and the Cure of Souls in Jung's Psychology*, p. 122.

This specified notion about the process of individuation aiming to achieve a *whole* grasp of self-knowledge is indeed in line with Lewis's understanding of the way to a genuine meeting with the "I". Both Jungian and Lewis's claims on the integrity of an individual self, or personality, are insightful to our reading of Orual's self-experiences. It seems inescapable and necessary for Orual to journey into the depth and darkness of her heart to experience a wholesome development of personality—to be really faced with or come to grips with or, even better, find the way to transcend the un-resolved problems within her psyche and personality. Then, within her, self and reality as well as self and belief (in the god) can hopefully come to meet together. To reach such a happy end of integration, Lewis would suggest that what it really takes is to, in Lewis's own words, "put the human machine right" again, as inferable from his preaching in one of his broadcast talks (on BBC), later published as the article entitled "Morality and Psychoanalysis." Moreover, about how to achieve this goal of turning the disordered "human machine" to normal, i.e., removing the bad raw materials of moral choices—all different sorts of psychological perversion, Lewis names two partly overlapped techniques, namely, Christian morals and psychology.²⁰⁷ This thinking of Lewis's may explain why this mythic novel, particularly in the character of Orual, is imbued with such a strong religious sense and at the same time with so deep a psychological touch and profundity.

As far as Orual's most insidiously unresolved and not fully acknowledged problems are concerned, her complex of ugliness is perhaps the chief skeleton in the cupboard. To better analyze the psychological significance of this skeleton we

²⁰⁷ By "psychology," or "psychoanalysis," Lewis excludes the psychological school that adds into their scientific theories "the general philosophical view of the world," which Lewis specifically refers to the anti-religious theorists like Freud. Cf. Lewis's "Morality and Psychoanalysis," *Mere Christianity*, p. 88-89.

should consult Jungian psychology again to learn about his theory of complexes. In “Psychological Theory of Types,” Jung provides a specific definition of “complexes:”

Complexes are psychic contents which are outside the control of the conscious mind . . . and lead a separate existence in the unconscious, being at all times ready to hinder or to reinforce the conscious intentions . . . They are “vulnerable points” which we do not like to remember and still less to be reminded of by others, but which frequently come back to mind unbidden and in the most unwelcome fashion. . . . to have complexes . . . means that something incompatible, unassimilated, and conflicting exists. . . . they indicate the unresolved problems of the individual, the points at which he has suffered a defeat , and where there is something he cannot evade or overcome—his weak spots in every sense of the word.²⁰⁸

The qualities and functions of complexes expounded in this passage are greatly applicable to the predicament of Orual under the spell of her bodily ugliness. Without doubt, Orual’s complex of ugliness is her major weak spot or, say black spot, and it breeds other vulnerable points to her *inner self*, such as low self-esteem, self-righteousness, self-delusion, self-pity and even self-hatred. In view of the close relation between her ugliness and her unwholesome self-images, we can see that ugliness does not merely signify a mark of shame on her body but also adversely affects her psyche. Moreover, nearly all the personal crises in Orual’s life are involved with the psychological effects the complex of ugliness causes on her, by either “hinder[ing] or reinforc[ing] [her] conscious intentions,” to use the words of Jung. The most significant crisis is certainly concerned with her passionate love for Psyche and her near-to-collapse situation in the wake of losing Psyche. Such a devastating crisis is seemingly based on love but substantially related to the psychological confliction or tension between Orual’s craving to be loved and her

²⁰⁸ Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 90-91.

fatalistic pessimism about her undesirability—because of her ugliness.

Playing a centrally dominant part within Orual's psychic contents, the complex of ugliness, however, is not an innate quality of Orual's personality. It is, in a psycho-genetic sense, basically derived from her sonless and daughter-hating King Father. Apart from her unfavourable daughterhood, the King also outspokenly discredits Orual by making humiliating remarks with reference to her extraordinarily ugly appearance. For example, to Orual's frenzied readiness to sacrifice her life in place of Psyche to be the Brute's bride, the King Father makes his dismissive response of repulsion: "There's some cursed cunning that I haven't yet smelled out behind all your sobbing and scolding. You're not asking me to believe that any woman, let alone such a fright as you, has much love for a pretty half-sister? It's not in nature" (60-61). Later, leading Orual to look into the great mirror and see the "perfect image" of herself, the King adds, "Ungit [the goddess] asked for the best in the land as her son's bride . . . [a]nd you'd give her *that*" (62). The effect of the repeatedly insulting feedback from the Father is not really reinforcement but an imposition on Orual's thinking and feeling mind the deep sense of shame and repugnance toward her face and even worse—toward her worth as a love-object for other humans or the god.

In fact, the repulsive attitude of the Father, together with their alienated and unloving relationship, has a detrimental influence both on the building of Orual's self-image and on her personality. Primarily owing to the traumatic experience of being humiliated and discredited by her supremely authoritative King-Father, Orual embraces a life-long sense of terror of the mirror, along with her inescapable sense of fear toward her Father. Besides, throughout her life, Orual is gripped and thwarted by her complex of ugliness and low self-esteem, mostly inherited from her Father's negative attitude, and this seems to be the key reason why Orual would have many

troubles with building fulfilling personal relationships, why she seems incapable of loving joyfully and light-heartedly like Psyche or at least having a wiser instead of distorted understanding of love, and why at the same time in the depth of her heart there seems to be an unspeakably agonizing longing to be loved. Also, perhaps we can say that her persistent disputing perspective about the cruelty of the gods is, at least in a psychological sense, a projection of her experience of the cruelty of her Father.

It is therefore probably true to suggest that Orual's disturbing relationship with her Father overshadows her life tremendously and even comprehensively and that the Father plays a decisive part in making Orual a victim who suffers from continuous struggles, consciously and unconsciously, under the spell of the complex of ugliness. Toward her old age and long after her succeeding the King to become the Queen of Glome since his death, there is an inward cry of Orual's recorded in her book, "How could I ever have thought I should escape from the King?" (273). This question tellingly expresses Orual's lasting fear-bound relationship with her Father-King. However, even if she cannot evade the cruel reality that as an ugly daughter, she is unfavourable and doubly ill-fated and can never change the predestined fate of looking ugly and becoming unlovable, Orual can at least choose for herself to be seen or not to be seen. She thus determines to *cover* her shame of ugliness—by veiling her face.

The meaningfulness of the very choice of putting on a veil to face the world is of course not limited to her motive of hiding the very sign of her shame, as Orual herself consciously acknowledges. Underneath her self-willed decision and behind her ambivalent feeling of bitter-sweetness for having her face veiled, there could be found other hidden intentions and significance that are not totally recognized by Orual's consciousness. To put it in another word, as a significantly meaningful *symbol*, her

veil or the act of veiling would disclose some secret motivations or desires that are largely existent within her unconscious self though they do not remain utterly imperceptible in her self-expressive text. Thanks to the ambiguities the new sign of veil brings about, the advantages of showing up as a *veiled* Queen are far better than Orual herself could expect. With her ugly face covered, Orual, in a sense, manages to get released from, as it were, a hermeneutic bondage of her original image of ugliness that unavoidably and dogmatically defines her value and situates her in a disadvantaged position. By means of veiling her face, she finds that the veil amazingly strengthens her Queenship and opens up new possibilities of signification for her image. In the narration quoted below, we can hear from Orual how she admittedly enjoys the fact that the very medium of hiding her shameful looking turns out to create wonderful meanings and unrestricted possibilities of re-defining her image:

[A]s soon as my face was invisible, people began to discover all manner of beauties in my voice. . . . The best story was that I had no face at all; if you stripped off my veil you'd find emptiness. But another sort . . . said that I wore a veil because I was of a beauty so dazzling that if I let it be seen all men in the world would run mad; or else that Ungit was jealous of my beauty . . . The upshot of all this nonsense was that I became something very mysterious and awful. I have seen ambassadors who were brave men in battle turn white like sacred children in my Pillar Room when I turned and looked at them . . . and was silent. I have made the most seasoned liars turn red and blurt out the truth with the same weapon. (228-229)

Just as the Queen Orual discovers for herself, the veil becomes a mystifying tool and is indeed a marvellously useful weapon, not only for covering her face, the very emblem of her shame and powerlessness, but also for empowering her Queenship. However, there are still other possibilities of the psychological significance of her

adherence to such a powerful medium, which Orual still fails to recognize.

The depth psychology of Orual underlying the act of indulging herself in being a veiled Queen is a most intriguing topic about the symbolic conveyance of the veil and about Orual's personality as well. As both a medium of covering her most disadvantageous part, her face, and a weapon to empower her, especially her identity as a Queen, the veil becomes a new emblem, standing for *power*, and is considerably in association with her Queenship. Yet, either as a medium of disguise or as an emblem of power, the veil, if re-examined more closely in psychological terms, bears a certain significance of paradoxical profundity. On the one hand, it signifies an explicitly conscious choice and an insincere gesture to hide her genuine image, her weak spot; that is to say, in order to establish in herself a *persona* for Queenship of remarkable strength—to be a worthy, powerful, and respectable Queen, Orual has to hide her real but vulnerable, even failing self. In this sense, the choice as well as the gesture is really a cheating act with an intention preoccupied with her weakness. On the other hand, it is simultaneously an implicit and subtle indicator of her subconscious desire for power, not just referred to the empowerment of her Queenship, as it appears to be, but essentially correlated with her hopeless and unceasing longing for being re-affirmed as a lovable and valuable person. The complexity of this intertwined desire—for power, for love, and for self-worth—is especially meaningful to our exploration of Orual's selfhood.

It is not difficult to find *textual* evidence to exemplify these two paradoxical observations about Orual's personality, since her own "faithful" account of the external and internal events is full of valuable clues as well as straightforward expressions. Sometimes, the narration of her inward thinking sounds like the an internal monologue and therefore serves particularly effectively our psychoanalysis of her inner self. For instance, from Orual's expression of her state of mind just before

her fight in a duel with the king of a neighbouring country so that not only the security of her country but the strength of her Queenship could be affirmed and solidified, we can overhear the secret voice within her which speaks deeply her craving for power.

if . . . the swords were out, my courage failed me? I'd be the mockery of the whole world; . . . I could hear them saying, 'and yet how bravely her sister went to the offering! How strange that she, who was so meek and gentle, should have been the brave one after all!' And so she would be far above me in everything: in courage as well as in beauty and in those eyes which the gods favoured with sight of things invisible, and even in strength . . . 'She shall not,' I said with my whole soul. (200)

It is manifested in this passage that Orual's hidden desire for empowerment is, in a sense, blackened by her mentality of rivalry between Psyche and herself. This subconscious mentality reveals a vile touch of jealousy mixed with some streaks of vanity and pride in Orual. Surprised at the vileness and sickness of her thinking, Orual turns to blame the cruel gods who she accuses of making her beloved Psyche her enemy and tries to suppress the true voice of her inner self. For us readers, however, it makes it very clear that Orual is actually symptomatic of the pathetic mentality of those in want of the sense of self-worth and thus endowed with a complicated mixture of emotions—the fear of being disaffirmed and rejected, the anxiety of being surpassed, the embittered sense of jealousy toward someone superior and the strong desire for affirmation from others. In view of this, the desperate need of affirmation originated from her complex of ugliness is, in itself, not just a weak point but a black spot too.

The consequence of the critical fighting is a beautiful victory for Orual.

However, the narration of her hosting the victory feast reveals to us that she is in the meantime conscious of a *split* internal world—"Three parts of me was a shamed and frightened Orual ... and was bitterly lonely; the fourth part was Queen, proud (though dazed too)" (223). Evidently, in Orual, the moment of outwardly celebrating her winning of power parallels with an inwardly self-pitying moment. Enjoying the heat and clamour among the guest crowd, she at the same time suffers from a double loneliness for Psyche and for Bardia, the chief commander of Glome's army, a married man whom Orual the Queen falls in love with secretly inside her heart. The sense of divided-selfhood mixed with the affliction of her unsatisfied yearning for being loved also with the attempt to reinforce her power as a Queen becomes such an overwhelming force that even prompts the Queen-Orual to make such a determination laden with a figurative touch of suicidal violence: "I am the Queen; I will kill Orual too" (225). It follows that her inner world becomes a battlefield for her self-willed engagement in an intramural fight between the outer self, the Queen, and the inner self, Orual. The following passage provides another figurative description about the development of this inner war: "I locked Orual up or laid her asleep as best I could somewhere deep down inside me; she lay curled there. It was like being with child, but reversed; the thing I carried in me grew slowly smaller and less alive" (226). Compared with the act of veiling her outer appearance, this inward process of hiding the original self is far more destructive than the physical disguise.

In another sense, the same self-deceptive nature of the disguised self-image can also be found in the hidden motivation of the attempt to kill Orual. To be more specific, the mentally suicidal attempt is intertwined with an overwhelming sense of guilt for the destruction of Psyche's celestial happiness enacted by Orual's egoistic and possessive passion. During those years when the Queen (Orual) is stably and

prosperously on her throne, her private self keeps haunted by the sound of “a girl crying in the garden” (224), which Orual imagines should be the wailing of the “cold, hungry, and banished” (224) Psyche, but she strives repeatedly to convince herself that “it was the chains swinging at the well” (224). Finally, after a long time of being constantly troubled by the haunting wailing voice, the Queen makes a frenzy command of having the well *covered* with “madly thick walls” to silence the terrible voice once and for all. Yet, in the wake of such a willfully and frantically silencing action, the fear of being persistently haunted becomes transformed and reappears in Orual’s dreams: “For a while after that an ugly fancy used to come to me in my dreams, or between sleeping and waking, that I had walled up, gagged with stone, not a well but Psyche (or Orual) herself”(235). This recurrent “ugly fancy” in the realm of the dream and the imagery of the “crying girl” or the “swinging chains at the well” are undeniably abundant with symbolic meanings and significant for our examination of Orual’s psychic process of coping with her sense of guilt.

As psychological symbols, those elements of Orual’s fancies, including the horrible sound, chains at the well, and the walling, must be interpreted in terms of the inter-relation between her life-experiences and psychic contents, especially the depth feelings and struggles that may be existent in her *unconsciousness*. Evidently, all of them are involved in the traumatic experience of losing Psyche and ruining her happiness. From the psychological point of view, this painful experience could be seen as an un-resolved problem in the depth of her psyche, primarily because Orual is consciously unwilling and probably unable to go through the trauma *truly* and *sincerely*. Her emotional and rational incapacity of letting Psyche “go,” of letting Psyche’s happiness be, and perhaps more importantly, of facing and knowing the wrong she has done, is closely related to her failure to love and see properly. The crucial causes to the double failure lie in her blind spots in love, in spirit, and in the

truth about her self. Undoubtedly, these causes as well as her personal incapability are foreign to her conscious self.

As for insincerity, the fancies discussed here can serve as signal evidence. To Orual, she seems to have no other way to stop the terrible crying voice that haunts her day and night but cover the “swinging chains” (the traumatic memory and her sense of guilt) at “the well” (the depth of her heart) by thick walls. Walling the well can thus be understood as a concretized measure taken to put into practice her terror-stricken evasion. Yet, the evasion itself is certainly not as simple as a reasonable psychological reaction. In the sense that the horrible sound is genuinely the voice of her conscience coming from within, the very act of walling the well / Psyche / Orual, however concrete or fanciful it is, is intended to numb or silence the itchy sense of guilt and to bury the sickening residue of the memory of Psyche or the old Orual. The evasive act of “walling,” in itself, is symbolic of Orual’s resort to her familiar strategy of evading from reality, namely, her tendency to *disguise*. It is a disguise, just like the attempt to hide her authentic bodily image, symbolically conveying her psychology of self-evasion and self-hatred. Furthermore, the disguise in this context concretizes her insincerity in that she thoroughly would not or cannot be true to her inner self. Both her indulgence in veiling the genuine face and the frantic move to bury and silence the inner voice reveal her double estrangement from her real self, who remains living in her unconsciousness, no matter how she could willfully split her self-image to the veiled and bare-faced Orual and naïvely divide her whole being as the Queen and Orual. Ultimately, she makes herself symbolically *faceless* by means of rejecting the true face of both her outer and inner self—through veiling / walling, through burying the traumatic memory, through paralyzing her feeling heart and silencing her conscience, and lastly through fooling herself that she can lead a self-divided life and make the vulnerable self (Orual)

weaker and even dead.

But, in reality, Orual refuses to die, and the voice of conscience cannot actually be silenced. If it cannot be heard from within, it will be uttered from without. Until she starts giving ear to the whisper or megaphone of conscience and encountering with the knowledge about her self bare-facedly, she cannot undergo the kind of death that she really needs to go through. Self-disguise is only a deceitful and foolish kind, after all. In other words, she must meet with the true face of her inner self; then she can really embrace the hope of *undoing* the old Orual and getting rid of, or better, *growing* out of, her vulnerabilities. The turning point for this undoing task lies in the beginning of firstly undoing her blindness to the truth about love and her personality. As long as she is in the path of a gradual grasp of authentic self-knowledge, she is undergoing a *self-growing* process in the psyche and in spirit too.

The multi-dimensioned development of the growth of the self is suggested in Orual's confessional text as follows: "I did not, even when I had finished the book, see clearly many things that I see now. The change that the writing wrought in me (and which I did not write) was only a beginning—only to prepare me for the gods' surgery. They used my pen to probe my wound. . . . in the writing there came stroke[s] from without" (253-254). In these meta-critical words, Orual the autobiographical writer seems to testify the discovery that in her text are actually embedded many of her blind spots and that outside her writing there are yet other changes for her to experience, primarily the growth of self-understanding and the perception of reality, which she supposes is enacted by the gods and thus could be ascribed to spiritual enlightenment.

One stroke from without that calls into question Orual's presumption of the reality is about her alienated and sometimes hostile relationship with her another sister,

Redival. Orual believes Redival to be “false and a fool” (256) and always treats her in a contemptuously indifferent manner. But on a special occasion, Orual happens to learn that Redival has suffered because of Orual’s cruel indifference and actually she is miserably lonely. To pathetically self-centered and self-pitying Orual, this is indeed the most foreign and shocking news. But this surprise is only an appetizer to initiate the main course of de-constructing Orual’s presumably correct judgment of others and particularly of herself. It is Bardia’s wife, Ansit, who is the most important megaphone of conscience that crucially prompts Orual to enter into the real experience of being tied down and operated by the divine surgeons.

The explosive interaction between the two women happens on the occasion when Orual, under a complicated psychological background, pays her visit ostensibly offering condolences to the widowed Ansit. Inwardly Orual believes that she is not less saddened by Bardia’s death than his wife Ansit because she herself too used to be madly in love with Bardia inside her secret heart; besides, Orual cannot help feeling some bitter jealousy and a touchy sense of superiority toward this rival in love. Their interaction, from the beginning, is full of tension with some inexpressible or unnamed sense of conflict going on between them. Then comes the climatic moment after the unintentional disclosure of the Queen-Orual’s secret love for Bardia. Following the momentary friendliness shared, as it were, between the fellow sufferers, the confrontation between the two enemies restarts, and this time Orual the Queen becomes totally caught unprepared by the sad, embittered, yet acute-minded Ansit, who definitely has a sophisticated understanding of love and apparently gets the upper hand over the issue of love. Without hesitation, Ansit attacks Orual by insisting that her “queenship drank up [Bardia’s] blood year by year and ate out his life” (264). More pointedly but truthfully, Ansit advances a further charge that rightly hits the fatal point of Orual and nearly causes the stronghold of her *ego* to a complete

collapse:

Oh, Queen Orual, I begin to think you know nothing of love. . . Perhaps you who spring from the gods love like the gods. Like the Shadowbrute. They say the loving and the devouring are all one, don't they? . . . Faugh! You're full fed. Gorged with other men's lives, women's too: Bardia's, mine, the Fox's, your sisters'—both your sisters'. (264-265)

The criticism rings so true that Orual has nowhere to escape from the terrible reality of her devouring personality. For the first time in her life, she is forced to face the real image of herself—an insatiably greedy, all-demanding, and entirely unsympathetic, a vampire-like exploiter in love. This explosive moment marks the very turning point of Orual's *psychic* and *spiritual* life: now she really begins trying to look at her inner self and listening to the voice of conscience and growing receptive to the “operation” of the “divine Surgeons” (266).

Immediately following the revelation of the fact about her devouring nature, Orual makes a confession (to her readers) of her old “mad midnight fantasies: “(Ansit dead, or, better still, proved whore, witch, or traitress) when he was at last to be seeking my love, I always had him begin by imploring my forgiveness . . .” (266-7). Such fantasies are not merely mad but also fully *immoral*, which makes the confession itself bear some inevitable *moral* touch and thus signal out Orual's *leaning* toward moral reflection. In fact, Orual is really coming to a new stage of life in which she would undergo a so-called *self-disillusioning* process. Ansit's revelation is indeed a fatal enlightenment to Orual, who again confesses: “nearly all that I called myself went with it. It was as if my whole soul had been one tooth and now that tooth was drawn. I was a gap. And now I thought I had come to the very bottom and that the gods could tell me no worse” (267). It appears that Orual is conscious

of experiencing a new kind of death on the ground that now she comes to recognize the very truth that her previous self-knowledge is nothing but a façade. This sense of being a “gap” is a clear expression of self-disillusionment and, in another sense, a sign of the beginning of self-growth.

Progressive as Orual’s self-knowing or self-growing process appears, we are not allowed to assume that Orual has now already reached the very bottom. The death she experiences at this stage is still only a superficial kind of death, for as Orual’s journey into the abyss of her psyche and into the truth of reality goes on, there are more new discoveries to make for Orual as well as for her readers. Her next vital encounter with a clearer recognition of her true image is experienced in a vision, in which she is led by her dead Father to his great mirror again and she sees that her face projected on the mirror is the face of Ungit. In the narration of this transcendental experience of seeing, Orual the writer notes about the twist of her writing, which undoubtedly parallels her psychic process toward self-knowledge:

“I am Ungit.” My voice came wailing out of me and I found that I was in the cool daylight and in my own chamber. So it had been what we call a dream. But I must give warning that from this time onward they so drenched me with seeings that I cannot well discern dream from waking nor tell which is the truer. This vision, anyway, allowed no denial. Without question it was true. It was I who was Ungit. That ruinous face was mine. I was that . . . all-devouring womblake, yet barren, thing. Glome was a web—I the swollen spider, squat at its center, gorged with men’s stolen lives.

(276)

The key alteration in her writing Orual explains here about the increasing interpolation of the dream-texts into her life-experiences is an extremely significant signpost of the inter-related development of her psyche, her spirit, and her writing as

well. Compared with her previous writing laden with “shamefully wild reveries and fantasies” which she felt ashamed to write of but did not gain any insight into the hidden truth about her self, now the writing becomes endowed with recurrent dreams and fantasies full of light shed from the divine on her growing acknowledgement of the truth about her life and self. In this sense, the textual alteration evidently corresponds with Orual’s psychic and spiritual development.

As far as the significance of the living experiences in the dreams is concerned, Orual herself is certainly right to acknowledge that the dream-texts are full of spears and water-spouts of truth from the very depth of truth” (277). From the perspective of the Jungian psychology of individuation, the blurring of the boundary between waking and dreaming lives is importantly functional in transferring Orual’s ego to the next stage of life—to recognize and accept her alter ego, the “also-I.” The psychic process of this ego-transference is exactly in line with Jung’s analysis of the psychic-development from the “childhood level of consciousness” to “that of the dualistic stage:”

Something in us wishes to remain a child; to be unconscious, or, at most, conscious only of the ego; to reject everything foreign, or at least subject it to our will; to do nothing, or in any case indulge our own craving for pleasure or power. . . . it is persistence in a hitherto existing state whose level of consciousness is smaller, narrower and more egoistic than that of the dualistic stage. For in the latter the individual finds himself compelled to recognize and to accept what is different and strange as a part of his own life—as a kind of “also-I”.

It is the extension of the horizon of life which is the essential feature of the dualistic stage . . . The very aim of religious education, from the exhortation to put off the old Adam, backward in time to the rebirth rituals of primitive races, is to transform a human being into a new—a future—man, and to allow the old forms of life to die away.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ Jung, “The Stages of Life,” *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 116-117.

It is not an overstatement to share that Jung's insight, as quoted here, about the psychic process of individuation is precisely mapping out the trajectory of Orual's development of personality. Throughout Orual's writing, especially toward the end of it and of her life too, we find indeed that her living experiences undergo a similar psychic process coinciding with the Jungian psychological paradigm, which definitely would illuminate our psychological investigation into the changes in Orual's life.

According to Jungian psychology, during the process of individuation, that is, the way to integrate the subject's consciousness with the psychic contents within the unconscious level, the ego would experience "the danger of disintegration" and the process itself would be "a time of crisis for his soul"²¹⁰ before the blissful stage of reintegration through a process of religious transformation. In the case of Orual, her text intermingled with her dream-texts testify to such a psychic process. Ultimately, it is the element of spirituality that becomes the indispensable turning point for the disintegrated self to restore the integrity of her whole being. Specifically speaking, as soon as Orual comes to the knowledge that she is "as ugly in soul" (281) as Ungit, her soul becomes perilously on the edge of total collapse and in order to cease being Ungit she even makes attempts at suicide. As she is about to fling herself into the deep river, a god's voice comes to stop her: "'Do not do it,' said the god. 'You cannot escape Ungit by going to the deadlands, for she is there also. Die before you die. There is no chance after'" (279). If she cannot live with Ungit's soul, nor can she die to escape Ungit, how then can she die before she dies? The words of the god are indeed very much like riddles, and the mystery of this one seems no less hard to

²¹⁰ The phrases are quoted from Hans Schaer's "Elements of Jungian Psychology." The original context is: "The approach to the unconscious exposes the ego [the center of consciousness] to the danger of disintegration. That is why a man descends into the unconscious only at a time of crisis for his soul" (Schaer, p. 47).

unravel as the ambiguity imbedded in the divine voice that reaches Orual for the first time right after the destruction of Psyche's happiness: "You, shall know yourself and your work. You also shall be Psyche" (174). Nevertheless, these mysterious or ambiguous voices from the divine ultimately turn out to be the very prediction of the prospect of her personal life-journey; as for the meaning of such a life-journey, Orual has got to live it out.

The striking discovery of the identification between herself and Ungit—both faceless in body and ugly in soul—is itself already a kind of death for Orual in the sense that Orual simply cannot live with such a terrible fact—Ungit being her *alter ego*. But this death—the most desperate resistance to face the truth of the “also-I”—is not the same sort of “death” foretold by the god that Orual needs to go through before she dies. In her struggle to grasp the meaning of this “death before death” and to figure out how she can live on instead of committing suicide, Orual turns to the Greek philosopher's wisdom with a view to changing her “ugly soul into a fair one” (282). With great efforts to put her “passions and desires and vain opinions” (281) to death, Orual, however, falls into the greater despair of finding herself to be a hopeless failure as a moral being. Deeply frustrated, she finds with a cold fear in her heart that she could never mend her soul any more than her face. Then trying to turn to the help of the god, she is immediately gripped by a more bitter thought that because of her double ugliness in body and in soul, she must also be doubly ill-favoured both as a woman and as a human being; that is to say, she will never be granted any help from the god. Her reasoning logic sounds ridiculously simple; however, it reveals also some change in Orual as a spiritual being. Now, more than ever and even for the first time in her life, she is in the desperate position of seeking the help of the gods with all her heart.

The divine help does not come to the desperate Orual as she expects perhaps

because she has not really reached the bottom. The experience of near breakdown in her moral consciousness is probably not the death meant by the god. Besides, although she feels like a gap because of being stricken by the ugliness of her soul, she has not approached the complete emptiness of the self yet. After all, it is evident that up to now Orual does not grasp the *whole* truth about her self, and therefore the self-emptying process has yet to be carried on. There remains, as it were, some residue of delusion about her self that is to be uprooted. The most steadfast delusion in Orual is unmistakably her deep-rooted belief in her love for Psyche. To the old Orual in her despairing state of mind, this is like the last cornerstone for her nearly all crashed stronghold. The following narration describes how she clings to this belief to console herself:

However I might have devoured Bardia, I had at least loved Psyche truly. There, if nowhere else, I had the right of it and the gods were in the wrong. . . . And one day I took this book . . . to comfort myself, and gorge myself with comfort, by reading over how I had cared for Psyche and taught her and tried to save her and wounded myself for her sake. (285)

Obviously, Orual still remains blind to the truth of love or her love for Psyche. Her self-confidence in this aspect actually rings very ironically, especially in view of the narcissistic touch conveyed in the self-assertion she makes here. Aside from her false self-justification, another important point worthy of our re-examination is her equally delusive conviction in the truthfulness of her writing. Yet, from the perspective that Orual's book as a whole is substantially a faithful self-expression and therefore inevitably contains a considerable amount of Orual's blindness, it is actually understandable why Orual would embrace such a comfort which is based on the

twofold misunderstanding.

However, her self-misunderstanding is exactly the first and foremost plank in her eye that needs to be removed so that she can *see* properly what she used to be incapable of seeing. Without the capacity of *seeing* she is unable to gain insight into her true level and to discern the falseness of unrealities and the truthfulness of realities. The restoration or cultivation of the seeing capacity of this sort is exactly what “purgation” means, according to the observation of Evelyn Underhill in the essay entitled “The Essentials of Mysticism.” Underhill’s explanation of the meaning of “purgation” from a point of view that fuses religious and psychological dimensions is tremendously insightful to the present investigation concerning Orual’s self-growth:

[T]he self is either suddenly or gradually inclined to “true wisdom”; and this change of angle affects the whole character, not only or indeed specially the intellectual outlook, but the ethical outlook too. This is the meaning of “purgation.” False ways of feeling and thinking, established complexes which have acquired for us an almost sacred character, and governed though we knew it not all our reactions to life—these must be broken up. That mental and moral sloth which keeps us so comfortably wrapped in unrealities must go.²¹¹

In the same essay, Underhill also notes that the practice of “purgation” is “the first essential stage in the development of the mystical consciousness.” It is noticeable that Underhill’s psychologically-based specification of purgation is greatly in accordance with Jung’s psychology of religion and also with C. S. Lewis’s testimony or observations in some of his Christian writings, especially when he deals with the issue of conversion in *Surprised by Joy*. All of these authors are really akin to each

²¹¹ Underhill, Evelyn, “The Essentials of Mysticism,” *The Essentials of Mysticism and Other Essays* (London & Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1920), pp. 1-24. For this long passage and the short quotation below, see p. 12.

other in their insights about the correlation between the development of the religious consciousness and psychological transformation. So, in this respect, they can echo each other and all sound undoubtedly relevant to this study of Orual's *psychic* and *spiritual* journey to know her self.

Put in the context of Orual's living experiences, the essential goal of "purgation," specifically the development of the self from misperception toward true wisdom to attain a character of humility, in its full sense, is not accomplished until Orual's climactic encounter with the god—"the most dreadful, the most beautiful" (307). On the other hand, toward the climactic moment of her life, there are indeed purgatory phases for her to go through in order that her *perception* may become perfected and her whole being can be renewed and prepared for the ultimate experience of the numinous. Of such purgatory phases the most crucial event happens in a "living vision" in which Orual is taken to the sacred court with her book written to make complaints against the gods. The dramatic scene in the divine court when Orual is asked to read her complaint is the most vital turning point for her to discover the real voice from her inner self. Taken to stand in front of the divine judge, who too has a veiled face, Orual is firstly commanded to speak in her *bare-face*. The first two words of the divine judge, "Uncover her," (289) are symbolically meaningful, pointing straightly and precisely to the most conspicuous and crucial blind spot in Orual. The divine command can be understood as an immediate though maybe implicit suggestion that before Orual could *sound true*, she must show her *true image*. Moreover, this order of revealing Orual's bare face may also be associated with the simple but inescapable fact that in the presence of the divine, not just the veil-mask but also all of Orual's *self-disguise*, in any form, at any level—conscious or unconscious, must and would eventually be uncovered. This is actually the essence of the "purgation" that Orual needs to live through.

The demarcation between the veiled and the revealed, the real and the unreal must be, in a sense, restored and re-legitimated, at least in the sacred place. Orual, therefore, would have to face the challenge of acknowledging the unrealities that she used to embrace out of her own intention or because of her ignorance and blindness. For example, now in the land of the divine, she is both located in and faced with the metaphysical *reality*, which she used to obstinately dismiss and reject as *unreality* on account of its invisibility. Orual's misperception in this respect is actually based on an *invalid* dichotomy between the seen / known or knowable and the unseen / unknown or unknowable that she used to usurp (disbelieving in Psyche's sacred Palace and her unseen God) or enjoy "playing" with (always wearing a veil). Now, Orual has to abandon her false dichotomy and change her mind as well as her "view" to embrace the Reality revealed to her—of the god and of her self.

To Orual, the most striking discovery of the unreality she has naively clung to is about her book. As soon as she is bid to read her complaint, she sees the book in her hand become utterly strange to her; it is not *her book* at all. It is no longer the same book that she wrote and which gives her unspeakable comfort. Now it becomes a roll of "all vile scribble—each stroke mean and yet savage, like the snarl in [her] father's voice, like the ruinous faces one could make out in the Ungit's stone" (290). Her immediate reaction to this incredibly shocking alteration is to request the divine agents to give her back her original book, but the request is not met. In "a great terror" (290) and a loathing attitude, Orual, however, puts aside her strong resistance and starts reading it. Her second surprise is the strangeness of her reading voice, which she finally realizes is her "real voice" (292). This weird experience of reading a different book in a strange voice from herself is like a deconstructive moment as far as the authenticity of her autobiographical text is concerned. What used to be real to her has gone, and she is forced both to *look at* and *listen to* something foreign but

really belonging to her—from the innermost depth of her being.

As a result of listening to her own repeated reading of the different but authentic book, at last Orual comes to the real bottom of her downward process of self-disillusionment. The essential problem about her love toward Psyche and her charge against the gods is uncovered and disclosed to Orual: she is actually blinded by her own weak and wicked nature—egoism and self-pride and even jealousy toward the externally and internally superior Psyche. Her weakness in character or inward wickedness is, so to speak, the very foundation on which she has built her own *fictional* world full of hatred, bitterness, pride, and prejudice about the god's mean and cruel deprivation of her only love, Psyche. Now, the very text of her fiction, that is, her *writing*, has been proved all wrong-headed and a dark-hearted illusion. Yet, on the bottom of self-disillusionment there lies also a light of hope, for the moment of complete disillusionment can be the turning point for the growth of the self. Thanks to the disclosure of the true face of her being, Orual from now on no longer has to be the *faceless Ungit*; instead, she becomes *faced* again by means of the retrieval of authentic self-knowledge. That's why in response to the divine judge's brief question, "Are you answered?" (293) Orual can give a definite "Yes." Now that she has grasped the truth about her self, it seems that she has also come to reconcile herself with the imperceptible gods.

The correlation between self-knowledge and the perceptibility of the divine is another wonderful enlightenment to the self-disillusioned yet fully appeased Orual, as noted in the narration below:

The complaint was the answer. To have heard myself making it was to be answered. . . . When the time comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which was lain at the center of your soul for years . . .

I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till
that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we
think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?
(294)

This enlightenment as a whole is of multi-layered significance concerning the encounter between human subjectivity and the divine otherness. Specifically, Orual at least comes to the twofold realization: firstly, the outcry from “the center of her soul” is her real voice and reveals very true *face* of her soul; secondly, without integrating this level of self-understanding into the so-called self-knowledge, she can never be sincerely or right-mindedly seeking after the knowledge of the divine other, either the divine *voice* or *face*. In psychological terms, the very turning point for the human subject to be aware of the unconscious self so as to re-integrate both the conscious and the unconscious would make a crucial meeting point for human beings to encounter with the divine, to achieve reconciliation and dialogue out of true *sincerity* on the part of humans. Meanwhile, since the *spiritual* achievement is correlated with the *psychic* development, the divine may take an *active* part in the human acquirement of the enlightenment.

In Lewis’s dramatization of Orual’s psychic and spiritual journey, it is discernable that for a blind creature like Orual, she simply needs to be *led* or *brought* out of her darkness, within the psychic and intellectual and spiritual domains, into the lightness of Reality. The interaction between the psychic force and the religious power which leads to the ultimate comprehensive integration of the whole being of the self—the inner and the outer and the spiritual—is correspondent with Jung’s assertion that “religion ministers to psychic hygiene.”²¹² Hans Schaer in “Religion

²¹² Also see Hans Schaer’s *Religion and the Cure of Souls in Jung’s Psychology*. The original

as a Psychic Function” provides a well-said summary of Jungian ideas about how “a living religion” can function in the psychic process toward the self:

Religious experience can be defined by saying that it tends towards psychic integration. Religion is the acknowledgement of the things that consciousness fails to realize; or it can go further and bring about an inner unity and wholeness. Thus, . . . a living religion is needed for the full development of personality.²¹³

The notion of the ministry of religion to psychic health helps justify the observation that C. S. Lewis’s heroine achieves her self-growth, namely, “psychic integration,” not really through a process of reflection on *within* but more indispensably and substantially because of the religious strength and insight from *above*.

Furthermore, what Orual is also enlightened to perceive in the whole event of knowing herself and reconciling herself with the gods is about the discrepancy between the “word” uttered from her conscious mind and the “real voice” poured out of the depth of her psyche. The recognition of such a discrepancy is just meaningful not merely in terms of her spiritual regeneration but also in the aspect of her meta-critical thinking about her book. From Orual’s acknowledgement of her own responsibility in her incapacity of hearing and seeing the gods because of her insincerity, we may further infer that once she has a full grasp of the reality of her inner self—preoccupied and predominated by weakness and blindness, she becomes genuinely capable of reflecting on her own writing objectively. In other words, in addition to becoming able to receive the message and the vision of the divine, entering into the stage of true self-knowledge also changes Orual’s views on her

quotation of Schaer is: “Jung makes the astonishing assertion that religion ministers to psychic hygiene. (PR, p.81) . . . a living religion ministers to psychic health” (Schaer, 129).

²¹³ Schaer, *Ibid*, p. 136.

previous subjective writing, which she afterwards acknowledges as problematic and inauthentic as her old self. Orual's self-discovery in a double sense, the personality of her whole self and the textuality of her writing, testifies too Jung's insightful statement about the interrelationship between "seeing" and "being" and "writing:" "Our way of looking at things is conditioned by what we are. And since . . . people are differently constituted, they see things differently and express themselves differently."²¹⁴

Indeed, the writing of Orual is inevitably conditioned by the narrowness of her perspectives and personality. Until the horizons of both her thinking mind and her being can be broadened through at least acknowledging her narrowness and limitedness and even sinfulness, she cannot truly and effectively engage herself in a self-critique. Before her growing out of her self-importance or self-righteousness, her reflective writing can only, at best, reflect her blind spots imbedded within the intellectual and moral dimensions of her being. C. S. Lewis in his essay "Christianity and Literature" comments on the "two ways in which a man may be said to write about himself," and he takes St. Augustine and Rousseau, the two most noted writers of "confessions," as his examples:

[W]e have the expressionist and the Christian attitudes towards the self or temperament. Thus St. Augustine and Rousseau both write *Confessions*; but to the one his own temperament is a kind of absolute (*au moins je suis autre*,) to the other it is "a narrow house too narrow for Thee to enter—oh make it wide. It is in ruins—oh rebuild it."²¹⁵

²¹⁴ The statement of Jung's is quoted from "Freud and Jung," in Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 134.

²¹⁵ See Lewis's article, "Christianity and Literature," *The Seeing Eye and Other Selected Essays from Christian Reflections*, p. 11.

In view of the different mindsets of confessional writing typified by Rousseau and St. Augustine, it could be inferred that the situatedness of Lewis's heroine as a sort of confessional writer undergoes some transference from the position of vehement self-expression to a posture edified by the character of humility. Her transference in the consciousness of writing is undoubtedly in accordance with her development in personality. To put in another way, as the confinement of her subjectivity is to some extent transcended, so her consciousness as a writer is also being enlarged. This is the very significance of Orual's interconnected transformation in the two dimensions—personality and textuality.

However, this is still not the whole story of Orual's life-transformation; it only prepares Orual to approach a better end of her life-journey. The working of religion has to be done more thoroughly to her life so that she could be clothed with a renewed psychological outfit, i.e., a new consciousness of being, and further undergo a comprehensive renewal of her self, in both soul and body. In this mythic fiction about the heroine's psychic and spiritual growth, Lewis employs a series of living visions as the mediators of religion for his heroine to re-live her life with a view to righting the wrongs preoccupying her feeling and cognition during the history of her life. The experience of reading out a different but more correct version of her complaint is one of the living visions Orual walks into and prompts her to re-examine the truthfulness of her book and her self-understanding. Later, led by the loving Fox's ghost to her "true judges," the gods themselves, and waiting with him in the sacred chamber, Orual is bestowed more living visions from the story pictures painted on the walls of the sacred locality. What is more marvellously significant is that those enlivened pictures are all about the life-stories of Orual herself and Psyche. On this occasion, as a distanced viewer, Orual has a chance to look into their stories and to discover more truth about their interrelated and even mystically inter-changed

lives.

To Orual's amazement, displayed in the visions on one of the walls are the scenes in which she and Psyche toil together to undertake the same ordeals, but between them there is a great contrast—Psyche is almost always “merry and in good heart” (300), while Orual bears “nearly all the anguish” (300). The most surprising and strange discovery to Orual in these “co-working” scenes is that it is herself who “bore the anguish” but Psyche “achieved the task” (301). How could Orual understand such a mysterious and ambiguous interchange of “anguish” and “achievement”? According to the wise Fox, their sharing each other's burdens and tasks and contributing to each other's gain and achievement are actually the phenomena of the very reality of interpersonal relationship: “We're all limbs and parts of one Whole. Hence, of each other. Men, and gods, flow in and out and mingle” (300-301). Or, as Doris T. Myers puts, the interchanged living experiences of Orual and Psyche are basically “a Charles Williams-like process of substitution,” through which “Orual's sufferings have spared Psyche, and Psyche's beauty has been shared with her, so that both of them are worthy to stand before the god.”²¹⁶ However, the ambiguity of the meaning of their interrelationship does not seem completely cleared away by the moral in the mouth of Fox, nor can it be pinned down by Myers's rightly made association. We interpreters of Orual's viewings may further wonder: What does this revelation of the inter-mingled living relationship between Psyche and herself mean to Orual personally? And, how would Orual re-interpret her relationship with Psyche with this discovery of co-living as a “whole body”?

Apart from the moral-based interpretation of Fox (in the afterlife, quite curiously, appearing as a convert, a believer, no less), another way of looking at Orual's vision and rethinking its significance to Orual's understanding might be to interpret this

²¹⁶ Myers, *C. S. Lewis in Context*, p. 192.

seeing experience as a cathartic and liberating moment for Orual. This is based on a different level of understanding of the newly discovered reality. That Orual has in reality gone through with Psyche the ordeals Psyche is punished to undergo in her banished miserable predicament, in fact, signifies something psychologically illuminating to Orual to such an extent that she now could be set free from a sense of imprisonment buried deep in her heart. As revealed in the living vision of reality, like the victimized Psyche because of Orual's possessive and manipulative love, Orual herself too suffers to share Psyche's ruinous state of being; Orual's suffering for Psyche's sake, in a sense, does herself credit, for it is she who bore the anguish in their shared sufferings. In light of this revelation, Orual can thus be relieved of the long-gripping sense of guilt for the destruction of Psyche's happiness. In other words, with the reinterpreted inter-relationship between Orual and Psyche, the depth of Orual's heart long haunted by the psychologically and morally unresolved problem involving her guilty doings to Psyche's life can now be greatly unburdened.

The last *mystically* surreal vision on the wall of the sacred chamber is about the last ordeal for Psyche set by Ungit to fetch beauty for Ungit from the Queen Death herself. On Psyche's journey to the deadlands, forbidden by Ungit's law to speak to anyone "for any fear or favour or love or pity" (301), Orual sees that the most tormenting and grieving challenge for Psyche is to go past the most demanding and seductive wailing voice out of Orual herself. The touching pathos in Psyche's suffering, which now Orual understands is to a greater degree than her own, provides Orual with the dawning realization of the truth that her undeniable jealousy toward Psyche's happy union with the god / "the Divine Nature" (304) has made herself the most "dangerous enem[y]" (304) to Psyche. Orual's dawning though belated realization seems to be the final point of her downward process of self-disillusionment and simultaneously an essential point of her upward development of spiritual

regeneration. The overlapped point brings Orual to nearly reach the bottom she is supposed to approach—to die before she dies.

The signification of this bottom, namely, a kind of death, is presented through the way the totally *changed* Orual greets and *confesses* to Psyche the goddess. At the moment of their long-deferred reunion, we see the humblest profile of Orual welcoming the victorious and glorious returning of Psyche to her sacred house, and we can hear Orual's *honest confession* full of self-negating repentance: "Oh Psyche, oh goddess . . . Never again will I call you mine; but all there is of me shall be yours. Alas, you know now what it's worth. I never wished you well, never had one selfless thought of you. I was a craver" (305). The clear touch of the abolition of egoism and the sense of dedication and compassion mark distinctly the change in Orual in terms of love and personality. She seems totally transformed—from the one who subconsciously tends to abuse her own passion for Psyche and the latter's love to satisfy the wickedly destructive kind of possessive desire to become profoundly sympathetic and full-heartedly repentant. Besides, the subjective emotion expressed in her confessional petition to Psyche the goddess manifests as well the spiritual virtue that Orual has grown into. In her article, "The Place of Will, Intellect and Feeling in Prayer," Evelyn Underhill describes the "operation of feeling in prayer" with such a note about the self's feeling state of spiritual humility: "the self's feeling of its own imperfection . . . a feeling which grows with the growth of the soul's spiritual perceptions, and includes all the shaded emotions of penitence and of humility. 'For meekness in itself is naught else but a true knowing and feeling of a man's self as he is.'"²¹⁷ Such a mystic state of feeling as Underhill delineates serves to characterize the exact state of *spirit* as well as mind of Orual.

In view of her new characteristic, or quality, of spirit and psyche, Orual may be

²¹⁷ Underhill, *The Essentials of Mysticism*, p. 110.

claimed to have fulfilled the essentials of purgation, according to Underhill's criteria in terms of mystical development. Up to now, she has indeed approached the "true wisdom" with a full grasp of reality, at least the reality of her true self. However, this is still not a full stop for either her psychic process or spiritual journey. As far as the *loving* relationship is concerned, until the broken relationship between Orual and Psyche, the central passion of her old self, can be totally mended and healed, the unresolved problem within Orual's deep heart is not fully dealt with. To Orual's heartfelt confession, Psyche immediately responds with the same old sense of intimacy of love, which sustains Psyche's selfless concern for Orual: "But Maia, dear Maia, You must stand up. I have not given you the casket. You know I went a long journey to fetch the beauty that will make Ungit beautiful" (305-306). Psyche's response at such a moment, without doubt, signifies their reconciliation based on forgiveness and shared compassion. More importantly, the message in Psyche's words of love bears also some key point referring to the total solution to Orual's problem, in both the psychic and spiritual sense, namely, her ugliness.

Indeed, the most essential problem within Orual's psyche and even spirit lies in her complex of ugliness, as has been elaborated before in this study. It is, so to speak, the very root of her bitterness and her contradictory tendencies of self-hatred and egotism, especially in her treatment of love. Because of her ugliness, she holds the fatalistic view of life that because she lacks a beautiful body and soul, she is unworthy as a love-object for men and for the gods; on the other hand, largely subconsciously she possesses the pathetic sense of desire or longing for being loved, with a "hopeless dream" that in "some other land, some other world, some other way" (282-283) an ill-favoured woman like her might be also a conqueror of some sort, not always a predestined loser. To resolve this complicated psychological problem, Orual is offered by the goddess Psyche *beauty* of a transcendent order. As the

mythical vision shows, the ultimate purpose of Psyche's long journey to the Deadland is for "facing" the faceless or ruinously-faced Ungit (the alter ego of Orual) with beauty from the Death herself so that both the inward and outward ugliness of Ungit / Orual can be "re-innovated."

Such an offering as well as undertaking of Psyche is meaningful at least in two levels. Firstly, the act of offering beauty itself to satisfy Orual's deepest and most desperate wish and need is based on Psyche's love, that is, *Charity*, as coined by Lewis in his *The Four Loves* referring to love of a divine order. Secondly, just like the divine quality of love, the beauty Psyche fetches for Orual is of an eternal order too because it is earned by Psyche the goddess through overcoming the difficulties and dangers of journeying all the way to the land of Death. In a spiritual sense, the beauty in Psyche's basket signifies both the victory of love and the defeat of death and is thus endowed with the nature of eternity. To be given such beauty in this sense for Orual means sharing with Psyche the status of conqueror of death and ugliness. From a religious point of view, Psyche represents a mythic version of Christ (the Saviour) in the Christian sense, and Orual becomes *prototypically* once the damned one now *reborn* into a blessed being of no shame. The religious significance of divine gift of beauty serving to fulfill Orual's fundamental wish for liberation from the damnation of her double ugliness fully justifies the fact that Orual's whole experience of being redeemed is in essence a religious experience.

So far, this discussion has been focused on Orual's psychic process through which Orual manages to grow out of the personality un-integrated with her unconscious self yet predominated by the internal struggles and aspirations and even a horrible sense of dark-heartedness all pertaining to her unconsciousness. As for the existential sense of terror that is inevitably bound with her humanity, our discussion of Orual's psychic changes must be re-oriented toward her transformed stage of life, in

which her self undergoes re-integration and her personality becomes wholly renovated—fundamentally through her encounters with the transcendence. Following her seeing the living visions that reveal the realities and thus thoroughly de-construct the unrealities in her perception and ultimately serve to redeem both her body and soul by replacing her ugliness with beauty, Orual then comes to her fullest experience of the “living religion,” through encountering with the god himself, the son of Aphrodite (or Ungit). It is the climactic coming of the holy god that brings Orual into the ultimate power of religion and gives her the absolute feeling of the *numinous*. In Orual’s own description, the experience of the holiness of the god, even just at his approaching, is a completely piercing and shattering experience to her whole being: “Each breath I drew let into my new terror, joy, overpowering sweetness. I was pierced through and through with the arrows of it I was being unmade. I was no one” (307). It is evident that at the coming of “the most dreadful, the most beautiful” (307), or in Rudolf Otto’s words, “the overpowering,” Orual’s state of mind—feeling her self “being unmade”—bespeaks the so-called “creature-consciousness.” Orual’s extremely self-diminutive or self-depreciating attitude toward the existence of the holy is undoubtedly a religious emotion in response to the “absolute overpoweringness,” which according to Otto is an element denoting the nature of the holy. Lewis’s delineation of the “creature-consciousness” in Orual closely corresponds to Otto’s ideation in this respect. In *The Idea of the Holy*, Otto expounds the relation between the “creature-consciousness” and the “overpowering” nature of the holy:

It is especially in relation to this element of majesty or absolute overpoweringness that the creature-consciousness, . . . comes upon the scene, as a sort of shadow or subjective reflection of it. Thus, in contrast

to ‘the overpowering’ of which we are conscious as an object over against the self, there is the feeling of one’s own submergence, of being but ‘dust and ashes’ and nothingness. And this forms the numinous raw material for the feeling of religious humility.²¹⁸

In terms of Otto’s ideas, the heightened sense of the death of the self in Orual’s response to the numinous other is derived from a special quality of her subjective consciousness, which is unmistakably a quality of a religious order, namely, religious humility. In other words, with such a numinous experience of encountering the holy god, the ultimate meaning and reality of religion, Orual also approaches the ultimate reality of her self as a human being, and as a result she really comes to her death, which means that now she finally achieves to “die before she dies.”

Furthermore, Otto also attributes this religious sense of “self-depreciation” to “one of the chiefest and most general features of mysticism,” and besides he elaborates such a mystical feeling state as one “which comes to demand its own fulfillment in practice in rejecting the delusion of selfhood, and so makes for the annihilation of the self.”²¹⁹ It is observable that this mystically-based conception of “self-depreciation” can be unquestionably applied to Orual’s feeling of “self-death.” Based on this observation, Orual’s religious emotion of death of the self is no doubt a *mystical* experience. She has at last achieved in the highest degree the purpose of “purgation,” which is one of the essential stages of mysticism as conceptualized by Evelyn Underhill. Actually, in terms of Underhill’s conception of mysticism, obviously echoed by Otto’s understanding, we can infer that Orual’s life journey becomes not merely a journey to self-knowledge but essentially a *mystic* journey. To justify this inference, it is worthwhile to quote Underhill’s insightful definition of

²¹⁸ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 20.

²¹⁹ Otto, *Ibid*, p. 21.

mysticism, in the Preface to her magnum opus, *Mysticism*:

I understand [mysticism] to be the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order; . . . so long as this is a genuine life process . . . I believe this movement to represent the true line of development of the highest form of human consciousness.²²⁰

From Underhill's mystical perspective, we may infer that the moment Orual fulfills the mystical phases of purgation and her spirit becomes in complete harmony with the holy deity, her whole being reaches also the mystical ideal of coming to "the highest, and to the utmost fullness of being which the human soul can contain" (306).

In the end, the beatitude of the numinous experience brings about the total redemption of Orual's life, including not only her spirit but also her body. At the climactic moment as the god of love approaches, standing side by side with Psyche, Orual looks into the pool at the sacred place and discovers the ultimate significance of her personal encounter with the transcendence—her own transfiguration: "Two figures, reflections, . . . stood head downward in the water . . . Two Psyches, the one clothed, the other naked? Yes, both Psyches, both beautiful (if that mattered now) . . . 'You also are Psyche,' came a great voice" (307-308). This transcendental vision in which Orual has been transformed into another Psyche (her super-ego) is indeed full of significance. For one thing, it signifies that the hopeless distance between Orual and Psyche is completely annihilated, for now they share and both reflect the beauty of a divine order, spiritually and physically. This, in another sense, means that with her new self Orual's life-long bitterness toward her own ugliness and her tendency to gaze obsessively at Psyche's beauty are both transcended. That is to say, for Orual,

²²⁰ Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. x.

the life-binding spell based on the dichotomy between beauty and ugliness is broken at last. Moreover, the transcendental experience of self-transformation is of tremendous significance in terms of Orual's development of *personality*. Undergoing the spiritual and bodily *metamorphoses* in the presence of the holy god indicates the ultimate achievement of Orual's *psychic* journey toward the self, namely, the attainment of a fully and perfectly developed personality.

Therefore, it is true to say that Orual's psychic progression or her mystical journey culminates in the climactic meeting with the transcendent god happening in the sacred place, which is the exact space where Orual becomes ultimately transfigured and sanctified. But, we should also put in mind that all of these transcendental experiences do not happen in reality but are lived through by Orual as a mortal through "seeings" (308). As the final section of Orual's book tells us, soon after she returns from those "living visions" to the real world, she is about to die *physically*. Suppose the metamorphoses and sanctification of her *self* actually happen to Orual as a living being in whatever forms, spiritual, mental, or mythically fantastic, we may wonder *where* then is the very channel for the still mortal Orual to undergo all those transcendental seeings and surreal livings. We might thus come to a presumably valid suggestion that the *real* space or channel for Orual firstly to face the reality of her true self and then to encounter with the transcendence and accordingly go through the experience of her life being transcended is located within her *psyche*. On the basis of this, another justifiable assumption would be that it is actually in her psyche that lies the sacred locality wherein she can discover the truth of reality and meet with the numinous face to face and ultimately *recovers* the sanctity of her living being.

That the sacred space of Orual's journey to self-discovery, spiritual (re)union with the transcendence, and redemption of the whole being is her very *psyche*

validates the fundamental concern of this study—investigating Orual’s self-experience through exploring her psychic process and its inter-relation with the functions of the living religion. From the psychological perspective or a religious point of view, Lewis’s myth-rewritten novel, *Till We Have Faces*, can be interpreted as a profound text that represents sophisticatedly both the problematic and the potential of human self as a sacred space for the interaction or meeting between humanity and divinity. In her autobiographical book, Orual once voices an interrogative outcry from her inner being: “Why must holy places be dark places?” (249). We readers and interpreters of Orual’s writing and life-journey can raise another question in response: How come the domain of human psyche is as dark as the holy places? To induce a possible answer, we might further think about such probabilities: Couldn’t the darkness of the holy place be the projection of the darkness of human psyche? And, might the psyche of humanity not be the sacred space, dark though it is, for the lightness of divinity to come in and ultimately dwell within?

On how religion can function to minister the psychic predicament, Hans Schaer, the German Jungian scholar, makes the following sophisticated observations in “Religion as a Psychic Function:”

Surveying at a glance what Jung has to say about the function of religion, we see that religion always relates to man’s wholeness. . . . even if the myths and [religious] symbols harbour all sorts of unconscious elements, these may yet produce a *psychic cosmos instead of a psychic chaos*. All the psychic contents which are touched into life by religion then become related to one another, e.g. the conscious to the unconscious, the spiritual to the natural; . . . The symbols release things in us, create order, and broaden. Psychic functions that might otherwise exert a disturbing influence become positive in their effect. The individual attains to . . . an *active* experience,

which imposes a cosmos on the chaos of his soul.²²¹ (Emphases added)

Based on the insight of Jungian psychology of religion, these valuable thoughts of Schaer can be associated with Orual's case. Throughout her whole psychic journey toward the integrity of personality, Orual indeed undergoes the transference from "psychic chaos" to "psychic cosmos" through the mediation and ministry of religion. It is no wonder that the dying yet also redeemed Orual / Psyche would conclude her writing by finding herself answered because she has been faced with the ultimate meaning of religion—since the visitation of the divine. Out of a renewed spirit and a rehabilitated mind and with a clearly religious sense of peace, she utters her last words: I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer. Before your face questions die away. What other answer would suffice? Only words, words; to be led out to battle against other words. Long did I hate you, long did I fear you, I might— " (308). These words, in psychological and religious senses, sum up the overall significance of Orual's growth in personality and spirituality through a psychic process.

Also, these last words indicate a certain conclusion of Orual as a *writer*. It seems that toward the end of her life and writing, Orual has come to the reality of writing or words as well; she realizes that all the battles of words for the purpose of pursuing or claiming authenticity and truth are fatally failing in the face of the ultimate revelation of Truth Himself. Finally, her writing ends without a full stop, and the suggestiveness of the meaningful open-ending could be, to some extent, informed by the postscript written by the priest, who notes: "From the markings after the word *might*, we think the Queen's head must have fallen forward on them as

²²¹ Schaer, *Religion and the Cure of Souls in Jung's Psychology*, p. 128.

she died and we cannot read them” (308). The unreadable and inconceivable conclusion of Orual’s writing caused by her death, in a certain sense, could be associated with the unlimited possibilities of being-after-death in eternity. If so, then the open ending is most appropriate for the writing of Orual’s life. Her story should go on, but the on-going part of Orual’s eternal life after she dies defies either the writing of C. S. Lewis or the reading of any human being in this world.

For us readers, exploring Lewis’s mythical yet also very realistic world, full of revealing imagery of the scenarios of an individual human’s personal struggles in psyche, in relationship and in wrestling with the divine, is a rather peculiar experience—of the *mythopoeic* manifestation of humanity, or predicament of humanity. From a literary perspective, the peculiarity of Lewis’s rewriting of the Cupid and Psyche myth, in effect, has much to do with his ingenious artistry in creating such a psychologically complicated character, Orual, the hopelessly ugly and ignorantly doubtful sister of Psyche. Owing to the profound complexity in Lewis’s characterization, we readers seem invited to undergo a first-hand experience of journeying into the undiscovered land, that is, the untouched abyss of the heroine’s psyche, as we read through her first-person writing of her love and hate and her ultimate, albeit poignant, reception of catharsis, in both the psychological and the religious senses. At the end of her story, we indeed come with her to the very truth that as her ugliness is not beyond transformation, so can her life-long ignorance and deficiency in love, in knowledge of her self and others, and in faith be ultimately tackled and healed. This ultimate hope of the multi-faceted redemption of personality as well as personal relationships (with other humans and with the god) may be counted as a revelation, a cathartic one, not simply for Orual but also possibly for her (and Lewis’s) readers.

Moreover, the very revelation or suggestion of such a hope reflects the

mythopoeic texture of Lewis's work, since it speaks not merely of a *particular* situation but also a *universal* principle regarding human psyche becoming a sacred space. But, as "an object of contemplation,"²²² which is what Lewis suggests us to treat a myth, the text (or story) of *Till We Have Faces* is profoundly mythopoeic for other reasons as well. Besides its well-wrought "externalization" of "psychological forces"²²³ suggesting some universal truth about humanity, Lewis's mythic novel also indicates some permanent and inevitable principle concerning how the human being must wear a *real* and *renewed* face so as to transcend the intertwined problem of the self and (religious) belief. From a straightly religious point of view, could this mythic representation of the existential problem of belief be apologetically significant as well, like Lewis's previous religious narratives? Evidently, *Till We Have Faces* is probably the most heavily disguised Christianity-related text of all Lewis's imaginative works. Deeply allusive as it appears, from the mythic novel as a whole, the association with the following reflection over the relationship between the human self and Christian faith, made by Lewis the Christian thinker, is, however, not impossible to make:

Christianity is not, in the long run, concerned either with individuals or communities. Neither the individual nor the community as popular thought understands them can inherit eternal life: neither the natural self, nor the collective mass, but *a new creature*.²²⁴ (Emphases added)

²²² The phrase is cited from "On Myth," *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 45.

²²³ In the article, "The Mythopoeic Gift of Rider Haggard," Lewis mentions that the working of the mythopoeic is to "externalize . . . psychological forces." *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories*, p. 153.

²²⁴ The quotation is from Lewis's article, "Membership," *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church*, p. 340.

Ch. VIII. *A Grief Observed: An Inward Drama of the Crisis of Faith*

“The characteristic of Pains and Pleasures is that they are unmistakably real, and therefore, as far as they go, give the man who feels them a touchstone of reality.”

-- C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

“Providence stings some people to avoid giving them happiness for too long . . . to strengthen their virtues of mind . . . she brings to self discovery through hardship.”

-- Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*

“The battle is between faith and reason on one side and emotion and imagination on the other.”

-- C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

In order to highlight the crucial part that human self / psyche plays in the *existential* problem of faith or belief in supernatural reality, i.e., God Himself, C. S. Lewis indeed very skillfully characterizes his doubting heroine in *Till We Have Faces* as an autobiographical writer of her own life-experience. It has been proven in the previous discussion about this mythic novel that the first-person and self-reflective account can be a fittingly effective mode of expression to lay bare the reality of the self and the close relationship between self and faith. In effect, such an employment of writing self as the same agent engaged in the existential / subjective wrestling with religious belief serves not just as a device of rhetorical convenience. Owing to its literary effect upon the perfect match between form and content, it actually becomes a useful medium for apologetic persuasion too. Based on this understanding, we may also infer that another deeply autobiographical text of Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, is characteristic of the same expressive method—using the pen of the *narrator* himself to dramatize a self-reflective and also self-realizing journey through which the truth about the entangled problem of the self and his crisis of faith can be really ascertained.

Published as a pseudonymous book in 1961 some time after the death of his wife from cancer, C. S. Lewis's *A Grief Observed* is apparently constructed as an intensely personal book on suffering. Nevertheless, it is a critical controversy whether this text should be treated as an autobiographical recording of the author's personal experience of bereavement or as a fictional narrative that chronicles the emotional and spiritual struggles of the average individual in bereavement. Some readers or critics tend to take the first perspective, namely, identifying the authorship of the journal writing within the book with the *real* author, C. S. Lewis himself. Without dismissing Lewis's apologetic attempt, they take seriously the crisis of faith recounted in those private (now published) journals simply as Lewis's own. The philosophically perceptive (perhaps somewhat obsessive) critic, John Beversluis, is one of the faithful upholders of this critical position, which is manifested by his book, *C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion*. Besides, Lewis's stepson, Douglas H. Gresham, can be counted as another representative; his deeply moving "Foreword" written for the 1994 version shows his close understanding of the connection between the book and Lewis's marriage.

On the other side, there are other critics who hold such an overt biographical approach unnecessary and even illegitimate. They argue, in different ways, that *A Grief Observed* is a substantially apologetic work, in which the biographical associations should or might as well be brushed aside. Cynthia Marshall, for example, in her response to the disagreement about the "fictionality" of *A Grief Observed*, recommends approaching the book "in terms of *belief*," and she makes an interesting, literary sort of suggestion, in parentheses, that "it may be in its own way 'a true fairy tale.'" ²²⁵ Before putting the literary issue into more serious

²²⁵ Marshall, Cynthia, editor of *Essays on C. S. Lewis and George MacDonald: Truth, Fiction, and the Power of Imagination*. See "Introduction," p. 5-6.

consideration, perhaps we should also hear Walter Hooper's first-hand report of what Lewis himself said of this *seemingly* autobiographical book. According to Hooper,

A Grief Observed is a carefully constructed work of Christian apologetics in which the author tries to imagine what reactions and follies each of us is likely to commit when we lose someone we love. Lewis told me that he felt he had to make the book *sound* autobiographical if it was to help the average man or woman who had lost husband or wife. This meant he couldn't publish it under his own name, not only because it isn't autobiography but because he wished to avoid drawing attention to *his* marriage and *his* grief.²²⁶

With Lewis's own say as reported here by Hooper, does it mean that the autobiography or fiction dispute has been resolved once and for all? The answer is no. After all, even Lewis himself, whether as a literary author or critic, would agree that when dealing with a *literary* text, such as *A Grief Observed*, to draw a demarcation line between the autobiographical and the fictional is really superfluous. Such a line simply does not have to exist in literature. It is worth bringing up again what Lewis asserts in *The Allegory of Love* to the effect that the division between "an autobiographical document" and "a literary exercise" is a "fatal dichotomy" which a literary critic, e.g., of poetry, ought to avoid.²²⁷ As a matter of fact, within the textual world of literature, "life and letters are inextricably intermixed," according to Lewis. Then, perhaps we should ask: Isn't *A Grief Observed* a text of this sort? Or, is it taken as a *literary* piece of work at all?

Needless to say, Lewis's writing and publishing of this highly personalized book on bereavement and crisis of faith is far from intended to be self-expression, or in any

²²⁶ Walter Hooper, "C. S. Lewis: The Man and His Thought," *Essays on C. S. Lewis and George MacDonald: Truth, Fiction, and the Power of Imagination*, p. 22.

²²⁷ Cf. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, p. 22.

other forms of self-obsessive enterprises. In fact, as a literary critic Lewis is a persistent opponent of “the idea that literature is self-expression,”²²⁸ or that poetry is primarily the “expression of the poet’s personality”—a fallacious concept coined by Lewis as “the personal heresy.”²²⁹ The reason why this thinking is erroneous and misleading is because it disorients the reader from meeting with “a true text, a true world” and experiencing a successful and truly literary enterprise of a good poet. In his well-made introduction to Lewis’s 1939 publication, *The Personal Heresy*, the distinguished Lewis scholar, Professor Bruce L. Edwards, summarizes Lewis’s proposition as follows:

the successful poet’s achievement is to create an object that is universal not local, public not private, impersonal not personal, since thereby the poet allows the reader to see what the poet sees—and not the poet “himself” in some crude or unguarded fashion. Consequently, for Lewis, the critic’s role is neither to reconstruct the poet’s psyche between the lines of the poem nor to deconstruct the poem as concealed biography ...²³⁰

It is very clear that the text of a poem is a construction of art and therefore not supposed to be a mirror of the poet’s state of mind or selfhood. This notion about what a literary text *is*, or, how to regard the textuality of a literary work, can be applied to our reception of *A Grief Observed* as well. However subjective or *personal* this book is, in tone, in content and even in form, the subjectivity or personality should not be pointed to Lewis’s own not just because Lewis proclaimed he did not mean to write any autobiography. What Lewis *did* mean to do is to

²²⁸ Lewis, “Christianity and Literature,” *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories*, p.8.

²²⁹ This “label” later became the title of a publication, *The Personal Heresy* (1939), in which C. S. Lewis argued with E. M. W. Tillyard, a Milton scholar, over the issue about the connection between poetry and the poet’s personality and the related question about the proper office of the critic.

²³⁰ See *The C. S. Lewis Readers’ Encyclopedia*, p. 318.

textualize a particular predicament of a bereaved man at the edge of losing his faith based on his deeply felt absence of God. In other words, the writing itself is a literary attempt, which is, in itself, an act aimed at the “universal,” the “public” and the “impersonal” indeed.

On account of this, the unmistakable sense of subjectivity or trace of subjectivism most surely pertains to the text or the narrator *within* the text rather than C. S. Lewis himself. Lewis’s readers or critics or friends mostly tend to bypass this point too easily. Among them is Austin Farrer, himself a very close friend and reader of Lewis. Regardless of its literary qualities, Farrer adopts the most popular perspective to approach *A Grief Observed*, i.e., an autobiographical one. It is worth rethinking here Farrer’s association between this personal book of Lewis’s and *The Problem of Pain*, a highly intellectual book written twenty years earlier, of little personal touch but dealing with a similar topic—the problem of believing in a good God in the reality of pain:

A Problem of Pain? Surely not. How can we take *The Problem of Pain* seriously now that we have *A Grief Observed*? When his wife died, Lewis felt the reality about which he had so airily theorized and his theories were of no consolation or assistance in the hour of trial. He had to find the existential solution. . . . But Lewis’s aim is apologetic, and therefore pastoral. He knew his readers.²³¹

Comparing Lewis’s two books on the similar subject of suffering, Farrer is certainly right to highlight the individualistic and empirical significances of *A Grief Observed*, contrasted with the relatively general and theoretical qualities of the discursive work of *The Problem of Pain*. Moreover, in spite of his definite identification of the

²³¹ Austin Farrer, “The Christian Apologist,” in *Light on C. S. Lewis*, p. 31-33.

consolation-seeker in *A Grief Observed* with Lewis himself, Farrer's comments on how and for what Lewis wrestles with "his" experience of the problem of pain are rather meaningful for a literary consideration of the work. Firstly, he correctly points out the significant feature of Lewis's contemplation of the problem of pain in *A Grief Observed*—via an existential approach. With this keen observation of Farrer's, we could further inquire: How do we readers sense the intensely and subtly imparted existentialism? Isn't it conveyed through a particular way of expression, namely, the self-reflective, or if you like, autobiographical, writing of the *narrator*? Moreover, Farrer's insightfulness touches upon Lewis's awareness of his readers in close relation with his apologetic purpose of writing. No doubt, to write an apologetic work like *A Grief Observed*, Lewis must have his readers in mind. To put in another way, a book with apologetic intent is of course done and meant for its readers. That is to say, its concern and scope must be not merely subjective but also objective (if not universal), and definitely not simply private or personal, even if not wholly impersonal. With these mixed qualities, what else can the text of *A Grief Observed* be if not a piece of literature?

Basically, the following discussion treats *A Grief Observed* as a religious narrative, that is, as another text of Lewis's literary apologetics. To appreciate and examine its literariness, the best and most valid mode of reading is, of course, literary.²³² Therefore, the present study is primarily a literary investigation—specifically into the texture of the "autobiographical" / self-reflective writing of a suffering and doubting self *within* Lewis's *pseudo-* or *semi-*autobiographical book. Also, this study purports to explore the apologetic import embedded within this literary narrative. Noticeably, even in terms of its

²³² Pointing out the distinction between "literary and unliterary modes of reading," Lewis maintains in *An Experiment of Criticism* that to approach literary works, such as poetry, demands a literary mode of reading. See "Poetry," in *An Experiment of Criticism*, pp. 95-103.

apologetic signification, the narrator's self-reflective mode of thinking and writing still plays a very important, even indispensable part. This is actually not beyond our expectation of Lewis's apologetic literature, which is generally featured by the intermingling of the literary form and apologetic implication. Textually speaking, *A Grief Observed* is a book of autobiographically imparted apologetic. Aside from the topic of *personal* grief, the title of the book actually also hints at *how* such a topic is to be dealt with. The very notion of observation in the title suggests that the intertwined problem of grief and faith will be approached and tackled —through *introversive observation*, namely, a *self-reflective* mode of thinking. In view of this, this combined discussion, from both literary and apologetic points of view, means to consider thoroughly the narrative persona's attempt, with his probing pen, to look into and map out the particular landscape of his grief through the self-reflective writing of his heart.

That the *text* of the book could be compared with a *landscape* of “grief” is noted suggestively and somewhat pictorially in the beginning of the last chapter of *A Grief Observed*:

I thought I could describe a *state*; make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process. It needs not a map but a history, . . . there is something new to be chronicled every day. Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape. (76-77)

In this brief yet enriched and vivified description, it is gripping to find what the narrator himself experiences in grief and in writing about his grief. At the closing stage of his journal writing, the writer comes to realize that the emotion of sorrow, or the feeling of mental suffering, he has gone through is by nature not static but

dynamic. Equally unexpected to him is his verbal portrayal of the emotional experience—the text itself—which accordingly has undergone a historical instead of topographical *move*. In other words, what he self-consciously discovers here is, so to speak, a landscape of *dynamism*, in both empirical and textual senses. In view of this double discovery, it is manifest that the summing-up imagery of grief (like “a long winding valley”) is appropriately constructed to visualize such a landscape.

In terms of this, the task of interpreting the book, i.e., all these private and personal journals, should be oriented toward a twofold discussion of how such a dynamic landscape of grief is *situated* both within the mind of the experiencing subject and within the text of his experiential writing. This discussion, however, is not meant simply to look at the theme about the experience of grief and how it is packaged in a specific form of writing. Rather, the whole study is aimed at practicing a hermeneutical principle proposed by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911)—to understand a text through re-experiencing its “texture of inner life” that “comes fully into expression.” To investigate “the texture of writing” of Lewis’s book, this study aims to undertake multi-layered explorations: firstly, what is sensed and perceived, namely, the *materials* of the feeling and thinking mind, or the inward drama—the individual situatedness of the experience of grief; secondly, how the subjective experiences are rhetorically conveyed—the *nature* and particularity of its language; last but not the least, the significance of the self-conscious writer’s tendency to reflect upon his psyche and his writing—the interrelation between the *frame* of mind and the *structure* of writing.

Moreover, it would be wrong to assume that these references are separate elements irrelevant to one another. On the contrary, the texture of writing of the book is actually reinforced not only by the interpolation of each of these elements but also by the interplay among them. It is, in effect, the major character that makes A

Grief Observed a text of complexity rather than merely a “highly personal journal, or a “manifestation” of Lewis’s grief.²³³ As mentioned in the discussion above, the personal touch is indeed an essential and fundamental fabric of the text. However, the autobiographical point of view is yet to be intensified and integrated with other significant “fabrics,” such as psychological display and inquiry and along with it spiritual interrogation and reconciliation thereafter. Altogether they make up the tapestry of an extraordinary landscape of grief, one that is not simply autobiographically marked but also psychologically charted and spiritually (re-)shaped.

Thematically, the predominant motif of the overall text is apparently the problem of a bereaved man’s grief, which is such an overwhelming experience that it nearly shatters his faith. The whole book manifests how this emotionally afflicted man “confront[s] the depth of his despair” and consequently out of his troubled soul his personal journal discloses “a fascinating dialectic between his intense feelings on the one hand and his theological reasonings on the other,” as the critic, Thomas Talbott, sensibly remarks.²³⁴ It is, in some sense, centered upon such a war within that the psychology of grief is dramatized in depth within the text. Yet, this war within is also of complicated qualities in the sense that in addition to the spiritual wrestling with a staggering faith, the first and ongoing confrontation within the consciousness of the griever is between his emotional self and his rational mind.

Here and there in his journal, the disquieted writer bursts out with self-questioning observations on the overflow of his overpowering emotions and whimsical states of mind—a totally self-conscious act related to an internal conflict

²³³ In his reference to *A Grief Observed* collected in *The C. S. Lewis Readers’ Encyclopedia* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), Thomas Talbott holds Lewis’s book as a “highly personal journal,” which is “not so much an *account* of Lewis’s grief as it is a *manifestation* of it.” P. 193.

²³⁴ See also Thomas Talbott’s reference entry about *A Grief Observed* in *The C. S. Lewis Readers’ Encyclopedia*, p. 193.

between his feelings and his intellect.²³⁵ For instance, from the following internal monologue in the first chapter, we could overhear the cross-currents within his mind concerning such a confliction.

There are moments, most unexpectedly, when something inside me tries to assure me that I don't really mind so much, not so very much, after all. Love is not the whole of a man's life. I was happy before I ever met H. . . . People get over these things. Come, I shan't do so badly. One is ashamed to listen to this voice . . . Then comes a sudden jab of red-hot memory and all this 'commonsense' vanishes like an ant in the mouth of a furnace.

On the rebound one passes into tears and pathos. Maudlin tears. I almost prefer the moments of agony. These are at least clean and honest. But the bath of self-pity, the wallow, the loathsome sticky-sweet pleasure of indulging it—that disgusts me. (19-20)

Here, it is evident that the naked expression of his uncontrolled emotion of grief is entangled with some rational attempts to contend with the force of it. Also, between the lines of this passage, we can sense the tension between his willing indulgence in the agony of mourning and his intellectual reaction against such self-indulgence— a disgusting pleasure of wallowing in grief and self-pity. Obviously, at these moments when the emotion of grief seems to have the upper hand, the commonsensical defense mechanism does not appear to work very well; his rationality could not really manage to dictate the feeling and emotional self. As a result, the writer gripped by his passion of grief is inevitably losing solid foothold in his religious faith as well.

Indeed, in parallel with the tension between emotion and reason, his problem of faith is being developed into another even darker mental storm. It is a storm raging

²³⁵ The notion of mental “confliction” made here is correspondent with Thomas Talbott’s critical observation that “Lewis was fully conscious of the internal war raging between his intellect and his feelings.” See *The C. S. Lewis Readers’ Encyclopedia*, p. 193.

out of a spirit on the verge of being broken by the sorrow of his heart.²³⁶ This religious storm within his mind, not really unbelieving but helplessly coming to disbelieve in a Good God, is triggered by a desperate but unsatisfied need for consolation. Not incapable of psycho-analyzing himself so as to know that his doubting interrogation about “Where is God?” is really “one of the most disquieting symptoms” (21) of grief, the consolation-seeker, however, cannot help feeling thwarted by a strong sense of the void. The dispirited writer thus imagines:

But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become. There are no lights in the windows. It might be an empty house. Was it ever inhabited? It seemed so once. And that seeming was as strong as this. What can this mean? (22)

Such a despairing picture of an unresponsive or simply absent God bitterly and honestly reflects his feeling of desperation. On the other hand, in spite of this hopeless outlook, the repeated use of the word seem to some extent connotes that the whole picture is based on human speculation. In this sense, perhaps it is not the existence of God but the foundation of one’s personal faith that should arouse suspicion. Is it on his imaginative, or worse, his wishful mind that his faith in God is grounded? At this stage, the writer is too desperately wanting for consolation to undertake such a self-examination. In reality, the inward storm is simply further unleashed into a total disavowal of the goodness of God, at least for the time being.

²³⁶ Cf. Proverbs, 15:13: “by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.”

In view of the unbearable reality of human life, the man in his bitter grief targets God and makes a bombardment of criticisms:

If God's goodness is inconsistent with hurting us, then either God is not good or there is no God: for in the only life we know He hurts us beyond our worst fears and beyond all we can imagine. . . . I am more afraid that we are really rats in a trap. Or, worse still, rats in a laboratory. . . . Supposing the truth were 'God always vivisects'? . . . Time after time, when He seemed most gracious He was really preparing the next torture.
(44, 46-47)

Such vituperative comments about God can be understood as the outcry of a resentful sufferer whose viewpoint is psychologically twisted, which is later admitted by the writer himself with the hindsight derived from his journal writing. Yet, is it a purely *psychological* crisis of faith at all? Or is it a *logical* crisis, as John Beversluis proclaims in his book, *C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion*? Taking *A Grief Observed* as the autobiography of Lewis, Beversluis proclaims that the book testifies to the bankruptcy of the rational approach that Lewis used to emphatically espouse to understand the goodness of God. In the same vein, Beversluis further argues that what the famous rational apologist for Christianity underwent is the loss, if not of faith, then at least of a belief in faith's intelligibility."²³⁷ How truthful are these observations about the "crisis of faith" dramatized within *A Grief Observed*, about the fact that "faith's intelligibility" has become logically problematic to Lewis?

Actually, they ring more or less like partial judgments if we take into account the whole process in which the writer (not necessarily or exactly Lewis) within the text goes through his crisis of faith. Reading carefully into his turns of thinking, we

²³⁷ John Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 145.

would see that the mourner does not entirely cease to be a capable thinker and that to him faith is not absolutely unintelligible after all. On the contrary, he is, at least, still up to reflecting on all the nonsense in his mind preoccupied by his emotional “suspension of belief.” Right through the following passages we could witness the changed scene of the drama within—the crippled yet continually inquiring believer is striving to retrieve his intellect to struggle against his emotionally and spiritually stormy mind.

I wrote that last night. It was a yell rather than a thought. Let me try it over again. Is it rational to believe in a bad God? Anyway, in a God so bad as all that? The Cosmic Sadist, the spiteful imbecile? I think it is, if nothing else, too anthropomorphic. . . . Why do I make room in my mind for such filth and nonsense? Do I hope that if feeling disguises itself as thought I shall feel less? Aren't all these notes the senseless writings of a man who won't accept the fact that there is nothing we can do with suffering except to suffer it? . . . Feelings, and feelings, and feelings. Let me try thinking instead. From the rational point of view, what new factor had H's death introduced into the problem of the universe? What grounds has it given me for doubting all that I believe? (47, 50, 53)

In these fragments of introspection, the writer, now more reasonable, reflects on all the nonsense in his mind as well as in the writings at the previous period of dis-equilibrium when his rationality appeared to be intricately entangled with strong emotion. Presently, from a psychologically distanced position and a “rational point of view,” he attempts to disentangle thoughts from feeling and more importantly becomes able to re-situate the problem about the relationship between his experience of bereavement and his crisis of faith. Moreover, from his reflective and analytical language, we could sense the writer's endeavour to re-embrace his intellect, which

consequently makes him ready to undertake the task of self-inquiry. As he strives to exercise his rationality to pursue the truth about the reality of the universe, he at the same time inquires for the reality of his self. As a result, the writer's conscious appeal to retrieve his rational self—a purer thinking mind without being disturbed by the emotional feeling— becomes the crucial turning point to his rehabilitation in faith. The evidence that the writer's rational returning and his restoration of faith are actually closely related can definitely discredit the criticism that the book is a document showing the impossibility of re-affirming faith through rational thinking.

However, it is equally questionable to assume that Lewis is a thinker or believer who completely or simply relies on *reason* to establish his faith and understanding of life. Aside from the appeal to rationality as a counterbalance to feelings, Lewis also emphasizes the value of the authenticity of *experience* as a counterpoint to the importance of the validity of reasoning in human understanding. As Stephen Thorson sophisticatedly remarks in “‘Knowledge’ in C. S. Lewis’s Post-Conversion Thought: His Epistemological Method,” “Lewis believed experience brought one in *touch* with the reality of [the subjective world and the supernatural world], as opposed to reasoning which is *about* reality.”²³⁸ It follows that to Lewis, the rational Christian apologist or the narrative writer on grief, to acquire the real knowledge about oneself and about God, one must appeal both to reason and to experience; the two are and should be complementary to each other. What Lewis said about his conversion obviously corresponds to his epistemological principle: “I arrived where now I am, not by reflection alone, but by reflection on a particular recurrent experience. I am an empirical Theist. I have arrived at God by induction.”²³⁹

²³⁸ Stephen Thorson, “‘Knowledge’ in C.S. Lewis’s Post-conversion Thought: His Epistemological Method,” *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review*, vol. IX (Marion E. Wade Center of Wheaton College and Bookmakers Guild, Inc., 1988), p. 108.

²³⁹ R. L. Green and W. Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Harvest Paperback, 1976), p. 113.

Such correspondence can also be found in the text of *A Grief Observed*. It is perceivable that at the core of the writing of the journal are the writer's endeavours to solve the dialectic between his experience of powerful emotion and his intellectual exercise of reasoning primarily involving his Christian faith. In other words, what his internal struggles seek to achieve is integration of his empirical as well as emotional self with his rational and religious self. The need for pursuing such integration is basically in line with Lewis's clarification regarding what gives rise to one's loss of faith. In "Faith," one chapter in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis remarks that it "is not reason that is taking away my faith: on the contrary, my faith is based on reason. It is my imagination and emotions. The battle is between faith and reason on one side and emotion and imagination on the other."²⁴⁰ The "battle" Lewis describes here is actually a very close portrayal of the narrator's experience chronicled in *A Grief Observed*. As the narrator's confessional journal reveals, the subjective experience of traumatic feeling and the religious inquiry are intertwined in a more and more promising way firstly to recognize the truth about what he himself and his faith are really like, then to "arrive at God," and hopefully in the end to rebuild his faith, "not in imagination but in reality."

As far as the quality of his personal faith is concerned, it is noticeable that based on some logical induction related to his experience in real life, the writer comes to realize the vulnerability of his "imaginary faith." In a highly figurative way of speaking, the writer concludes that

If my house has collapsed at one blow, that is because it was a house of cards. . . . It has been an imaginary faith playing with innocuous counters labeled 'Illness,' 'Pain,' 'Death,' and 'Loneliness.' I thought I

²⁴⁰ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 139.

trusted the rope until it mattered to me whether it would bear me. Now it matters, and I find I didn't. . . . Nothing less will shake a man—at any rate a man like me—out of his merely verbal thinking and his merely notional beliefs. He has to be knocked silly before he comes to his senses. Only torture will bring out the truth. Only under torture does he discover it himself. . . . But then the Cosmic Sadist and Eternal Vivisector becomes an unnecessary hypothesis. (54-55)

Evidently, instead of keeping wrestling with onto-theological questions about “God or no God,” “a good God or the Cosmic Sadist” (54), the griever is now in a changed frame of mind, no longer centered on self-pity but oriented toward self-critique. As a result, the former religious disillusionment caused by his resentment in grief and thus disbelief in the goodness of God is replaced by a discovery of the true *face* of his faith—as vulnerable as “a house of cards” because of lacking sincerity and authenticity. Resonant with an Augustinian association of the “soul” with a “house” recorded in the great autobiographical book, *The Confessions*,²⁴¹ the very comparison of the nature of his faith to “a house of cards” here imbues the narrator’s self-reflective writing a discernibly deepened sense of confession. The reader is also reminded of Augustine’s self-deprecating outcry for salvation, emerging out of the recognition of his impiety of heart:

The house of my soul . . . lies in ruins; rebuild it. [I.5.6]
 For my mind is clouded by darkness and is far from your face. [I.17.27]
O God of hosts, turn us around and show us your face, and we shall be saved. For in whichever direction the soul of man turns, unless it turns to you, it is transfixed on things that cause pain. [4.10.15]

Augustine’s confession here lays bare the truth that it is really the darkness of the

²⁴¹ Augustine, *The Confessions* (London: Everyman Publishers plc, 2001, trans. & ed. Philip Burton). The following quotations of Augustine are derived from this version.

human mind that blocks the self from seeing God—a “pious” kind of self-awareness indeed which is also a true understanding of the personal problem of faith. This insight is poignantly echoed by Lewis’s self-analytical narrator in the midst of his struggle to get over the crisis of faith, to remain in faith in spite of the invisibility and silence of God. Also, it is reminiscent of the confession of Orual in *Till We Have Faces*, another autobiographical writer in Lewis’s texts. Toward the end of her almost life-long unbelief, the embittered and veiled queen receives an epiphany-like understanding that until her true face of being can be uncovered, no longer hidden from the god, others and even her self, the divine being as well as dwelling can become intelligible and visible. In a similar vein, the confessional writer in *A Grief Observed* acknowledges the fact that his experience of the collapse of faith, *in reality*, reflects the untruthfulness not of God but of his own faith, which is ruined by the darkness out of his own heart. As an act of mind, faith must be *existentially* grounded on an individual self’s state of mind. By the same token, it is only after the bereaved persona penetrates into his heart possessed by the passion of grief that he may come to share the pious insight of Augustine, who managed to see what the prodigal in the biblical parable sees—the truth about his own state of mind “full of darkness, and cut off from [God’s] face” (*The Confessions*, I.17.27).

With the awareness of the genuine face of his imaginary faith, the narrator indeed turns around gradually from being “transfixed” upon his “pain” and doubt toward the same good God. As we can read in the entry of his journal quoted above, the painfully grieving and doubting writer has changed his mind to such an extent that he even tries to see and designate torture as a blessing on the ground that without it he cannot come to the truth. It seems that the endeavour of his rational self has done a marvellous job indeed. The recuperation of his rational mind firstly leads him into self-analysis, then into self-realization and thence into a wonderful “leap of faith,”

which signifies not only an act of willingly suspending his disbelief but also a mind turning perceptive to what the ancient consoler, “Philosophy,” once helped Boethius (c.A.D. 475-525) to see, namely, the blessing of “self discovery through hardship.”²⁴²

How does such a “leap in faith” affect the writer’s self-reflective portrayal of a personal landscape of *grief*? In effect, the landscape itself has undergone a wonderful transformation into that of *faith*. In other words, the journey of grief has been turning into a *progressive pilgrimage* toward a truer faith as well as a wiser self—from disillusionment about the goodness of God to the remarkable enlightenment of taking his suffering in the brightest religious sense by associating grief with the blessed inhabitation of truth. Such a landscape is indeed full of unexpected bends. In some places, the writer picks up his old tone of rational apologist to further induct his theological reasoning. Of course, in the text that depicts a blended landscape of grief and faith, the voice of the rational thinker is naturally attenuated and mingled with the voice of the believer who is suffering from the torture of grief. In such a mixed and maybe too overtly apologetic tone, the writer describes the induction that guides him to reconsider the question about how belief in God and the suffering would be correlated:

But suppose that what you are up against is a surgeon whose intentions are wholly good. The kinder and more conscientious he is, the more inexorably he will go on cutting. . . . But is it credible that such extremities of torture should be necessary for us? Well, take your choice. The tortures occur. If they are unnecessary, then there is no God or a bad one. If there is a good God, then these tortures are necessary. For no even moderately good Being could possibly inflict or permit them if they weren’t. (60-61)

²⁴² Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976, trans. V. E. Watts), p. 139.

The induction recorded here marks, first of all, a renewed perspective on the image or the nature of God—in a transformed picture of a good-intentioned conscientious surgeon. Besides, it serves to locate an important signpost showing the fact that his reasoning mind does not fail the grieving writer after all. What is also noteworthy is his suggestion that the key to the theological question about the relationship between God and human sufferings is a matter of choice. In the face of cruel reality of bereavement, the writer now tries to choose to believe in a benevolent and conscientious surgeon God, which for him is a totally *free* and rational decision.

Such an appeal to choose faith (instead of fall, meaning the choice of self rather than God)²⁴³ so as to come to terms with the paradox of the faith in a good God and the real experience of suffering is in line with the solution to the question of theodicy suggested by Lewis in *The Problem of Pain*. To make sense of a good God who allows his creatures to suffer pain, Lewis argues that it is better to have an omnipotent God who would not prevent evil at the cost of human freedom, since without human's free will, real love and real goodness are impossible. Clearly, Lewis's apologetic argumentation in tackling the problem of pain is grounded on the doctrine of human freedom / will. The same approach is detectable in the context of the bereaved griever's problem of faith in the goodness of God. In *The Problem of Pain* or *A Grief Observed*, as in Lewis's other religious narratives, such as *The Great Divorce* and *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis consistently and emphatically recommends the momentous role of human choice / will in knowing and experiencing divine goodness. The doubting persona in grief, for example, deeply desiring consolation yet thwarted by the sense of God's absence, finally copes with his crisis of faith by re-shaping his

²⁴³ Cf. Lewis's *The Problem of Pain*, Ch. 5, "The Fall of Man." Pp. 63-85.

thinking mind as well as re-assuring his feeling heart toward believing again in a good God—most crucially out of the choice of his willing self.

The analogy of the all-intentioned surgeon,” a metaphor for God repeatedly used in Lewis’s religious writings, indicates the suffering self’s attempt at re-confirming his belief in the goodness of God. More importantly, it anticipates a spiritual victory attained through the cooperation of reason and faith over the temptation dictated by emotion and (unfaithful) imagination. In view of the treatment of faith as a mental, precisely cognitive, act in collaboration instead of conflict with the exercise of human reason, Lewis clearly follows the epistemological tradition founded by Thomas Aquinas (1224?-1274), one of the greatest theologians since the Middle Ages. According to St. Aquinas, in his well-known *Summa Theologiae*, there are two channels for humans to acquire knowledge, namely, divine revelation and natural reason, which actually co-work synthetically, not necessarily antithetically, to lead the human mind to the knowledge of God. In this sense, it is definitely a sensible move for Lewis’s persona to resort to a rational approach to his problem of faith—via thinking it over again to make his reasoning mind compatible with the revealed knowledge of God, which can also be understood as an act of choice, both rational and faithful, to reintegrate the self in suffering with the belief in a good God.

As regards the momentousness of human choice in giving assent to the compatibility between the experience of suffering and the goodness of God, the key point that makes such a choice of faith rationalistic, at least for the narrator in the teeth of grief, lies in the very association of God, or Providence, with “a kind and conscientious surgeon.” Certainly, this association is not a mere rationalization welcomed and also reiterated by C. S. Lewis, given the fact that his Christian apologetics is notably tinged with rationalism. In fact, Lewis’s apologetic or literary utilization of such a metaphor, or analogical imagination, of the nature of God could

find a classical and philosophical echo in Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* (AD524), in which God is described as "the mind's guide and physician" or as "Providence [who] stings some people . . . by hard fortune to strengthen their virtues of mind."²⁴⁴ More precisely, Lewis's perception of suffering as an instrument of "discipline and correction" from Divine Providence is greatly indebted to Boethius' Christian Platonist views on human life and Divine Being. In Boethius' world-classic book, the Lady Philosophy's scheme for consoling the human self in adversity is advising the sufferer the significance of, in the translator V. E. Watts' phrases, "the turning of the gaze from what is false to what is true and the realization that God is the supreme good."²⁴⁵ Although Lewis's bereaved sufferer has got no consoler like Lady Philosophy, he is, however, aided by his reason to make logical induction and thereby draw the religious conclusion about the falsity of his imaginary faith and the function and usefulness of tortures for bringing up the truth about his own self and about the ultimate goodness of God. In addition to reason that serves to bring light and, in a sense, consolation to the dark-minded griever and doubter, the exercise of *freedom* or "moral will"²⁴⁶ to choose faith and suspension of all emotional blasphemy plays another key role in relieving both the intensity of the emotion of grief and the tension between the griever and his religion. Lewis's highlighting of free choice as a determinant factor in resolving the crisis of faith is undoubtedly

²⁴⁴ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, p. 138-139.

²⁴⁵ See V. E. Watts' "Introduction" to his translation of *The Consolation of Philosophy*. P. 22.

²⁴⁶ Concerning the emphasis upon the "moral will" in C. S. Lewis's "apologetic theology," Austin Farrer, in his famous article on Lewis, "The Christian Apologist," criticizes that Lewis, particularly in *The Problem of Pain*, thinks of man "too narrowly as a moral will" and the relation between man and God "too narrowly as a moral relation." Farrer counter-argues Lewis's "overbalanced" moralistic apologetics by asserting that "pain cannot be related to the will of God as an evil wholly turned into a moral instrument." Farrer's critique, however, seems to miss the point when put in the context of *A Grief Observed*, wherein Lewis quite convincingly treats the will to belief as the decisive turning point for the person in grief to rehabilitate his belief in a good God. Rather than simply making association (not exactly equation) between "pain" and "the will of God" or between "evil" and "a moral instrument," Lewis means, more possibly, to underscore the vital influence of man's choice—to believe or not to believe—upon either his existential predicament or his relation with God. See *The Light on C. S. Lewis*, pp. 23-43.

resonant with the wise admonition of Boethius's "Philosophy," which makes very clear to the ill-fated and confused prisoner that "[i]t is in your own hands what fortune you wish to shape for yourself."²⁴⁷

Besides figuring out the fact that either turning "away from the false to the true" (regarding his faith) or the believing in a good God despite the presence of pain is significantly a matter of choice, the self-reflective and more sober writer also engages himself in probing deeply into his own *psyche*. In other words, he does not simply rely on his *will* to consolidate his faith at crisis; rather, his retrieved rationality also makes him ready to journey farther into the depth of his state of mind which is an unmistakable cause of his crisis of faith. These two undertakings in grappling with the problem of faith, namely, logical induction and psycho-inspection, actually consist in the methodology of judging the validity of assumptions which Lewis asserts elsewhere: "You must find out on purely logical grounds, which of them do, in fact, break down as arguments. Afterwards, if you like, go on and discover the psychological causes of the error."²⁴⁸ This is exactly the very methodology the writing of *A Grief Observed* is involved with. Within the text of recording what he observes in his perplexing situation of living "each day thinking about living each day in grief" (26), as his tongue-twisting words expresses, the writer applies the method of combining logical and psychological examinations to judge and analyze his own mind. In view of this, the writer does not do this journal writing simply for the sake of getting somewhat outside of his subjective experience but he goes further with his reasoning power to endow his writing with self-analysis on a psychological basis. The experience of writing itself thus becomes an introversive undertaking of *interpreting* the depth psychology of his inner life in grief. So far as the text is

²⁴⁷ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, p. 144.

²⁴⁸ Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 273.

concerned, this analytical aspect serves to render the texture of the writing psychologically profound.

One of the examples of his analytical mode of thinking and writing can be seen in the writer's *observation of* the change in his mood. Looking closely into his feeling mind, the writer tries to grapple with its state of confusion.

Still, there's no denying that in some sense I 'feel better,' and with that comes at once a sort of shame, and a feeling that one is under a sort of obligation to cherish and foment and prolong one's unhappiness. . . . Partly, no doubt, vanity. We want to prove to ourselves that we are lovers on the grand scale, tragic heroes; not just ordinary privates in the huge army of the bereaved. . . . I think there is also a confusion. We don't really want grief, in its first agonies, to be prolonged; nobody could. But we want something else of which grief is a frequent symptom with the thing itself. . . . What we want is to live our marriage well and faithfully through that phase too. . . . We will be still married, still in love. Therefore we shall still ache. But we are not at all—if we understand ourselves—seeking the aches for their own sake. (71-72)

With his rational and clearer mind, he manages to probe into the complicated feeling of his bereavement and gain insight into the psychology of the bereaved. It is indeed extremely insightful to be able to detect what underlies his ostensible indulgence in grief is a hidden desire to keep intact the sense of love and connection with the dead. This kind of self-indulgence could be viewed as, so to speak, a complex of bereavement. His analytical observation is especially penetrating as he objectively looks at his personal predicament and deconstructs such a complex by criticizing himself as one pathetic bereaved man driven by his vanity to be addicted to the feeling of unhappiness with a subconscious motive to heighten the tragic sense of bereavement. With such acute self-understanding and self-criticism, the grieving

writer becomes more and more relieved, for from now on he can both stop deceiving himself and unload the emotional burden of grief. The acuteness of his analysis and judgment about the psychological symptoms of bereavement imbues the texture of his writing with a certain dissectional acuity. By degrees, we have read to see the writer come to acquire a mind of clarity.

Owing to his conscious and rational efforts to untangle emotion and thoughts, the writer gradually recovers his equilibrium. As a result, the inner journey he has been embarking on to make sense of his grief takes a turn for the better and brighter prospect, mentally and spiritually. It is, in some sense, like a journey out of the darkness of Gethsemane into the lightness of the promised land where not only his faith but also his spiritual sensibility would eventually be restored and renewed. Regarding this refreshed and transformed situation, the writer notes: "It was as if the lifting of the sorrow, removed a barrier" (62). Once the "barrier" is removed, that is, without tears to blur his eyes, or the passion of grief to blind him, faith becomes intelligible again because he has regained his vision of clarity, which enables him to receive. To put in another way, as long as those misleading psychological errors as well as the emotional causes to the spiritual deadlock could be uncovered and removed, the spiritual breakthrough would follow. The landscape of grief in the writing accordingly moves forward (or "upward"?) to the turn for a vision of spirituality. With a renewed spirit within, the writer becomes equipped with new, or perhaps restored capacity to interpret the words of God meditatively and self-reflectively.

You can't in most things, get what you want if you want it too desperately . . . 'Them as asks' (at any rate 'as asks too importunately') don't get. Perhaps can't.

And so, perhaps, with God. I have gradually been coming to feel that the door is no longer shut and bolted. Was it my own frantic need that slammed it in my face? . . . Perhaps your own reiterated cries deafen you to the voice you hoped to hear.

On the other hand, 'Knock and it shall be opened.' But does knocking mean hammering and kicking the door like a maniac? And there's also 'To him that hath shall be given.' After all, you must have a capacity to receive, or even omnipotence can't give. Perhaps your own passion temporarily destroys the capacity. (63-64)

It is evident that the writer has come to acknowledge his former mistakes in dealing with God through reading and digesting the biblical messages. From the passage quoted above, somewhat in the tone of the edifying apologist, we could see the bereaved self has pulled himself out of the mire of grief with the aid of his reasoning capacity and his religious perceptiveness that cooperated to lead him into a rehabilitated state of spirit and mind. In fact, the capability to make sense of his predicament does play a significant role in his progressive reconciliation with God, which in turn freshens up his faith and his perception for brooding over more truth about reality, the reality of his self, of God, and even of the dead. That is why in the end of his writing, the writer could arrive at the hopeful prospect that "all manner of things shall be well," which ultimately is far from an empty promise but a spiritual reward to this fascinatingly capable thinker and receptive mind. .

A perceptive *interpreter* of both his miserable experiences and biblical messages, the narrator in grief, through writing of his personal Gethsemane, walks through and also grows wiser out of, as it were, the darkest valley of his emotional and religious life. Throughout *A Grief Observed*, the interpolation of those blissful and insightful *observations* into his sincere account of his gloomiest feelings and thoughts indeed makes the whole text itself a *glowing* landscape. Through reading, we too enter into

the space of such a landscape and share the light he gains from his lessons that he believes omnipotence intends him to learn from the very experience of bereavement, a trial (70) rather than a torture from God. What this trial means to him, above all, is to give him the opportunity to know the real quality of his imaginary faith in God and his egoistic love for his wife. Bereavement, in one sense, is just for God to knock down his “card-castle about both” so that he could know the very truth. The suffering experience as well as the crisis of faith itself thus becomes a meaningful blessing, indeed a gift of grace, for it turns out to be the turning point that leads him to a revival of faith. C. S. Lewis’s manifestation of such a personalized landscape of grief is, without doubt, apologetically meaningful. Though conveyed in the mode of subjective journal writing, the intent to objectify the personal struggles in pain and in crisis of faith so as to make defence for Christian belief is still largely perceptible to the readers.

On a private occasion, Lewis once explained how this book is structured to serve its apologetic aim—on the basis of the pattern of journeying demonstrated in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*: “You go down and down and down. Then, as in Dante, when you hit the bottom and pass Lucifer’s waist you go *up* to a defence of God’s goodness.”²⁴⁹ Lewis’s narrator indeed undergoes a, so to speak, rebounding journey—setting out by plunging himself deep into the overwhelmingly dark passion of grief and doubt, then with the help of rational, self-analytical thinking gradually pulling himself out of the all-time low in his emotion and faith, and ending up with peace of mind and the enlightened recognition of the hidden blessing and divine grace in suffering. Through such a downward and upward journey, Lewis’s persona ultimately encounters the apologetic truth that not only reveals, on the existential level, the

²⁴⁹ This quotation of Lewis is derived from the report of Walter Hooper, in his essay, “C. S. Lewis: The Man and His Thought,” collected in *Essays on C. S. Lewis and George MacDonald: Truth, Fiction, And The Power of Imagination*, p. 22.

infirm, even false faithfulness all belonging to the human believer but also testifies, on the religious level, to the “constant” goodness of God, in whom lies the eternal and victorious power to turn everything into good. Lewis’s portrayal of the journey invested with such apologetic significance can actually be viewed as a literary manifestation of the following discourse of Kierkegaard, the Christian and existentialist edifier in the early Nineteenth Century, around the peak of the Age of Crisis of Faith:

When sorrow casts its shadow over our lives, when despondency veils our sight, when the clouds of anxiety take God away from before our eyes, then sounds the apostolic warning, that with God there is no shadow of turning. . . . That which he emphasizes is that as God’s all-powerful hand made everything good, so He, the Father of lights, still constant, makes everything good in every moment, everything into a good and perfect gift for everyone who has the heart to humble himself, heart enough to be confident.²⁵⁰

In this edifying yet also poetically conveyed passage, it is evident that Kierkegaard grounds an apologetic understanding of the reality of sorrow upon his faithful interpretation of the biblical admonition regarding the nature of God and the right spirit in face of adversity. In the same vein, Lewis’s autobiographical persona, when capable of reasoning like the rational apologist Lewis himself, also bases his rethinking of his own frustrating experience of the silence and absence of God on the teaching in the biblical text. Being perceptive once again to the biblical revelation about the Being of God, along with the recognition of his own problematic faith, the writer ultimately manages to get over his crisis.

²⁵⁰ Kierkegaard, *Edifying Discourses: A Selection* (London: Collins, 1958, ed. Paul L. Holmer), p. 54.

Yet, with all its apologetic significance, the truth that the narrator journeys into, in effect, is not simply religiously but also psychologically significant. “With [his] own instrument” (70), that is, his writing pen, he tries conscientiously to dig down into his widower-hood to explore its meaning as much as he can. Thereafter, he discovers that all his moans and groans are revealing evidence not just of his inauthentic faith but also of his self-centered love. At the epiphany-like moment, he questions himself: “What sort of a lover am I to think so much about my affliction and so much less about hers? Even the insane call, ‘Come back,’ is all for my own sake” (58). The awareness of his own egotism serves to shift the focus of his writing as well as of contemplation more away from himself, more toward his beloved wife. Reciprocally, the shifting moves the writer further out of his agonies for her death and into the blissful sense of intimacy and the enjoyment of love in their marriage, which for him goes on even after her death.

Becoming least absorbed in self-pity, the mourning writer enters into his exceptional and illuminating understanding of bereavement:

bereavement is a universal and integral part of our experience of love. It follows marriage as normally as marriage follows courtship or as autumn follows summer. It is not a truncation of the process but one of its phases; not the interruption of the dance, but the next figure. We are ‘taken out of ourselves’ by the loved one while she is here. Then comes the tragic figure of the dance in which we must learn to be still taken out of ourselves though the bodily presence is withdrawn, to love the very Her, and not fall back to loving our past, or our memory, or our sorrow, or our relief from sorrow, or our own love. (67-68)

Such a wonderfully insightful definition of bereavement is, in itself, a telling signpost that the bereaved writer’s receptive capacity has nearly grown to its culmination;

without doubt, he has finally become receptive to her death, in a peaceful mind. His is also a mind capable of transcending his predicament of widowerhood through developing quite sagaciously his own idea of matrimonial love which should last even when “one or other dies” (67). The essence of love or a marital union, in his conception, comprehends simultaneously a certain kind of self-denial and a full recognition of the “otherness,” “the full reality” (73) of the beloved one. The whole understanding of matrimony is packaged metaphorically as a kind of “dance,” which carries a tragic undertone and a mixed sense of beauty and sublimity.

The more perfect the intimacy of matrimony is, the more intense the sense of loss is felt by the bereaved one, for whom both can be beyond description, or at least beyond expression of any ordinary language. The way Lewis articulates the matrimonial relationship between him and his now passed-away wife shows, indeed, the particularity of his language.

One flesh. Or, if you prefer, one ship. The starboard engine has gone. I, the port engine, must chug along somehow till we make harbour. Or rather, till the journey ends. How can I assume a harbour? A lee shore, more likely, a black night, a deafening gale, breakers ahead—and any lights shown from the land probably being waved by wreckers. Such was H.’s landfall. Such was my mother’s. I say their landfall; not their arrivals.

(50-51)

In a fascinatingly effective manner, the writer creates a metaphoric space for his imaginary vision of his bereavement and her death to inhabit. Together with its highly suggestive diction, the metaphoric force makes the passage read like a prose poem. In fact, the language Lewis employs here to convey his metaphorical imagination concerning marriage and death is fittingly informed by his ideas of poetic

language, which is a real medium of information by Lewis's definition. According to Lewis explication in the essay, "The Language of Religion," "poetic language" possesses remarkable powers "to use factors within our experience so that they become pointers to something outside our experience—as two or more roads on a map show us where a town that is off the map must lie."²⁵¹ Moreover, in the same article, Lewis proclaims that the "very essence of our life as conscious beings . . . consists of something which cannot be communicated except by hints, similes, metaphors."²⁵² Based on these theoretical ideas, we can see why the "poetic language" is such a particularly effective medium for the writer to transport the essence of matrimony and the deep sense of loss in his desperate experience of bereavement, not to mention the incomprehensible, even unimaginable condition of afterlife. Specifically, the bonds of matrimony and the situation of their parting are subtly and vividly embodied by the complete set of imagery—the voyage of one ship. Rhetorically and aesthetically, such highly informative imagery indeed renders the texture of the writing poetically imaginative.

Perhaps, the autobiographical text presents a more enriched drama because of the added dimension of spirituality, also an important element underscoring the close relationship between his faith and his life-experience of grief. Comparing his widower-hood as an "incomplete ship," or a "one-legged man" (71), the persistently and capably truth-seeking writer, however, is no spiritual cripple at all, otherwise at last he would never possess the seeing eye and the tremendously sensitive feeling mind that prepare him for the most *mystical* experience of transcendence, the climatic encounter with the very reality of H., his dead wife. It is an utterly emotionless encounter, with a pure and complete sense of intimacy, transcending all the earthly

²⁵¹ Lewis, "The Language of Religion," *The Seeing Eye and Other Selected Essays from Christian Reflections*, p. 177.

²⁵² Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 183.

senses of emotion, totally beyond his aspiration and imagination.

Just the impression of her *mind* momentarily facing my own. . . .
Not at all like a rapturous reunion of lovers. . . . Not that there was any
'message'—just intelligence and attention. No sense of joy or sorrow.
No love even, in our ordinary sense. No un-love. . . . so business-like.
Yet there was an extreme and cheerful intimacy. An intimacy that had not
passed through the senses or the emotions at all. . . . The dead could be
like that; sheer intellects. (90-91)

This heavenly moment is perhaps the most rewarding experience for a man in his bereavement who has trained his emotion and overcome his grief through the strength of his intellect and from his religious belief. In other words, he has become most blessed "with a growth that is from God" (Colossians 2:19). The extremely joyful yet absolutely unemotional exchange of intimacy between the living and the dead that the writer tastes or foretastes in this mystical moment evidences one significant aspect of his growth in God—from self-indulgence in the grief for *his* loss of the beloved wife to a self-emptied, that is, selfless, love.

In other words, the whole experience of the transcendental intimacy signifies the double changes in the writer, both as a Christian mourner and as a lover. One recalls Mother Julian of Norwich's revelatory vision regarding the will of God for His children who suffer from bereavement. According to her vision, "it is not God's will that we dwell on the painful feelings, and grieve and mourn over them. He wants us to let go of them quickly, and hold on to his endless joy."²⁵³ In terms of this, the writer may be said to have conducted God's will—by letting go his self-willed grief and self-centered love and as a result embracing the joy that is indeed endless and

²⁵³ Julian of Norwich (c.1342 - c.1416), *Revelations of Divine Love* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987, ed. Halcyon Backhouse with Rhona Pipe), p. 35.

limitless, for it is, in nature, heavenly and eternal, transcending either earthly emotion or mortality. In addition to such transference from dwelling in grief to inhabiting trans-mortal and trans-temporal joy, we can also perceive a mark of self-transcendence in Lewis's persona in regard to love. As put by the narrator himself, the experience of intimacy, or, the mind-and-mind communion of a transcendental order, transcends any ordinary sense of love, while it is also paradoxically no "un-love." To understand the paradoxical nature of this love, the exhortation given by "George MacDonald" within the fantasy of *The Great Divorce* is tremendously illuminating. On love in relation to bereavement, the redeemed soul of "MacDonald" instructs the ghost of "Lewis": "love, as mortals understand the word, isn't enough: Every natural love will rise again and live forever in this country [i.e., Heaven]: but none will rise again until it has been buried" (*The Great Divorce*, 105). That is to say, the very means for human love / "natural love" to survive mortality, namely, to be revived in eternity, is to *die* first. What does the death of "natural love" mean, in the context of the narrator's bereavement as well as Christian belief? Firstly, it is related not to the annihilation of love itself but the annihilation of the self involved with love. In other words, to have his natural love buried, the narrator's self must die first; he must learn not to love his own self-love but to love *selflessly*. Besides, he also needs to really let his beloved go. Otherwise, in his subjective mind, how can he meet with her, who was gone and now lives in "the other world," and taste that mystical moment of intimacy full of love of a supernatural and divine order?

That the bereaved narrator has really let his dead wife go can be evidenced by the very ending of his journal. No longer holding on to self-centered love or the state of mind darkened by the unreligious passion of grief, the self-reflective writer ends his inward journey with a most peaceful and hopeful note, which is about his new understanding not just of himself but also of her: "How wicked it would be, if we

could, to call the dead back! She said not to me but to the chaplain, ‘I am at peace with God.’ She smiled, but not at me. *Pio si tornò all’ eternal Fontana*” (94). Now, at the end of the whole journey through his personal grief, the mourner has indeed come to a state of mind and being that can understand and even share his wife’s peacefulness—whether in the face of death or in front of God. The final words, “All manner of things shall be well,” directly derived from Mother Julian of Norwich’s *Revelations of Divine Love*, are fully reflective of what a renewed creature this journal writer once gripped by the intense passions of grief and doubt has been turned into in or by faith. Evidently, the whole process of writing down and living through his predicaments of grief has turned out to be not merely a psychologically triumphant attempt to defend his self “against total collapse” (75). Ultimately, it signifies a spiritual triumph that transforms the inward battlefield of the self into a temple of *real* faith for the immanence of the Supreme Good and the reality of divine love to occupy.

As readers, we do not know, nor can we imagine, like Lewis’s persona, if his dead wife does live through Purgatory in her afterlife. Yet, re-visiting the landscape of grief laid out in his writing, we are allowed, to a great extent, to witness both the restoration of his psychological self and the regeneration of his spiritual life after a fascinating journey through the purgatory of bereavement in the real life. More than that, through reading, we are actually, in some sense, engaged with the lived journey taking place within or emerging from the text. That is to say, we are *hermeneutically* involved in the autobiographical narrator’s businesses either of making sense of his personal experience of grief or of drawing out a landscape of it. To be more specific, our hermeneutical journey is made as we attempt to *understand*, even to re-live, the experiences of the autobiographical narrator who journeys to pursue (religious) meaning and ultimately discover the reality of his faith and self. It follows that the

readers in the process of understanding, that is, interpretation,²⁵⁴ also participate in the writerly experience, which is to a large extent the same as the business the narrator undertakes all along.

Yet, in the matter of searching for meaning in the experience of the landscape of grief *in* the text, the readership does not pertain to us, the *outside* readers alone. In fact, as we readers “outside the text” are engaged with the “writerly experience,” so does the narrator, or the writer “*within* the text,” of this particular landscape partake in the “readerly experience”²⁵⁵ (of his own writing). As the author of the first-person account of the journey, the narrator himself ought to be regarded and indeed is acting as the first reader of the / his text. It is actually one of the conclusive observations made in the discussion above that without both of the engagements or exercises, i.e. self-reflective writing *and* reading, the narrator cannot come to realize what the experience of grief means to him objectively. Nor can he, indeed, experience as we do the texture—not simply the “outer form / reality” (referred to his life-experience of bereavement and grief) but more importantly the “inner form / reality”²⁵⁶ (concerning

²⁵⁴ According to Gadamer, in *Truth and Method*, “understanding is always interpretation.” See p. 274.

²⁵⁵ According to Bruce L. Edwards in the entry written for *The C. S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia*, C. S. Lewis changed his critical emphasis from strong opposition to the subjectivism inherent in the psychological and biographical criticism of literary works to the less objectivist principle of reading highlighting the “interplay between the reader and the text,” which is expounded by Edwards as “readerly experience, that is, a primary confrontation with a textual world offered by a real self.” Moreover, Edwards rightly observes that this advanced notion about “readerly experience” in Lewis’s critical thinking can be applied to both readers of literature and “the author who ‘discovers’ the meaning of his work and the presence of his intentions by composing the work,” such as, Edwards points out, what Lewis’ last novel, *Till We Have Faces*, purports to portray, namely, the significance of the heroine’s “readerly experience” in the process of her “autobiographical” writing. See p. 319.

²⁵⁶ The two distinctive ideas are appropriated from the introduction of Schleiermacher’s theory of “inner and outer form” made by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), a modern theorist of hermeneutics and also a celebrated biographer and true student of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834)—“the father of modern hermeneutics.” In Dilthey’s article, “The Development of Hermeneutics” (1900), Schleiermacher’s ingenious conceptions about the only two interpretative methods to approach a text, i.e., “grammatical interpretation” and “psychological interpretation; the latter, Dilthey explains, “starts with penetrating the inner creative process and proceeds to the outer and inner form of the work and from there to a further grasp of the unity of all his works in the mentality and development of their author.” Schleiermacher’s notion of “the outer and inner form” together with the idea of “psychological interpretation” is noteworthy and relevant here because the present interpretation of *A Grief Observed* is also very much psychological-based, purporting to probe into the narrator’s inward journey toward the reality of self and faith. The quotation of Dilthey is derived from David E.

the selfhood of the “author”)—of his writing, which *forms* the very “landscape of grief” emerging out of *the* text on the one hand and *transforms* his being on the other. Interestingly, the self-reflective narrator’s inter-mixed engagements with writing and “readerly experience” to an extent parallel the readers’ joint businesses in understanding the text—we read and interpret *as the writer* in order to relive textuality and (re)construct meaning. Such a parallel is pointedly stated by the German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey, as a fundamental hermeneutical situation, that is, “[r]eceptivity and creativity cannot be separated.”²⁵⁷ In terms of the overlap or interchangeability between reading and writing, does it mean that the reader, after undergoing the whole process of “observing” and “confronting” the text as the self-reflective narrator does, is “transformed” as well? In what ways? To what extent?

These are perhaps questions only the reader him- or her-self can answer. Also, it is highly probable that the answer(s) may vary with each individual reader, as every single act of reading as well as every existential and personal being is different in one way or another. However, the paradoxical truth about reading or understanding or even existence itself is that every individual, whether playing the part of reader or writer or both, is by no means an absolutely isolated island but actually shares some common ground with other fellow humans. To grasp the commonality shared *universally* by (human) readers across ages and cultures, one needs not go to the level of understanding as intangibly deep as the “collective unconscious” theorized in Jung’s anthropological psychology. There is, instead, a relatively commonsense explanation provided by hermeneutical ideas, such as Dilthey’s notion about the

Klemm’s *Hermeneutical Inquiry Volume I: The Interpretation of Texts* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986), p. 104. See also David Jasper’s concise but pointed introduction to Dilthey’s hermeneutics under the influence of Schleiermacher in his 2004 book, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press). P. 95-97.

²⁵⁷ See Dilthey’s “The Development of Hermeneutics.” *Hermeneutical Inquiry*, p.102.

“lived experience” common to all human existence, or simply “human nature,” which transcends the boundaries set by time or cultural differences and therefore “makes common speech and understanding among men possible.”²⁵⁸ Of course, awareness of a “common human nature” may explain human selfhood in general terms but still insufficient for specific, if not full, grasp of the truth about the human *self* as an individual being. For better and genuine self-understanding as well as valid interpretation, one must live the inevitable tension between universality and individuality, just as any interpreter in order to gain holistic comprehension of a text cannot but remain situated within the “hermeneutical circle,”²⁵⁹ which is essentially a dialectical relationship between the particular and the general. Based on this universal principle of understanding, it is inferable that the moment one “confronts” a text, which according to Dilthey’s definition is the “written record of human existence,”²⁶⁰ one already plunges into the experience of the meaningful tension that can yield not only understanding but also a transformation of the self. As to why and how the self of the reader may undergo transformation through the text, Gadamer offers illuminating insights in his masterwork on hermeneutics, *Truth and Method*. The text, or, “the work / play of art,” Gadamer proclaims, “has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience changing the person experiencing it,” for the very experience of the text entails the inquiry for what is true or “how true it is, i.e. to what extent one knows and recognizes something and oneself.” Moreover, Gadamer asserts that to be transformed out of the experience of “the play of art,” the player has to “lose himself in his play.”²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Dilthey, *Ibid.* p. 103. See also David Jasper’s introduction to Dilthey’s hermeneutics, in *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics*, p. 96.

²⁵⁹ Viewed as a guiding principle of text interpretation, the “hermeneutic circle,” in Schleiermacher’s terms, is about “the continual interplay between the particular parts of the text and its complete whole,” as well phrased in David Jasper’s *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics*, p. 86.

²⁶⁰ Dilthey, “The Development of Hermeneutics,” p. 95.

²⁶¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 92.

All these hermeneutical insights, especially Gadamer's idea of transformation regarding the *redemption* the autonomous being of play / text can work upon the player / reader, are tremendously worthwhile and stimulating thoughts for the self-reflection of our own. Indeed, if we do journey with the narrator through the living landscape of his grief and crisis of faith, which means not only intellectually observing it from outside but also *existentially* entering into it even at the cost of the autonomy of our own selves, we must also share the blessed experience of catharsis the narrator derives from his own text. Ultimately, we both gain light from the true being of the text for some truer, if not absolutely true, understanding of our existential relationship with others we think we love, with God who we find is good and love even in this world of pain, with our own selfhood that cannot regain integrity without experiencing the taste of death to receive the redemption—in faith and from the text. The whole experience of the landscape of grief displayed in *A Grief Observed* thus leads us ultimately into the readerly experience C. S. Lewis describes in his last book on literary criticism, *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961). As we can see in the quotation below, Lewis's views about good readership are quite in line with Gadamer's sagacious hermeneutics regarding the dynamic interaction between self and text.

Good reading, therefore, though it is not essentially an affectional or moral or intellectual activity, has something in common with all three.
 The primary impulse of each is to maintain and aggrandize himself. The secondary impulse is to go out of the self, to correct its provincialism and heal its loneliness. In love, in virtue, in the pursuit of knowledge, and in the reception of the arts, we are doing this. Obviously this process can be described either as an enlargement or as a temporary annihilation of the self. But that is an old paradox; 'he that loseth his life shall save it'. . . .
 Here, as in worship, . . . I transcend myself; and am never more myself

than when I do.²⁶²

From this passage, it is observable that what really concerns Lewis, a devoted literary critic and writer as well as a committed Christian, is ultimately less about how to read than about how to *be*. To some extent, our *textual* experience of his religious narratives, such as this self-reflective and transforming text on grief and faith, partakes of such existential purpose and significance. We, indeed, seem to undergo the paradoxical moment of self-experience—getting lost into the text from the outset and getting out at last with a renewed and redeemed self.

²⁶² Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 138, p.140-141.

Conclusion

The interpretation offered above is meant to demonstrate a way of reading C. S. Lewis's religious narratives in order to establish the meaningfulness of Lewis's texts and the artfulness of his literary communication that render these texts interestingly readable and religiously edifying to readers in the present time. Following the interdisciplinary investigations in the former chapters and some hermeneutic reflections on the role of Lewis's readers, the concluding section is not focused on the texts themselves but concerned with their author, C. S. Lewis, and his readers. There are basically two inquiries to tackle in the discussion below: firstly, how C. S. Lewis related himself with his time and then, how his readers can relate themselves to his literary texts.

The world that C. S. Lewis and his literary works entered into was characteristic of, or in the words of T. S. Eliot, "corrupted by," a "secular" spirit, which according to Eliot's definition is the phenomenon of discarding "the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life" as nothing but archaic among the general reading public, even in modern literature as a whole.²⁶³ In such a context of modern literature, it is no surprise that C. S. Lewis's voice, spoken from a traditional Christian outlook, can be easily dismissed as out of tune with his time. As elaborated in the discussions above, underlying his literary enterprise could be detected an apologetic vision that the integrity of human self is not subjectively generated but must be gained through (re-)union with the Ultimate Reality,²⁶⁴ which means re-embracing the archaic belief

²⁶³ The words and the idea are derived from T. S. Eliot's 1935 essay, "Religion and Literature," in which Eliot observes that "the whole of modern literature is corrupted by ... Secularism ...[and] simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life." *Selected Prose* (London: Penguin Books, 1953, ed. John Hayward), p. 41-42.

²⁶⁴ "The Ultimate Reality," in religious sense, means "the origin and end of all reality," as defined by

in the supernatural and the ultimate power of salvation, as revealed and promised in Christian faith. To call this Christian vision and faith-related concern apologetic is not saying that these religious narratives are intended by the Christian author to be the mere mediums for serving his apologetic purpose. Lewis himself, no doubt, would absolutely object to such an “unliterary” supposition about the reception of his literary works.²⁶⁵ If these works are essentially *literary* rather than *Christian apologetics per se*, how, then, can we justify an apologetic reading of Lewis’ texts of literature? Or, are we, by treating Lewis’s religious narratives as literary apologetics, ultimately endorsing or reinforcing the unsympathetic critics’ dismissal of C. S. Lewis’s literature as nothing but the propaganda of his dogmatism? Otherwise, how can we respond to Harold Bloom’s completely unfavourable and somewhat “prophetic” remark aimed at devaluing C. S. Lewis’s literary authorship (e.g., in his creation of Aslan) that “Dogma may always be in fashion, but even dogmas change. Time’s revenges are absolute”²⁶⁶?

For all his dogmatic rejection of C. S. Lewis’s literature, such as the *Narnia* books, which he takes in a clearly negative manner as the products of a “Christian apologist and allegorist,”²⁶⁷ Bloom, however, is right in his view of the variable quality of “dogmas.” Indeed, as C. N. Manlove’s historical survey into the development of Christian fantasies up to the twentieth century has informed us, there are discernible changes in the writings of the *modern* Christian fantasists, C. S. Lewis being one of them, that are partly but significantly affected by the influences of

the Catholic theologian David Tracy. In his book, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, Tracy expounds its religious and existential meaning as follows: “For believers, to be enlightened religiously is to be empowered to understand: to understand, above all, a power that is the ultimate power with which we all must deal” (Tracy, 89).

²⁶⁵ In *An Experiment in Criticism*, Lewis makes it very clear that “while we read, we must treat the reception of the work we are reading as an end in itself” (Lewis, 130). In other words, we must enjoy literature as literature, not as instruments for *ultra*-literary aims, such as “telling truth about life” or serving “as an aid to culture.”

²⁶⁶ Harold Bloom, “Introduction” to *C. S. Lewis’s The Chronicles of Narnia*, p. 3.

²⁶⁷ Bloom, *Ibid*, p. 1.

modernized Christian theology. One of such modern modifications within fantasy writing as well as within theology is a “humanizing” trend—less “theocentric” but putting more emphases on man’s experience of the immanent God. This trend of “immanentism” or a “humanist” approach to the meaning of God to man or heaven to earth, according to Manlove’s analysis, has much to do with “a general shift over the centuries, through the Renaissance via the Enlightenment to Romanticism, from a God-centred to a much more man-oriented Christian view of the universe.”²⁶⁸ In this regard, Manlove rings very true as he makes a keen observation of the connection between C. S. Lewis’s fantasies (in a broad sense, i.e. including different modes of writing, such as allegory) and the theological shift of concern from the transcendent God to man’s experience of the immanence of God. The central motif of “the dialectic of desire,” i.e. *Sehnsucht*, in Lewis’s allegory, *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, is a good example, noted by Manlove as well, of stressing the immanence of the divine within the subjective consciousness of a human self. Lewis’s critic Corbin Scott Carnell too rightly points out the remarkable parallel between Lewis’s theological interpretation of man’s existential experience of *Sehnsucht* and Paul Tillich’s theology about God being “both immanent and transcendent.”²⁶⁹ There is indeed certain common ground between Lewis’s understanding of the mystery of human soul’s transcendental longing as message sent from God and Tillich’s existentialist theology. Though not a systematic theologian himself, Lewis does share with Tillich, one of the most eminent and influential theologians in the twentieth century, the important idea that “the questions implied in human existence” are “correlated” with the theological answers given in Christian faith.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Manlove, *Christian Fantasy*, p. 156-157.

²⁶⁹ Corbin Scott Carnell, *Bright Shadows of Reality* (Michigan, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 149.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Paul Tillich’s theological statement: “The Christian message provides the answers to the questions implied in human existence.” *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd.,

As already reiterated throughout this research, at least in all of the narratives examined above, Lewis's approach to represent the *existential* problem of faith is in itself an existentialist one—certainly not of the nihilistic and atheistic type but of Christian kind.²⁷¹ In other words, to convey the ultimate, indeed Christian, concern with the meeting rather than separation between the human self and the transcendence, Lewis's thematic focus is always upon the religious experiences or struggles that the human subject goes / journeys through *in reality*. In addition to the transcendental longing that haunts a nonbeliever's soul, these existential experiences of religion cover other matters too—everyday temptations from the devil, as treated in *The Screwtape Letters*; the eternal orientation toward heaven or hell in close relation with mundane affairs and relationships, in *The Great Divorce*; a problematic personality entangled with a personal antagonism towards and a refusal to acknowledge the existence of the divine, the predicament of the heroine in *Till We Have Faces*; the trauma originating from love and death and the sense of God's absence, in *A Grief Observed*. From these thematic concerns, it is very clear that Lewis pays emphatic attention to the existential self when contemplating the relationship between the human and the divine. In terms of this, it is valid to claim with Manlove that Lewis's fantasy writing marked by an "existentialist" touch can definitely be associated with the modern trend of doing Christian theology with more "man-oriented" and "down-to-earth" considerations.²⁷² Meanwhile, this also

1953, c1951), p.72.

²⁷¹ The distinction of the two "roughly divided" groups of existentialists, i.e., nihilists / atheists and Christian thinkers, is based on David E. Roberts' exposition in his book, *Existentialism and Religious Belief*. According to Roberts, Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger are representatives of the first "self-sufficient, self-authenticating" group of proposing "human self-sufficiency" and "self-authentication," whereas Pascal and Kierkegaard belong to the "school" of practicing "penetrating forms of Christian faith" (Roberts, 11).

²⁷² Actually, Manlove does not make any association between Lewis and "existentialism," which is, however, one of the main observations this study purports to highlight. Also, he seems to bypass the existentialist significance in the "theology" of some modern Christian thinkers, which can be found in the following remarks of his made in the chapter of "Modern Christian Fantasy": "The theocentric side of Christianity, represented by such figures as Kant, Jakob Fries, Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Rudolf

explains the invalidity of some critics' casual commentaries about Lewis's overemphasis on "transcendence, eternity, objectivity, and the supernatural at the expense of immanence, temporality, subjectivity and the natural"²⁷³ and about his disconnection with the contemporary "pattern of presuppositions"²⁷⁴ of his time.

In the "Conclusion" of his book, *Shadows of Heaven: Religion and Fantasy in the Writing of C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien* (1971), Gunnar Urang makes his comments on what he regards the failure of the three Christian writers of fantasy his book is about:

They do not fail because they are true to an ancient pattern of presuppositions; they fail because—one must dare to say—in that allegiance they are less than true to themselves. A man who would be true to himself must come to terms in *some* manner with his culture, and thus, in turn, with his history. To set aside the reality of the present in any significant degree is to reject or distort *some* part of oneself.²⁷⁵ (Italics mine)

Although the kinship between Lewis, Charles Williams and Tolkien is not the topic of this study, Urang's adverse comment about these authors' problematic relation with time, and more precisely, the present time to which they (are supposed to) belong, is, in some sense, controversial and deserves some careful rethinking. After all, in order to re-estimate the worth of what Urang calls "didactic" fantasies / allegories / myths, particularly C. S. Lewis's, to modern or even "post-modern" readers, it is necessary to consider seriously the accusation of "anachronism" together with

Otto and Karl Barth, became steadily more embattled and attenuated throughout this [Victorian] period," (Manlove, 157). In mentioning these thinkers of Christian theology and stressing their "theocentric" concern, Manlove overlooks the fact that there is actually certain "existentialist" aspect in their contemplations, perhaps more so in some of them, among whom Kierkegaard is perhaps the most conspicuous representative.

²⁷³ Cited from Gunnar Urang's criticism of Lewis's fantasies, particularly his "space myth." *Shadows of Heaven*, p. 33.

²⁷⁴ The phrase is borrowed from Urang's commentary again, of which the context is quoted below.

²⁷⁵ Urang, *Ibid*, p. 169.

dogmatism heaped upon Lewis's Christian and traditionalist stance, which is sometimes thought of as, in Urang's terms, a *self-distorting* resistance to the modern modes of ideas and (literary) expression. Apparently trying not to push his view to an extreme, Urang still goes too far in holding that adherence to the "ancient" truth-claim and literary tropes signifies not simply "disloyalty" to modernity but even "untruthful" self-identity. However, the truth may be that C. S. Lewis, anachronistic freak as he is often counted, is really *truer* to his modern self when he persists in riding against the modern tide of thought, especially some ideas that he *believes* disputable and untruthful.

In fact, some of his critics, such as the excellent scholar Doris T. Myers, recognize Lewis as "very much a child of his own time" despite his staunch devotion to "preserv[ing] the ancient verities of classicism and traditional Christianity."²⁷⁶ Lewis himself in his middle age, already a very noted Christian author and literary scholar (in Medieval study), once proclaims that "[a]ll contemporary writers share to some extent the contemporary outlook – even those, like myself, who seem most opposed to it."²⁷⁷ Noticeably, conversion to Christianity in his early thirties definitely divides his life to two separate stages insofar as his engagement with modern thinking is concerned. Before returning to Christian belief, the orthodox rather than the modern liberalized version of course, Lewis used to be deeply affected by what can be roughly called "modern culture." As reported in his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, in the atheist period while he "was still very much modern" and also addicted to what he called "chronological snobbery" of his own age, he was so uncritically immersed in the modern enlightenment that he not only became a believer

²⁷⁶ This is quoted from Myers's "Preface" to her book, *C. S. Lewis in Context*, p. xi. Myers's treatise is to explore Lewis's involvement, in literary practice as well as criticism, with the context of the twentieth-century philosophy of language and literary criticism, which according to Myers evidences Lewis's connection with the modern context.

²⁷⁷ Lewis, "On the Reading of Old Books" (first published in 1944). *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories*, p. 31.

or at least a student of most fashionable patterns of thinking, including materialism, evolutionism, “new Psychology,” realism, and so forth, but also tended to discredit “whatever has gone out of date.” At this period, any conceptions related to the supernatural or spiritual, like “gods, spirits, after-life,” were taken by Lewis as “terms of abuse;” as for Christianity, nothing but *mythology*.²⁷⁸ To put in another way, at this stage of life, Lewis’s modern self was well developed—with a typical modern look of “secularism.” In the allegorical text of *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, his first post-conversion narrative, we are given a comprehensive account about how his personal, basically intellectual development out of the journey within the modern world / culture paralleled his search for the real *object* of the desire named Joy and finally turned into an individualized adventure of faith. Ultimately, it is Lewis’s personal experience of undergoing a modern self’s pilgrimage into conversion that changes not only his secular outlook but also his loyalty to the modern time and spirit, which means, ironically, spiritual disintegration.

Or, is it Lewis’s betrayal of his old modern self that should be seen as an irony instead? After his conversion, out of a renewed and resolutely un-secular personality, which is shown conspicuously in his Christian apologetics while more implicitly in his literary enterprise, Lewis’s new voice is, in some sense, articulated in a *self-negating* sort of way. As to examples for supporting the assumption of his self-negation, there are many indeed. For one thing, once a follower of the evolution theory, Lewis later disclaims vehemently against it as a “myth” specifically when it is no longer theory of purely scientific hypotheses but transformed into what Lewis calls the “popular Evolutionism or Developmentalism,” i.e., a “theory of improvement” of all existence from “the status of ‘almost zero’ to the status of ‘almost infinity.’”²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ Cf. *Surprised by Joy*, pp. 201, 236, 239-241, 247-249.

²⁷⁹ See Lewis’s essay, “The Funeral of A Great Myth,” *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church*, pp. 22-32.

To deal with such a modern yet essentially un-scientific “myth,” Lewis proposes a “funeral” for it. For another example, in contrast with his old assumption of “the Christianity mythology,” after being a Christian and even Christian apologist, his manifesto becomes: the “heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact.”²⁸⁰ Based on this paradoxical reception of the *miracle* of Incarnation, which Lewis holds as the core message of any “true Christian’s” belief,²⁸¹ Lewis, therefore, voices rather defiantly his layman’s dispute against the demythology appeal made by some modern Christian theologians. It is basically an apologetic fight against the unorthodox and presumably misleading theology of a few modern New Testament critics,²⁸² whose attempt to disavow the historicity and the miraculous (albeit selectively) of the Gospels is not only unappealing but also disputable to Lewis, a modern convert and also a “mere Christian” (i.e. not a liberal Christian).²⁸³

Although it is not the purpose of this conclusion to make a conscientious comparison between Lewis’s “layman theology” and the demythologizing theology which was being popularized influentially at Lewis’s time, nor is the aim of this study to evaluate which theory is more appealing to modern people, however, the theological controversy over “demythology” is still worthy of a closer look at. In fact, to think carefully about both the “consonance” and the “dissonance” made out of

²⁸⁰ See Lewis’s essay, “Myth Became Fact,” *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church*, p. 141.

²⁸¹ In the same essay, “Myth Became Fact,” Lewis proclaims: “By becoming fact it [the Incarnation] does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle. ... To be truly Christian we must both assent to the historical fact and also receive the myth (fact though it has become) with the same imaginative embrace which we accord to all myths.” P. 141.

²⁸² The names that are mentioned in Lewis’s essay, “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism” (originally a speech addressed at Westcott House, Cambridge, in 1959), include “Loisy, Schweitzer, Bultmann, Tillich, and Alec Vidler.”

²⁸³ See Lewis’s essay, “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism.” The essay is collected in *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church*, with a new title “Fern-seed and Elephants,” a phrase taken from Lewis’s “caricature” of the modern theologians who “claim to see fern-seed and can’t see an elephant ten yards away in broad daylight,” on account of the fact that their de-mythologizing theology “either denies the miraculous altogether or, more strangely, after swallowing the camel of the Resurrection strains at such gnats as the feeding of the multitudes.” See p. 243, 246.

the clash between modern theological “demythology” and Lewis’s counter-demythologizing position may bring us more light to C. S. Lewis’s relationship with his time, especially from the perspective of his *apologetic* enterprise, which is part of the major concern of this research on Lewis’s religious narratives. After that, we could see from a different angle that for all his medievalist taste and traditionalist leaning, Lewis actually actively engages himself with his own age—in an eloquent, albeit negative, but far from ironic voice in defense of “mere Christianity.” Undoubtedly, this balanced view about Lewis’s disengagement *and* his engagement with modern thinking bears tremendous relevance to a comprehensive estimation of Lewis’s apologetic work which is not only robustly undertaken in the context of his popular / layman’s theology but also significantly indicated in the context of his literary imagination, as pointed out formerly in this study on the different texts of Lewis’s apologetic literature.

In spite of his disagreement with the “demythology” of modern theology for various reasons, we should, however, remember that Lewis himself once makes very clear, in the essay entitled “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism,” about his critical posture, namely, a *non-fundamentalist* one. In other words, he has no intention to repudiate totally “this sort of theology” as he thinks it still has *some* “different elements [that] have different degrees of strength,”²⁸⁴ though he does not specify what they are. Yet, we may wonder: perhaps what Lewis leaves out, consciously or not, when articulating his encounter and confrontation with the thoughts of those modern, unorthodox theologians might be certain “commonalities” shared between his contemporary Christian thinkers and Lewis himself. Take the German theologian Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) for example, who is the most important figure of the “de-mythologizing” movement in the first half of the twentieth

²⁸⁴ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 252.

century. It is intriguing to see, on the one hand, the differences between Lewis and Bultmann in reading the Gospels and yet at the same time their similarity in putting emphatic concern with the relationship between the existential self and religious faith, or in Bultmann's own words, "the existential relation between God and man."²⁸⁵ Of course, unlike Bultmann, Lewis, who reads Pascal and some Kierkegaard while referring to either rarely, never uses the term "existentialist" to describe his theological or apologetic or even literary work.

Regarding the existentialist nature of de-mythologizing theology, Bultmann states very clearly that de-mythologizing is "an existentialist interpretation"²⁸⁶ of the Bible, for it undertakes to "translate" the ancient, mythical (i.e., unscientific) narratives of biblical texts for the understanding of modern readers, each of whom can thus be facilitated to "encounter with God in His word" *here and now*. A student of Heidegger's existentialist philosophy, Bultmann profoundly and, we might say, very "faithfully" appropriates the philosophical analyses of the reality of "being in time," which involves full responsibility of making moment-to-moment free decision without any intrinsic source of security, i.e. that available within existence itself, to elucidate the reality of faith and the demand of reading the Bible existentially:

Faith is ... the readiness to find security only in the unseen beyond, in God ... who has power over time and eternity, ...the Word of God ... calls [me] into freedom, freedom in obedience. . . . [C]onfined to man's temporal life with its series of here and now, [the analysis of existence]

²⁸⁵ Quoted from one of the chapters entitled "The Meaning of God as Acting," in the text of *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (1958) originally the text of many lectures given in the universities and divinity schools in the United States in 1951, on the subject of "demythologizing." The abridged text of *Jesus Christ and Mythology* is collected in the sixth chapter of *Rudolf Bultmann: Interpreting Faith for the Modern Era* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1987, ed. by Roger A. Johnson), p. 319.

²⁸⁶ Bultmann, *Ibid*, p. 305. In the beginning of the chapter entitled "Modern Biblical Interpretation and Existentialist Philosophy," Bultmann remarks: "I call de-mythologizing an interpretation, an existentialist interpretation, and that I make use of conceptions developed especially by Martin Heidegger in existentialist philosophy."

unveils a sphere which faith alone can understand as the sphere of the relation between man and God. . . . In the fact that existentialist philosophy does not take into account the relation between man and God, the confession is implied that I cannot speak of God as my God by looking into myself. My personal relation with God can be made real by God only, by the acting God who meets me in his Word.²⁸⁷

Insofar as Bultmann's demythologizing hermeneutics is concerned with the truth of existence and the relation between existence and faith (revealed in the Word of God) implied in existentialist philosophy, it is probable that Lewis may have acquiesced mostly in Bultmann's hermeneutical project. In fact, he might even find Bultmann a rather congenial theologian, as Lewis himself too tends to draw existentialist associations between the eternal reality of the self and his / her everyday act of choosing.

In *Mere Christianity*, for example, Lewis gives the following account for the relationship between existence and God, which is ultimately determined by the making of the "central self" within each individual being based on every temporal choice he or she makes:

[E]very time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that choose, into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Bultmann, *Ibid.*, p. 303, p. 313.

²⁸⁸ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 92.

In this simple, not so philosophically rigorous yet still penetrating explanation of the practical and authentic life of faith, we could indeed read the existentialist touch of Lewis's "layman / popular theology." This tendency of thinking like an existentialist is a style of Lewis's not just detectable in his "evangelizing" talks but also discernible in his literary practice. It has been repeatedly evidenced and highlighted in the previous chapters that Lewis's writing of the problem of faith from a predominantly *subjective* standpoint marks him out as a substantially existentialist Christian writer. In other words, he writes like a typically existentialist thinker who, according to David E. Roberts (author of *Existentialism and Religious Belief*), tends to focus on the individual human being on account of the fact that "in the search for the ultimate truth [or reality] the whole man, and not only his intellect or reason [but also "his emotions and his will"], is caught up and involved."²⁸⁹ Such an existentialist approach is taken in this study as the most distinctive trait of C. S. Lewis's literary apologetics. That is to say, the perspective Lewis adopts in the literary writing to manifest an apologetic response to the *macro*-predicament of the modern man's alienation from God is primarily concerned with the *micro*-situatedness, or, the lived experience of the individual self. This way of doing literary apologetics is shown not just in his allegory which is directly concerned with the modern self's pursuit of the divine reality, but also in the fantastical texts about the impact of evil temptation upon a convert and about the divorce between heavenly and hellish states of being, in the mythic novel focused on an individual being's lifelong struggle with the religious truth, hostile and unwilling to believe, and finally in the self-scrutinizing text about a grieving man's psychological and spiritual breakthrough. Unquestionably, all these textual instances of intermingling an existentialist perspective with the joint practice of literary writing and apologetic treatment of the entangled problem of faith and self

²⁸⁹ David E. Roberts, *Existentialism and Religious Belief*, p. 7.

serve to testify C. S. Lewis's implicit but real "kinship" with other modern existentialist thinkers, even with Bultmann, against whose biblical criticism Lewis openly expresses his antagonism.

As regards Lewis's quarrel with Bultmann, or, more precisely, with the de-mythologizing criticisms of the Gospels in modern theology, there is, in fact, some subtle and also kind of ironical truth about Lewis's disengagement from the modern trend of thinking. What can be regarded ironical in Lewis's argumentation against Bultmann's demythologizing is the simple fact that the latter is originally devised to aid the faith of modern readers to whom the "mythology" of the New Testament²⁹⁰ may be a crucial "stumbling block" to the happening of their conversion, yet this theory significantly misses out or misses the point to Lewis, who happens to be a modern convert after a personal journey of struggling to sort out the incompatibility between Christian faith and modern ways of thinking. What exactly makes Lewis react unsympathetically against Bultmann's "scientific" interpretation of the Bible, even if it purports to fit in with modern man's patterns of thinking and "make clear the true meaning of God's mystery" via "freeing the Word of God from a by-gone world of view"²⁹¹? Is there any "hermeneutical" principle that moves Lewis to dispute the latest movement of theology and stick to the traditional way of reading the Bible?

If we are to name any governing principle underlying Lewis's allegiance to the traditional as well as his disloyalty to the modern, whether it is about worldview, values, religion or even books, we could definitely say that his principle, as he oftentimes admonishes, is to keep the mind from being muddled by what he calls "chronological snobbery," or (historical) "provincialism," namely, the narrowness of

²⁹⁰ According to Bultmann, the "mythology" is referred to the "conception of the world" presupposed in the New Testament. It is called "mythological" "because it is different from the conception of the world which has been formed and developed by science ... [and] accepted by all modern men." Bultmann, *Ibid*, p. 291.

²⁹¹ Bultmann, *Ibid*, p. 304.

perspective indiscreetly restricted to the age that one was born into. To put in another word, it is the principle of “broad-mindedness.” As mentioned above, Lewis’s own conversion from a modern unbelieving frame of thinking to belief in (traditional) Christianity is to a great extent initiated by the awareness of his own “chronological snobbery” and by the attempt to open his mind to such “obsolete” and “mythological” ideas as traditional Christian belief. In fact, it can be inferred that at the heart of Lewis’s disputation against the “demythology” of modern theology is this changed habit of mind that Lewis himself has held on to since his conversion and also keeps urging others to acquire. For example, in the essay entitled “Is English Doomed?” Lewis remarks very judiciously on the “true aim” of English literary education—“to lift the student out of his provincialism by making him ‘the spectator’, if not of all, yet of much, ‘time and existence.’”²⁹² That is to say, students of English are to be guided “to meet the past where alone the past still lives, [to be] taken out of the narrowness of his own age and class into a more public world” where he can find out “what varieties there are in Man.”²⁹³

Lewis’s opinion about what literary education can and ought to achieve actually speaks for the very principle Lewis himself adheres to in cultivating his own literary taste, which is *liberally* formed indeed through meeting with varieties of great minds across centuries instead of focusing on authors of merely here and the present. In some sense, it could explain Lewis’s scholarly dedication to medieval literature,

²⁹² Lewis, “Is English Doomed?” *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories*, p. 27.

²⁹³ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 28. Lewis’s opinion about the purpose and value of literary education can be found clearly echoed by another distinguished scholar in English literature, Helen Gardner, who in a lecture-article entitled “The Relevance of Literature” makes a similar claim: “Literature of all the arts has the power to take us back into what is felt like to live in past ages, and to discover certain constancies in human experience surviving through changes in ideals, beliefs, manners, customs, ...” and thus “enabl[es] us to discover standards and values by which current shibboleths can be tested, knowledge and understanding of the past as it survives ... pre-eminently in literature, enriches our sense of our own identity.” See Helen Gardner’s book, *In Defence of the Imagination: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1979-1980* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 44-45.

although it by no means endorses some simple-minded critics' depreciatory view that Lewis "achieve a Christian mind by living in a prescientific world," which in terms of Austin Farrer "is the easiest way of writing him off as a thinker."²⁹⁴ Concerning Lewis's allegiance to medieval times, Farrer pertinently cites Lewis's posthumous scholarly book, *The Discarded Image* (1967), to exemplify how Lewis can present the late-medieval mindset and worldview as engagingly as if he were living then and yet also recognize in a detached way its beauties as part of a myth. Moreover, Farrer rings very true in observing that what Lewis really achieves in this book is to make his readers / students not just acquainted with the medieval point of view but also "be better placed for viewing with a reasonable detachment the scientific myths of [the modern] age."²⁹⁵ Actually, Lewis also applies such a principle of distancing oneself from one's own time to his recommendation of choosing *old* Christian books to read. Why choosing old books for either doctrinal or devotional purpose? According to Lewis's own explication, we need old books to "correct the characteristic mistakes [and "blindness"] of our own period" and to acquire "a standard of plain, central Christianity ...which puts the controversies of the moment in their proper perspective."²⁹⁶ Without doubt, it is grounded on the imperative of gaining such a "standard" and also comprehensive "perspective" that Lewis always propagandizes the value of "mere Christianity," which in the words of Lewis stands for "something positive, self-consistent and inexhaustible" after having been "measured against the ages."²⁹⁷

Now, what does this principle of broadening the mind, or healing one's provincialism, via reading old books have to do with Lewis's disagreement with the

²⁹⁴ Farrer, "The Christian Apologist," p. 27.

²⁹⁵ Farrer, *Ibid*, p. 28.

²⁹⁶ Lewis, "On the Reading of Old Books," *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories*, p. 31.

²⁹⁷ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 32.

“de-mythologizing” interpretation of the Bible? Is the negative reaction nothing but a *narrow-minded* repulsion because of his religious conservatism or dogmatism? Definitely not. On the contrary, we might even say that what moves Lewis to deprecate the demythology of modern theology is basically the *liberal* mind he both possesses and preaches. That Lewis is really liberal as a believer or a reader of the Bible (and other books) can be well evidenced by his remark as well as confession made in the paper entitled “Is Theology Poetry?” which Lewis concludes with these words: “Christian theology can fit in science, art, morality, and the sub-Christian religions. ...I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”²⁹⁸ Here, Lewis makes very clear two important suppositions. Firstly, theology is essentially a *comprehensive* field of knowledge, that is, neither exclusive of nor necessarily conflicting with other cultural areas, be it (modern) scientific development, artistic activity, even paganism. Based on this wide-scoped understanding of the nature of Christian theology, it then follows that Christian faith is supposed to *open* rather than *delimit* the believer’s, including his, “seeing eye.” In other words, to C. S. Lewis, it is perfectly possible and also sensible for a modern believer to be of a mind that is theological, scientific, poetic or mythological in orientation all at the same time. Therefore, he can preach eloquently as well as believe deeply in the twofold truth about the Incarnation—which is simultaneously mythical *and* factual / historical. Obviously, this view of theology afforded by a liberal mindset, as exemplified by the readiness to embrace both the mythology and the factuality / historicity of the Gospels, substantially contradicts the theological demand for the de-mythologizing the Bible, as proposed by Bultmann and other theologians of Lewis’s time.

²⁹⁸ Lewis, “Is Theology Poetry?” *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church*, p. 21.

According to Bultmann, the whole de-mythologizing project is prompted by the conflict between the mythology of the Bible and modern scientific thinking. To de-mythologize, therefore, is, in a technical sense, to help remove the stumbling-blocks within the biblical texts for modern man, including all the obsolete ideas no longer believed by modern science. Regarding what these mythological and thus problematic ideas to modern, scientific mind are referred to, Bultmann expounds them clearly as follows:

The whole conception of the world which is presupposed in the preaching of Jesus as in the New Testament generally is mythological; i.e., the conception of the world as being structured in three stories, heaven, earth and hell; the conception of the intervention of supernatural powers in the course of events; and the conception of miracles, especially the conception of the intervention of supernatural powers in the inner life of the soul, the conception that men can be tempted and corrupted by the devil and possessed by evil spirits. This conception of the world we call mythological because it is different from the conception of the world which has been formed and developed by science since its inception in ancient Greece and which has been accepted by all modern men. ...In any case, modern science does not believe that the course of nature can be interrupted or, so to speak, perforated, by supernatural powers.²⁹⁹

Evidently, in terms of Bultmann, the “problem of mythology” within the New Testament is judged by the criteria of modern science. For the de-mythologizing theologians, this “problem of mythology” needs to be tackled, that is, got rid of, so that it won’t cause to the problem of faith for modern man. At this point, Lewis’s viewpoint about the compatibility of Christian theology and science to some extent would suffice to undermine the initial impulse which gives rise to the whole business

²⁹⁹ Bultmann, Ibid, p. 291.

of de-mythologizing the Bible, that is, the confliction between (mythological) theology and modern science.

Furthermore, as far as the question of reading the Bible is concerned, Lewis's interest is less in whether the biblical messages, e.g. the Gospels, can be digested by a scientific mind or not. His real confrontation with the "demythology" of modern theology actually lies in his awareness of the value, rather than the "problem," of mythology in the Bible. Against Bultmann's hermeneutic proposition of de-mythologizing biblical texts, Lewis makes a kind of opposing appeal, also *hermeneutics*-concerned, to read the Bible "mythopathetically." Lewis's hermeneutic appeal is rendered in the following passage quoted from his essay, "Myth Became Fact," in which Lewis indeed makes a reversing suggestion that not the "mythology" but "demythology" would be the true "stumbling block" for the biblical readers, e.g., when encountering the revealed truth about the Incarnation:

God is more than a god, not less; . . . We must not be ashamed of the mythical radiance resting on our theology. We must not be nervous about 'parallels' and 'Pagan Christs': they *ought* to be there—it would be a stumbling block if they weren't. We must not, in false spirituality, withhold our imaginative welcome. If God chooses to be mythopoeic—and is not the sky itself a myth?—shall we refuse to be *mythopathic*? For this is the marriage of heaven and earth: Perfect Myth and Perfect Fact: claiming not only our love and our obedience, but also our wonder and delight, addressed to the savage, the child, and the poet in each one of us no less than to the moralists, the scholar, and the philosopher.³⁰⁰

It is elucidated here by Lewis that the significance of the mythological of the biblical narrative is based on the *mythopoeic* nature of the divine reality. Therefore, when

³⁰⁰ Lewis, "Myth Became Fact," *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church*, p. 142.

we approach the biblical text, it is unavoidable and indeed good for us to engage ourselves *imaginatively* with the mythically imported enchantment of the supernatural, the miraculous and the transcendental—all that is objectively true in the divine reality but also truly beyond either expression or human understanding. Noticeably, this way of reading the Bible suggested by Lewis is opposite to Bultmann’s de-mythologizing approach. For Bultmann, only via de-mythologizing can the biblical reader meet existentially and subjectively with the *real* and spiritual meaning of the words of God behind their mythological screen. For Lewis, contrarily, our *existential* encounter with the words of God, or God Himself, will not be obstructed by but, instead, must rest on the whole mythic experience contained in the mythological and also truthful expression of the divine reality—which is perhaps the only best means of transporting both the tangible body of the historical fact, e.g. the event of the Incarnation, and the intangible “soul” within the myth, i.e., the inexpressible reality of the divine.³⁰¹ In other words, to Lewis, the mythic experience or the presence of the mythological in the biblical text is an indispensable part of the genuine textual experience for the human readers of the Bible.

Certainly, Lewis’s defense of the mythological element of the Bible is not targeted at the readers’ textual experience only. In fact, his counter-demythologizing stance has indeed some “dogmatic” import. As mentioned above, what makes the de-mythologizing movement essentially problematic to Lewis is its tendency to doubt or even deny the authenticity and historicity of the supernatural and the miraculous happenings recounted in the stories of the Gospels. It is suggested sagaciously in Lewis’s paper, “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism,” that underlying the whole

³⁰¹ The idea about the “body” and the “soul” of the myth is based on Lewis’s remark on the myth made in his “Preface” to the book he edits, *George MacDonald: An Anthology 365 Readings* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, [1946] 2001): “In poetry the words are the body and the “theme” or “content” is the soul. But in myth the imagined events are the body and something inexpressible is the soul.” P. xxxi.

“demythology” of the modern theology is this kind of “scepticism,” which, Lewis argues, deserves our “scepticism” in response seeing that what these sceptical theologians’ de-mythologizing work is ultimately up to is not to extract but to dilute, even to distort the spiritual reality conveyed by the biblical narratives. If we return to Lewis’s critics’ questioning about his dogmatic mindset, we might ask whether this “skepticism” suggested by Lewis against the skepticism insidious in modern theology is just the expression of Lewis’s dogmatism in a different form. How about his mythic reading of the biblical narrative about the Incarnation as “the marriage of heaven and earth”? Should we take it together with the hermeneutics behind such an interpretation, namely, reading theology via mythology, as nothing but evidence of Lewis’s dogmatic adherence to the traditional orthodoxy of Christianity?

For those who believe not in “the marriage of heaven and earth” as Lewis does but in “the marriage of heaven and hell,” like the famous literary critic Harold Bloom, who claims to be a disciple of William Blake in regard to this conception, the answers to these questions are probably and unsurprisingly positive. However, following Austin Farrer’s expression, we could say that this criticism of Lewis’s dogmatism is actually “the easiest way of writing him off” not only as a thinker but also as a (biblical) reader. Although Lewis never makes any counter-arguments against such a criticism, however, in his fight against the de-mythologizing and de-supernaturalizing trend of modern theology, it is discernible that his theological or hermeneutic posture has nothing to do with so-called dogmatism. Rather, as Lewis proclaims in his address to an audience of theological students, what he really purports to preach is “a due agnosticism,”³⁰² which means in the context of biblical studies to remain “agnostic” is sometimes more judicious and legitimate than the

³⁰² Lewis, “Fern-seed and Elephants” (originally entitled “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism”), *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church*, p. 253.

sceptical and un-dogmatic interpretation of the Gospels—reading only the symbolic meaning at the expense of the literal expression. To illustrate how to put this “due agnosticism” into hermeneutical practice, Lewis in the end of the same paper, “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism,” recommends that we suspend our disbelief in the connection of the story of Ascension with any physical meaning of “space,” for we simply do not know *yet* whether “the transcendent reality ... excludes and repels locality” *or* “assimilates and loads it with significance.” Adopting neither an exclusively *symbolical* nor a completely *literal* approach to the Ascension story, Lewis urges us to “take our ignorance seriously.” Thus, instead of giving any answer to the possible meaning of how “the union of God with God and of man with God-man” could really happen, Lewis inquires only and wisely: “Had we not better wait?”³⁰³ Compared with the scepticism underlying modern demythologizing theology, Lewis’s proposal of “due agnosticism” together with his understanding of the Gospels as both historically truthful and mythically significant is far more *open-minded* in the hermeneutical if not the theological sense.

Furthermore, the characteristic of *open-mindedness* in Lewis’s hermeneutic principle as well as in his thinking mind demonstrates the quality of C. S. Lewis as a truly *interdisciplinary* reader of the Bible. Though he strongly objects to the secularist theory about the biblical texts as mere literature, Lewis, nevertheless, approaches the sacred text, i.e. the Bible, without totally disregarding or devaluating the significant part the literary element plays in either the conveyance or the reception of the messages about the divine reality. In other words, he reads the Bible both from the perspective of Christian faith and in literary terms. The trait of “interdisciplinarity” is actually not ascribable to his readership alone. It also speaks for the essential nature of his literary output. Although not all the readers / critics of

³⁰³ Lewis, *Ibid*, p. 254.

Lewis's literature pay serious attention to its literary aspect, yet none of them would fail to recognize its religious bearing, whether one likes it or not. Thus, literary categories that are varied in name while similarly pointing to the combination of the literary and the religious, such as "religious / Christian literature," "Christian / theological fantasy," and "apologetic allegory," are easily and normally associated with the texts of Lewis's literature. Indeed, whether Lewis himself likes it or not, the association between his literary authorship and his popularity as a Christian apologist is most commonly and almost inevitably made by his readers.

Yet, Lewis's *literary* readers too have their own responsibility to take, after recognizing the principle of "open-mindedness" or "due agnosticism" (rather than "dogmatism") underlying C. S. Lewis's engagement and disengagement with his time as the very principle that really defines the fundamental nature of C. S. Lewis's apologetic enterprise either in his discursive defense for the traditional Christian orthodoxy or in the embedment of his Christian outlook within his literary narratives. Aside from the imperative of undertaking an *interdisciplinary* reading, namely, considering not simply the *Logos* of the texts, the religious / apologetic meaning, but also their *Poiema*, the textual interweaving of the content and the form, wherein lies the literariness of the texts, the readers of Lewis's religious narratives need also equip themselves with a *mindset* similar to Lewis's own. Needless to say, the mindset for the sake of a proper reception of Lewis's apologetic literature, or literary apologetics, has nothing to do with Lewis's personal faith or taste—whether his religious traditionalism or his medievalist leaning. It is, instead, correspondent with the critical principle Lewis himself follows and also consistently "propagandizes," that is, avoiding "provincialism" by being *open* to different traditions, modern or old-fashioned, to varied forms of communicating the divine reality, such as history and mythology, and above all to the text itself, be it literary or biblical.

Such an open mindset is clearly pronounced in Lewis's masterly treatise on literary criticism, *An Experiment in Criticism*: "We must empty our minds and lay ourselves open. There is no work in which holes can't be picked; no work that can succeed without a preliminary act of good will on the part of the reader."³⁰⁴ In line with his theoretical claim in the centre of the proposed critical "experiment" (of shifting literary evaluation from the author to the reader) that good literature cannot exist without good reading, Lewis here is succinctly reiterating the importance of reader response. No doubt, this calling for the participation of the reader's willing self can find many echoes in modern literary criticism or hermeneutic theories. As discussed previously, it is an often ignored but irrefutable fact that Lewis's thinking is involved in significant ways with the modern fashion of thoughts, although as a thinker and reader, he is avowedly unwilling to be committed to any trends of idea or taste on the mere ground that they are modern and fashionable. Indeed, we may apply the idea of "sure taste," coined by Gadamer in *Truth and Method*, to C. S. Lewis's thinking and reading. According to Gadamer, a man of taste "observes measure even in fashion, not following blindly its changing demands, but using one's own judgment." As for someone of "sure taste," he or she keeps up "a specific freedom and superiority" "against the tyranny exercised by fashion."³⁰⁵ In light of Gadamer's definition, C. S. Lewis is definitely a modern man who cherishes "sure taste." This can be conspicuously evidenced by both his tendency to remain attuned to the pre-modern literary tradition and his unfashionable yet unfaltering voice from the position of a traditionalist Christian apologist spoken to an age in which the traditional orthodoxy or Christian dogma has long been in great discredit.³⁰⁶ Yet, as readers / critics of Lewis's literary texts, our task is surely not to

³⁰⁴ Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 116.

³⁰⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 35-36.

³⁰⁶ The idea is borrowed from Austin Farrer's essay "The Christian Apologist" that he wrote to

be *informed* by the nature of Lewis's taste or mind *only*. In fact, if we really keep our mind open in order to encounter or confront with Lewis's texts, we must to some extent be *challenged* by the taste emerging from them, if not in direct relation with their author.

In what sense would C. S. Lewis's readers be challenged by his works of religious / apologetic / Christian literature? Is it because they are the kind of "religious literature" T. S. Eliot once denounces as "deliberately and defiantly Christian"³⁰⁷ but scant of literary merit? Or, ought they to be taken as nothing but "an apologetics that pretends to lead reflection, without a break, from knowledge toward belief," as phrased by Ricoeur³⁰⁸? Certainly not. Considering seriously the inter-mixture of the literary structure and the religious / apologetic import within Lewis's texts, this interdisciplinary study means exactly to repudiate the easy and unliterary judgment of Lewis's literature as such. Actually, the question about the confrontation between the reader and the text is basically a *hermeneutical* question. After all, as we can learn from modern hermeneutics as well as Lewis's critical outlook, the practice of reading as interpretation or understanding is fundamentally "an intersubjective process" of "conversation," a process Ricoeur associates with textual criticism to mean "the connection between two discourses, the discourses of the text and the discourses of interpretation."³⁰⁹ In Gadamer's terms, this intersubjective conversation within the text can be designated as a "dialogical event."³¹⁰ Moreover, these hermeneutic ideas about "dialogicity" or

commemorate C. S. Lewis specifically as a Christian apologist. In the essay, Austin remarks: "the day in which apologetic flourishes is the day of orthodoxy in discredit..." *Light on C. S. Lewis*, p.24.

³⁰⁷ Eliot, "Religion and Literature," *Selected Prose*, p. 36.

³⁰⁸ Ricoeur, "Conclusion: The Symbol Gives Rise to Thought," *Symbolism of Evil*, p. 357, 319.

³⁰⁹ Ricoeur, *Ibid*, p. 322.

³¹⁰ This conception of Gadamer is based on Hans Robert Jauss's exposition. In the chapter on the "dialogic character [of] literary communication," Jauss explicates Gadamer's theory of understanding as follows: "Gadamer designated dialogicity as the prerequisite for all understanding, ... According to Gadamer, the Platonic dialogue provides the hermeneutic model in which understanding is constituted not as a monologic interpretation of, but as a dialogic inquiry into, meaning" See *Question*

intersubjectivity or intercourse between the reader and the text are echoed by Wayne C. Booth's conception of the reader as the author's "second self," as lucidly expounded in the following quotation from Booth's book, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). Noticeably, Booth's theory of literary reception is of even closer relevance to the reception of Lewis's literary apologetics, for it serves to illuminate the interplay between two selves, the author and the reader, which is regarded as necessarily involving the coincidence of the *beliefs* of the two parties:

It is only as I read that I become the self whose beliefs must coincide with the author's. Regardless of my real beliefs and practices, I must subordinate my mind and heart to the book if I am to enjoy it to the full. The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement.³¹¹

Applying all these theoretical viewpoints on the interaction between reader and text / author to Lewis's readers, particularly Booth's idea cited above of the "agreement" between the two "created selves (author and reader)" accommodated by the text, their meeting space, we can thereby be certain of the credibility of the assertion that the "self" of Lewis's reader must undergo a certain challenge in the whole process of being created as Lewis's second self via his texts. To put it in another way, when confronting Lewis's literary works with their texture underpinned by the Christian ideas associable with Lewis's religious belief and even apologetic enterprise, the willing readers will be hermeneutically provoked by the "challenge" of venturing on the apologetic discourse rendered by the texts of C. S. Lewis.

and Answer: Forms of Dialogic Understanding, p. 213.

³¹¹ Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, p. 138.

More specifically, in the very exercise of probing into the textual discourses of Lewis's religious narratives, one of the major tasks this research engaged in undertaking, we probably will be faced with a series of self-inquiries: Do we share, for example, with the modern pilgrim in the allegory of *The Pilgrim's Regress* the ultimate answer to the puzzle of the subjective experience of some mysteriously insatiable desire which cannot be satisfied until the existential self can turn away from all the misleading (intellectual) routes of the (modern) world to the main road that leads to the "reunion" with God? And, can we really attune ourselves to the sense of irony regarding the existence of the devil-tempter in the context of infernal admonition on tempting "human animals" in *The Screwtape Letters*, or to the promise of the restorability of the hellish human souls, who can if they *will* be transposed from Hell to Heaven to enjoy the new life bestowed by the divine Redeemer, as envisioned in *The Great Divorce*? Also, to what extent do we feel related to the mythical figure's struggle in the conflict between primitive cults of religion and her disintegrated selfhood in the Greek myth-refashioned novel of *Till We Have Faces*? Finally, do we find ourselves able or comfortable to digest the obstinate belief manifested by the grieving and doubting journal-writer's conclusion about theodicy, i.e. the incontestable goodness of God even in the reality of human pain, such as the suffering of bereavement textualized "autobiographically" in *A Grief Observed*?

The answers to these questions would probably vary from person to person as every individual reader, while meeting *existentially* with the texts concerned, has his or her personal response to make. But, he or she must be a *genuine* reader in the first place via *opening the mind* so as to receive, that is, to enter into and converse with, the text. No doubt, the receptive mindset of the reader, in Lewis's words, "a certain

good will, a certain readiness to find meaning,”³¹² is absolutely indispensable if Wayne Booth’s formula for the success in both writing and reading—the readers becoming created “peers” of the author—is to be fulfilled. According to Booth, “[t]he author makes his readers” which means a successful author makes his readers his peers by “mak[ing] them see what they have never seen before ... mov[ing] them into a new order of perception and experience altogether.”³¹³ For the reader of C. S. Lewis’s religious narratives, what can this “new order of perception and experience” be *existentially* about?

Throughout this research into the existential and apologetic meaning of Lewis’s texts, the *vision* encountered in them is ultimately a sign of hopefulness. To be more specific, it is about the hope of the restoration of human self to the faith and promised redemption in God on the premise that the existential and willing self (re-)orients its heart, mind, spirit, and even body to an integrated relationship with *reality* of what is subjectively and ultimately true, i.e. the reality of human selfhood and that of the transcendent yet also immanent existence of God. Of course, this vision of the re-integration between self and faith, or existence and reality, is not directly indicated by Lewis’s texts. Rather, it is through reading / interpretation / criticism that the texts are seen as, in the words of Ricoeur, “manifestation of the bond between man and the sacred.”³¹⁴ Moreover, insofar as it is concerned with the redemption of the self, as promised by religious, indeed Christian, faith, the hope suggestively manifested in Lewis’s texts must be viewed at the same time as a sign—in the religious and hermeneutic sense. The association of “a sign” with the textual vision of religious promise and also with the reader’s response to this implied vision is based

³¹² Lewis, “The Language of Religion,” *C. S. Lewis Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church*, p. 266.

³¹³ Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, p. 397-398.

³¹⁴ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 356.

upon Gadamer's ideas about the analogy between "the concept of faith" and "the concept of a sign." According to Gadamer's pertinent observation, either "a sign" or the "good news" proclaimed by gospel messages is "something only given to one who is ready to accept it as such."³¹⁵ Moreover, Gadamer furthers his discussion about religious signs in the Biblical context by highlighting the reception of signs as a *universal* hermeneutic question, rather than simply a question about religious faith. Most sagaciously, Gadamer points out the "universal challenge implied by the acceptance of the Christian message, something that Luther expressed in the formula *pro me*."³¹⁶ In terms of Gadamer's "hermeneutic conclusion" about the activity of "receiving a sign," we may confirm that the "sign" (to be) encountered in the literary context of C. S. Lewis's religious narratives must have very little to do with any dogmatism pertaining either to the texts or perhaps even to their author. In other words, proffered by Lewis's literary texts, the sign concerned, however strongly it may connote the importance of religious faith for human being's self-integrity, must await a *responsive* reading to become something incontestably meaningful.

In view of this, it is, therefore, inevitable to conclude that to finalize any "(apologetic) answer" of C. S. Lewis underlying his religious narratives about the problem of the existential self's alienation from the Ultimate Reality is but a mission impossible. In other words, in the process or at the end of the experience of reading, it is by no means likely to get any absolute answer dominated by the author's preoccupation, even if the author, who happens to be a traditionalist Christian apologist, is preoccupied with an obstinate or anachronistic belief in Christian dogma. Nor does this research intend to offer and impose any exact or final answer particularly to the apologetic meaning embedded within Lewis's texts, seeing that the

³¹⁵ Gadamer, "The Aesthetic and Religious Experience," p. 152.

³¹⁶ Gadamer, *Ibid*, p. 151.

task of discovering any answer or meaning is a challenge falling upon every individual reader in his or her own existential meeting with the text. What this work of interpretation of Lewis's religious narratives really pursues to achieve is to fulfill the "sole function" of "literary scholarship and criticism," namely, in terms of Lewis, "to multiply, prolong, and safeguard experiences of good reading."³¹⁷ To put it in another way, it is aimed to demonstrate an open-minded reception of Lewis's works—to make certain response to the sign of hope and promise emerging from them, as if made by the "second self" of C. S. Lewis.

Thus, it can be shown that this thesis has attested to the fact that ultimately a genuinely hermeneutical exercise can be a self-transforming and self-integrating process. In the case of C. S. Lewis's reader, at the post-critical, or post-interpretative, stage, i.e., after meeting and interacting with the texts created by the inter-mingling of literary art and religious meaning and also invested with the *Lewisian* existentialist-apologetic vision, he or she may indeed grow into a broadened and deepened awareness of what ironic or disintegrated subjectivity and redemptive supernaturalism mean and how they can possibly become reunited —*existentially*. In light of this, it is definitely sensible to revise the claim made by Kant in the early modernity and reinstate the pre-modern value that being dependent on the Christian faith in the Ultimate Reality, i.e. God, does not really cause to the self, whether a thinker or a reader, any betrayal or loss of subjectivity. Rather, it may actually bring about a heavenly, substantial and hopefully eternal gain of the integrity of the self.

³¹⁷ The quotation is part of a passage in which Lewis remarks: "If literary scholarship and criticism are regarded as activities ancillary to literature, then their sole function is to multiply, prolong, and safeguard experiences of good reading." See *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 104.

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