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Clive Staples Lewis
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Publication Date:
2012

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Clive Staples Lewis(29 November 1898 – 22 November 1963)

Clive Staples Lewis, commonly referred to as C. S. Lewis and known to his friends and family as "Jack", was a novelist, poet, academic, medievalist, literary critic, essayist, lay theologian and Christian apologist from Belfast, Ireland. He is known for both his fictional work, especially *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Space Trilogy* and his nonfiction, such as *Mere Christianity*, *Miracles* and *The Problem of Pain*.

Lewis and fellow novelist [J.R.R. Tolkien](http://www.poemhunter.com/john-ronald-reuel-tolkien/) were close friends. Both authors served on the English faculty at Oxford University, and both were active in the informal Oxford literary group known as the "Inklings". According to his memoir *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis had been baptised in the Church of Ireland (part of the Anglican Communion) at birth, but fell away from his faith during his adolescence. Owing to the influence of Tolkien and other friends, at the age of 32 Lewis returned to the Anglican Communion, becoming "a very ordinary layman of the Church of England". His faith had a profound effect on his work, and his wartime radio broadcasts on the subject of Christianity brought him wide acclaim.

In 1956 he married the American writer Joy Davidman, 17 years his junior, who died four years later of cancer at the age of 45. Lewis died three years after his wife, as the result of renal failure. His death came one week before his 65th birthday. Media coverage of his death was minimal; he died on 22 November 1963—the same day that U.S. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and the same day another famous author, Aldous Huxley, died.

Lewis's works have been translated into more than 30 languages and have sold millions of copies. The books that make up *The Chronicles of Narnia* have sold the most and have been popularised on stage, TV, radio and cinema.

Childhood

Clive Staples Lewis was born in Belfast, Ireland, on 29 November 1898. His father was Albert James Lewis (1863–1929), a solicitor whose father, Richard, had come to Ireland from Wales during the mid 19th century. His mother was Florence Augusta Lewis, née Hamilton (1862–1908), known as Flora, the daughter of a Church of Ireland (Anglican) priest. He had an elder brother, Warren Hamilton Lewis. At the age of four, shortly after his dog Jacksie was

killed by a car, he announced that his name was now Jacksie. At first he would answer to no other name, but later accepted Jack, the name by which he was known to friends and family for the rest of his life. When he was seven, his family moved into "Little Lea", the family home of his childhood, in the Strandtown area of East Belfast.

As a boy, Lewis had a fascination with anthropomorphic animals, falling in love with Beatrix Potter's stories and often writing and illustrating his own animal stories. He and his brother Warnie together created the world of Boxen, inhabited and run by animals. Lewis loved to read, and as his father's house was filled with books, he felt that finding a book to read was as easy as walking into a field and "finding a new blade of grass."

*"The New House is almost a major character in my story.
I am the product of long corridors, empty sunlit rooms,
upstairs indoor silences, attics explored in solitude,
distant noises of gurgling cisterns and pipes,
and the noise of wind under the tiles. Also, of endless books."*

—Surprised by Joy

Lewis was schooled by private tutors before being sent to the Wynyard School in Watford, Hertfordshire, in 1908, just after his mother's death from cancer. Lewis' brother had enrolled there three years previously. The school was closed not long afterwards due to a lack of pupils; the headmaster Robert "Oldie" Capron was soon after committed to a psychiatric hospital. Lewis then attended Campbell College in the east of Belfast about a mile from his home, but he left after a few months due to respiratory problems. He was then sent to the health-resort town of Malvern, Worcestershire, where he attended the preparatory school Cherbourg House, which Lewis calls "Chartres" in his autobiography. It was during this time that Lewis abandoned his childhood Christian faith and became an atheist, becoming interested in mythology and the occult. In September 1913, Lewis enrolled at Malvern College, where he remained until the following June. He found the school socially competitive. After leaving Malvern he studied privately with William T. Kirkpatrick, his father's old tutor and former headmaster of Lurgan College.

As a teenager, he was wonderstruck by the songs and legends of what he called Northernness, the ancient literature of Scandinavia preserved in the Icelandic sagas. These legends intensified an inner longing he later called "joy". He also grew to love nature; its beauty reminded him of the stories of the North, and the stories of the North reminded him of the beauties of nature. His teenage writings

moved away from the tales of Boxen, and he began using different art forms (epic poetry and opera) to try to capture his new-found interest in Norse mythology and the natural world. Studying with Kirkpatrick ("The Great Knock", as Lewis afterwards called him) instilled in him a love of Greek literature and mythology and sharpened his skills in debate and sound reasoning. In 1916, Lewis was awarded a scholarship at University College, Oxford.

"My Irish life"

Lewis experienced a certain cultural shock on first arriving in England: "No Englishman will be able to understand my first impressions of England", Lewis wrote in *Surprised by Joy*, continuing, "The strange English accents with which I was surrounded seemed like the voices of demons. But what was worst was the English landscape... I have made up the quarrel since; but at that moment I conceived a hatred for England which took many years to heal."

From boyhood Lewis immersed himself firstly in Norse and Greek and then in Irish mythology and literature and expressed an interest in the Irish language, though there is not much evidence that he laboured to learn it. He developed a particular fondness for W. B. Yeats, in part because of Yeats's use of Ireland's Celtic heritage in poetry. In a letter to a friend Lewis wrote, "I have here discovered an author exactly after my own heart, whom I am sure you would delight in, [W.B. Yeats](http://www.poemhunter.com/william-butler-yeats/)". He writes plays and poems of rare spirit and beauty about our old Irish mythology."

In 1921, Lewis met Yeats twice, since Yeats had moved to Oxford. Surprised to find his English peers indifferent to Yeats and the Celtic Revival movement, Lewis wrote: "I am often surprised to find how utterly ignored Yeats is among the men I have met: perhaps his appeal is purely Irish – if so, then thank the gods that I am Irish." Early in his career, Lewis considered sending his work to the major Dublin publishers, writing: "If I do ever send my stuff to a publisher, I think I shall try Maunsel, those Dublin people, and so tack myself definitely onto the Irish school." After his conversion to Christianity, his interests gravitated towards Christian spirituality and away from pagan Celtic mysticism.

Lewis occasionally expressed a somewhat tongue-in-cheek chauvinism toward the English. Describing an encounter with a fellow Irishman he wrote: "Like all Irish people who meet in England we ended by criticisms on the invincible flippancy and dulness of the Anglo-Saxon race. After all, there is no doubt, ami, that the Irish are the only people: with all their faults I would not gladly live or die among another folk." Throughout his life, he sought out the company of other

Irish people living in England and visited Northern Ireland regularly, even spending his honeymoon there in 1958 at the Old Inn, Crawfordsburn. He called this "my Irish life."

Various critics have suggested that it was Lewis's dismay over sectarian conflict in his native Belfast that led him to eventually adopt such an ecumenical brand of Christianity. As one critic has said, Lewis "repeatedly extolled the virtues of all branches of the Christian faith, emphasising a need for unity among Christians around what the Catholic writer [G.K. Chesterton](http://www.poemhunter.com/gilbert-keith-chesterton/) called 'Mere Christianity', the core doctrinal beliefs that all denominations share." On the other hand, Paul Stevens of the University of Toronto has written that "Lewis's mere Christianity masked many of the political prejudices of an old-fashioned Ulster Protestant, a native of middle-class Belfast for whom British withdrawal from Northern Ireland even in the 1950s and 1960s was unthinkable"

World War I

In 1917, Lewis left his studies to volunteer in the British Army. During World War I he was commissioned an officer in the Third Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry. Lewis arrived at the front line in the Somme Valley in France on his nineteenth birthday, and experienced trench warfare.

On 15 April 1918, Lewis was wounded and two of his colleagues were killed by a British shell falling short of its target. Lewis suffered from depression and homesickness during his convalescence. Upon his recovery in October, he was assigned to duty in Andover, England. He was discharged in December 1918, and soon returned to his studies. Lewis received a First in Honour Moderations (Greek and Latin Literature) in 1920, a First in Greats (Philosophy and Ancient History) in 1922, and a First in English in 1923.

Jane Moore

While being trained for the army Lewis shared a room with another cadet, Edward Courtnay Francis "Paddy" Moore (1898–1918). Maureen Moore, Paddy's sister, said that the two made a mutual pact that if either died during the war, the survivor would take care of both their families. Paddy was killed in action in 1918 and Lewis kept his promise. Paddy had earlier introduced Lewis to his mother, Jane King Moore, and a friendship quickly sprang up between Lewis, who was eighteen when they met, and Jane, who was forty-five. The friendship with Moore was particularly important to Lewis while he was recovering from his wounds in hospital, as his father did not visit him.

Lewis lived with and cared for Moore until she was hospitalised in the late 1940s. He routinely introduced her as his "mother", and referred to her as such in letters. Lewis, whose own mother had died when he was a child and whose father was distant, demanding and eccentric, developed a deeply affectionate friendship with Moore.

Speculation regarding their relationship re-surfaced with the publication of A. N. Wilson's biography of Lewis. Wilson (who had never met Lewis) attempted to make a case for their having been lovers for a time. Wilson's biography was not the first to address the question of Lewis's relationship with Moore. George Sayer, who knew Lewis for 29 years, sought to shed light on the relationship during the period of 14 years prior to Lewis's conversion to Christianity, in his biography *Jack: A Life of C. S. Lewis*, in which he wrote:

Were they lovers? Owen Barfield, who knew Jack well in the 1920s, once said that he thought the likelihood was "fifty-fifty." Although she was twenty-six years older than Jack, she was still a handsome woman, and he was certainly infatuated with her. But it seems very odd, if they were lovers, that he would call her "mother." We know, too, that they did not share the same bedroom. It seems most likely that he was bound to her by the promise he had given to Paddy and that his promise was reinforced by his love for her as his second mother.

Later Sayer changed his mind. In the introduction to the 1997 edition of his biography of Lewis he wrote:

I have had to alter my opinion of Lewis's relationship with Mrs. Moore. In chapter eight of this book I wrote that I was uncertain about whether they were lovers. Now after conversations with Mrs. Moore's daughter, Maureen, and a consideration of the way in which their bedrooms were arranged at The Kilns, I am quite certain that they were.

Lewis spoke well of Mrs. Moore throughout his life, saying to his friend George Sayer, "She was generous and taught me to be generous, too."

In December 1917 Lewis wrote in a letter to his childhood friend Arthur Greeves that Jane and Greeves were "the two people who matter most to me in the world."

In 1930, Lewis and his brother Warnie moved, with Mrs. Moore and her daughter Maureen, into "The Kilns", a house in the district of Headington Quarry on the

outskirts of Oxford (now part of the suburb of Risinghurst). They all contributed financially to the purchase of the house, which passed to Maureen, then Dame Maureen Dunbar, Btss., when Warren died in 1973.

Jane Moore suffered from dementia in her later years and was eventually moved into a nursing home, where she died in 1951. Lewis visited her every day in this home until her death.

Conversion to Christianity

Lewis was raised in a church-going family in the Church of Ireland. He became an atheist at 15, though he later described his young self as being paradoxically "very angry with God for not existing".

His early separation from Christianity began when he started to view his religion as a chore and as a duty; around this time, he also gained an interest in the occult, as his studies expanded to include such topics. Lewis quoted Lucretius (De rerum natura, 5.198–9) as having one of the strongest arguments for atheism:

<i>Nequaquam nobis divinitus esse paratam
Naturam rerum; tanta stat praedita culpa

Had God designed the world, it would not be
A world so frail and faulty as we see.</i>

Lewis's interest in the works of George MacDonald was part of what turned him from atheism. This can be seen particularly well through this passage in Lewis's The Great Divorce, chapter nine, when the semi-autobiographical main character meets MacDonald in Heaven:

<i>...I tried, trembling, to tell this man all that his writings had done for me. I tried to tell how a certain frosty afternoon at Leatherhead Station when I had first bought a copy of Phantastes (being then about sixteen years old) had been to me what the first sight of Beatrice had been to Dante: Here begins the new life. I started to confess how long that Life had delayed in the region of imagination merely: how slowly and reluctantly I had come to admit that his Christendom had more than an accidental connexion with it, how hard I had tried not to see the true name of the quality which first met me in his books is Holiness.</i>

He slowly re-embraced Christianity, influenced by arguments with his Oxford

colleague and friend J. R. R. Tolkien, whom he seems to have met for the first time on 11 May 1926, and by the book *The Everlasting Man* by G. K. Chesterton. He fought greatly up to the moment of his conversion, noting that he was brought into Christianity like a prodigal, "kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape." He described his last struggle in *Surprised by Joy*:

You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.

After his conversion to theism in 1929, Lewis converted to Christianity in 1931, following a long discussion and late-night walk with his close friends Tolkien and Hugo Dyson. He records making a specific commitment to Christian belief while on his way to the zoo with his brother. He became a member of the Church of England – somewhat to the disappointment of Tolkien, who had hoped that he would convert to Roman Catholicism.

Lewis was a committed Anglican who upheld a largely orthodox Anglican theology, though in his apologetic writings, he made an effort to avoid espousing any one denomination. In his later writings, some believe that he proposed ideas such as purification of venial sins after death in purgatory (*The Great Divorce* and *Letters to Malcolm*) and mortal sin (*The Screwtape Letters*), which are generally considered to be Roman Catholic teachings, although they are also widely held in Anglicanism (particularly in high church Anglo-Catholic circles). Regardless, Lewis considered himself an entirely orthodox Anglican to the end of his life, reflecting that he had initially attended church only to receive communion and had been repelled by the hymns and the poor quality of the sermons. He later came to consider himself honoured by worshipping with men of faith who came in shabby clothes and work boots and who sang all the verses to all the hymns.

Joy Davidman

In Lewis's later life, he corresponded with and later met Joy Davidman Gresham, an American writer of Jewish background, a former Communist, and a convert from atheism to Christianity. She was separated from her alcoholic and abusive husband, the novelist William L. Gresham, and came to England with her two sons, David and Douglas. Lewis at first regarded her as an agreeable intellectual companion and personal friend, and it was at least overtly on this level that he

agreed to enter into a civil marriage contract with her so that she could continue to live in the UK. Lewis's brother Warren wrote: "For Jack the attraction was at first undoubtedly intellectual. Joy was the only woman whom he had met... who had a brain which matched his own in suppleness, in width of interest, and in analytical grasp, and above all in humour and a sense of fun". However, after complaining of a painful hip, she was diagnosed with terminal bone cancer, and the relationship developed to the point that they sought a Christian marriage. Since she was divorced, this was not straightforward in the Church of England at the time, but a friend, the Rev. Peter Bide, performed the ceremony at her hospital bed in March 1957.

Gresham's cancer soon went into a brief remission, and the couple lived as a family (together with Warren Lewis) until her eventual relapse and death in 1960. The year she died, the couple took a brief holiday in Greece and the Aegean in 1960; Lewis was fond of walking but not of travel, and this marked his only crossing of the English Channel after 1918. Lewis's book *A Grief Observed* describes his experience of bereavement in such a raw and personal fashion that Lewis originally released it under the pseudonym NW Clerk to keep readers from associating the book with him. Ironically, many friends recommended the book to Lewis as a method for dealing with his own grief. After Lewis's death, his authorship was made public by Faber's, with the permission of the executors.

Lewis continued to raise Gresham's two sons after her death. While Douglas Gresham is, like Lewis and his mother, a Christian, David Gresham turned to the faith into which his mother had been born and became Orthodox Jewish in his beliefs. His mother's writings had featured the Jews, particularly one "shohet" (ritual slaughterer), in an unsympathetic manner. David informed Lewis that he was going to become a ritual slaughterer in order to present this type of Jewish religious functionary to the world in a more favourable light. In a 2005 interview, Douglas Gresham acknowledged he and his brother were not close, but he did say they are in email contact. Douglas remains involved in the affairs of the Lewis estate.

Illness and death

In early June 1961, Lewis began experiencing medical problems and was diagnosed with inflammation of the kidneys which resulted in blood poisoning. His illness caused him to miss the autumn term at Cambridge, though his health gradually began improving in 1962 and he returned that April. Lewis's health continued to improve, and according to his friend George Sayer, Lewis was fully himself by early 1963. On 15 July 1963 he fell ill and was admitted to hospital. The next day at 5:00 pm, Lewis suffered a heart attack and lapsed into a coma,

unexpectedly awaking the following day at 2:00 pm. After he was discharged from the hospital, Lewis returned to the Kilns, though he was too ill to return to work. As a result, he resigned from his post at Cambridge in August. Lewis's condition continued to decline, and in mid-November he was diagnosed with end-stage renal failure. On 22 November 1963, exactly one week before his 65th birthday, Lewis collapsed in his bedroom at 5:30 pm and died a few minutes later. He is buried in the churchyard of Holy Trinity Church, Headington, Oxford. His brother Warren Hamilton "Warnie" Lewis, who died on 9 April 1973, was later buried in the same grave.

Media coverage of his death was almost completely overshadowed by news of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, which occurred on the same day, as did the death of Aldous Huxley, author of *Brave New World*. This coincidence was the inspiration for Peter Kreeft's book *Between Heaven and Hell: A Dialog Somewhere Beyond Death with John F. Kennedy, C. S. Lewis, & Aldous Huxley*.

C. S. Lewis is commemorated on 22 November in the church calendar of the Episcopal Church.

Scholar

Lewis began his academic career as an undergraduate student at Oxford, where he won a triple first, the highest honours in three areas of study. Lewis then taught as a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, for nearly thirty years, from 1925 to 1954, and later was the first Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English at Cambridge University and a fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Using this position, he argued that there was no such thing as an English Renaissance. Much of his scholarly work concentrated on the later Middle Ages, especially its use of allegory. His *The Allegory of Love* (1936) helped reinvigorate the serious study of late medieval narratives like the *Roman de la Rose*. Lewis wrote several prefaces to old works of literature and poetry, like Layamon's *Brut*. His book "A Preface to *Paradise Lost*" is still one of the most valuable criticisms of that work. His last academic work, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1964), is a summary of the medieval world view, the "discarded image" of the cosmos in his title.

Lewis was a prolific writer, and his circle of literary friends became an informal discussion society known as the "Inklings", including J. R. R. Tolkien, Nevill Coghill, Lord David Cecil, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, and his brother Warren Lewis. At least one scholar points to December 1929 as the Inklings' beginning date. Lewis's friendship with Coghill and Tolkien grew during their time as members of the Kolbítar, an Old Norse reading group Tolkien founded and

which ended around the time of the inception of the Inklings. At Oxford he was the tutor of, among many other undergraduates, poet [John Betjeman](http://www.poemhunter.com/john-betjeman/), critic Kenneth Tynan, mystic Bede Griffiths, and Sufi scholar Martin Lings. Curiously, the religious and conservative Betjeman detested Lewis, whereas the anti-Establishment Tynan retained a life-long admiration for him.

Of Tolkien, Lewis writes in *Surprised by Joy*:

When I began teaching for the English Faculty, I made two other friends, both Christians (these queer people seemed now to pop up on every side) who were later to give me much help in getting over the last stile. They were HVV Dyson... and JRR Tolkien. Friendship with the latter marked the breakdown of two old prejudices. At my first coming into the world I had been (implicitly) warned never to trust a Papist, and at my first coming into the English Faculty (explicitly) never to trust a philologist. Tolkien was both.

Novelist

In addition to his scholarly work, Lewis wrote a number of popular novels, including his science fiction *The Space Trilogy* and his fantasy fiction Narnian books, most dealing implicitly with Christian themes such as sin, humanity's fall from grace, and redemption.

The Pilgrim's Regress

His first novel after becoming a Christian was *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), which depicted his experience with Christianity in the style of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The book was poorly received by critics at the time, although David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, one of Lewis's contemporaries at Oxford, gave him much-valued encouragement. Asked by Lloyd-Jones when he would write another book, Lewis replied, "When I understand the meaning of prayer."

"Space Trilogy" novels

His "Space Trilogy" or "Ransom Trilogy" novels (also called the "Cosmic Trilogy") dealt with what Lewis saw as the de-humanising trends in contemporary science fiction. The first book, *Out of the Silent Planet*, was apparently written following a conversation with his friend JRR Tolkien about these trends; Lewis agreed to write a "space travel" story and Tolkien a "time travel" one. Tolkien's story, "The Lost Road", a tale connecting his Middle-earth mythology and the modern world, was never completed. Lewis's main character of Ransom is based in part on

Tolkien, a fact that Tolkien himself alludes to in his Letters of JRR Tolkien. The second novel, *Perelandra*, depicts a new Garden of Eden on the planet Venus, a new Adam and Eve, and a new "serpent figure" to tempt them. The story can be seen as a hypothesis of what could have happened if the terrestrial Eve had resisted the serpent's temptation and avoided the Fall of Man. The last novel in the Trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*, further develops the theme of nihilistic science threatening traditional human values embodied in Arthurian legend (and making reference to Tolkien's fictional universe of Middle-earth).

Many of the ideas in the Trilogy, particularly the opposition to de-humanization in the third volume, are presented more formally in Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, based on his series of lectures at Durham University in 1943. Lewis stayed in Durham, where he was overwhelmed by the cathedral. *That Hideous Strength* is in fact set in the environs of 'Edgestow' university, a small English university like Durham, though Lewis disclaims any other resemblance between the two.

Walter Hooper, Lewis's literary executor, discovered a fragment of another science-fiction novel by Lewis, *The Dark Tower*, but it is unfinished; it is not clear whether the book was intended as part of the same series of novels. The manuscript was eventually published in 1977, though Lewis scholar Kathryn Lindskoog doubts its authenticity.

The Chronicles of Narnia

The Chronicles of Narnia is a series of seven fantasy novels for children and is considered a classic of children's literature. Written between 1949 and 1954 and illustrated by Pauline Baynes, the series is Lewis's most popular work, having sold over 100 million copies in 41 languages . It has been adapted several times, complete or in part, for radio, television, stage and cinema.

The books contain Christian ideas intended to be easily accessible to young readers. In addition to Christian themes, Lewis also borrows characters from Greek and Roman mythology as well as traditional British and Irish fairy tales.

Other works

Lewis wrote several works on Heaven and Hell. One of these, *The Great Divorce*, is a short novella in which a few residents of Hell take a bus ride to Heaven, where they are met by people who dwell there. The proposition is that they can stay (in which case they can call the place where they had come from "Purgatory", instead of "Hell"); but many find it not to their taste. The title is a reference to <http://www.poemhunter.com/william-blake/> William

Blake's [The Marriage of Heaven and Hell](#), a concept that Lewis found a "disastrous error". This work deliberately echoes two other more famous works with a similar theme: the Divine Comedy of [Dante Alighieri](http://www.poemhunter.com/dante-alighieri/), and [Bunyan's](http://www.poemhunter.com/john-bunyan/) [The Pilgrim's Progress](#). Another short work, [The Screwtape Letters](#), consists of suave letters of advice from a senior demon, Screwtape, to his nephew Wormwood, on the best ways to tempt a particular human and secure his damnation. Lewis's last novel was [Till We Have Faces](#), which he thought of as his most mature and masterly work of fiction but which was never a popular success. It is a retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche from the unusual perspective of Psyche's sister. It is deeply concerned with religious ideas, but the setting is entirely pagan, and the connections with specific Christian beliefs are left implicit.

Before Lewis's conversion to Christianity, he published two books: [Spirits in Bondage](#), a collection of poems, and [Dymer](#), a single narrative poem. Both were published under the pen name Clive Hamilton. Other narrative poems have since been published posthumously, including: [Launcelot](#), [The Nameless Isle](#), and [The Queen of Drum](#).

He also wrote [The Four Loves](#), which rhetorically explains four loves including friendship, eros, affection, and charity or caritas.

In 2009, a partial draft of [Language and Human Nature](#), which Lewis had begun co-writing with J.R.R. Tolkien, but which was never completed, was discovered.

Christian apologist

In addition to his career as an English professor and an author of fiction, Lewis is regarded by many as one of the most influential Christian apologists of his time; [Mere Christianity](#) was voted best book of the twentieth century by Christianity Today in 2000. Due to Lewis's approach to religious belief as a sceptic, and his following conversion, he has been called "The Apostle to the Skeptics."

Lewis was very interested in presenting a reasonable case for Christianity. [Mere Christianity](#), [The Problem of Pain](#), and [Miracles](#) were all concerned, to one degree or another, with refuting popular objections to Christianity, such as "How could a good God allow pain to exist in the world?". He also became known as a popular lecturer and broadcaster, and some of his writing (including much of [Mere Christianity](#)) originated as scripts for radio talks or lectures.

According to George Sayer, losing a 1948 debate with Elizabeth Anscombe, also

a Christian, led Lewis to reevaluate his role as an apologist, and his future works concentrated on devotional literature and children's books. Anscombe, however, had a completely different recollection of the debate's outcome and its emotional effect on Lewis. Victor Reppert also disputes Sayer, listing some of Lewis's post-1948 apologetic publications, including the second and revised edition of his *Miracles* in 1960, in which Lewis addressed Anscombe's criticism. Noteworthy too is Roger Teichman's suggestion in *The Philosophy of Elizabeth Anscombe* that the intellectual impact of Anscombe's paper on Lewis's philosophical self-confidence should not be overrated: "... it seems unlikely that he felt as irretrievably crushed as some of his acquaintances have made out; the episode is probably an inflated legend, in the same category as the affair of Wittgenstein's poker. Certainly Anscombe herself believed that Lewis' argument, though flawed, was getting at something very important; she thought that this came out more in the improved version of it that Lewis presented in a subsequent edition of *Miracles* – though that version also had 'much to criticise in it'."

Lewis also wrote an autobiography titled *Surprised by Joy*, which places special emphasis on his own conversion. (It was written before he met his wife, Joy Gresham; the title of the book came from the first line of a poem by William Wordsworth.) His essays and public speeches on Christian belief, many of which were collected in *God in the Dock* and *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, remain popular today.

His most famous works, the *Chronicles of Narnia*, contain many strong Christian messages and are often considered allegory. Lewis, an expert on the subject of allegory, maintained that the books were not allegory, and preferred to call the Christian aspects of them "suppositional". As Lewis wrote in a letter to a Mrs. Hook in December 1958:

If Aslan represented the immaterial Deity in the same way in which Giant Despair [a character in *The Pilgrim's Progress*] represents despair, he would be an allegorical figure. In reality however he is an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question, 'What might Christ become like, if there really were a world like Narnia and He chose to be incarnate and die and rise again in that world as He actually has done in ours?' This is not allegory at all.

"Trilemma"

In a much-cited passage from *Mere Christianity*, Lewis challenged the view that Jesus, although a great moral teacher, was not God. He argued that Jesus made several implicit claims to divinity, which would logically exclude this:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

This argument, which Lewis did not invent but developed and popularised, is sometimes referred to as "Lewis's trilemma". It has been used by the Christian apologist Josh McDowell in his book *More Than a Carpenter*. Although widely repeated in Christian apologetic literature, it has been largely ignored by professional theologians and biblical scholars and is regarded by some as logically unsound and an example of false dilemma.

Lewis's Christian apologetics, and this argument in particular, have been criticised. Philosopher John Beversluis described Lewis's arguments as "textually careless and theologically unreliable". Theologian John Hick argues that New Testament scholarship today does not support the view that Jesus claimed to be God. New Testament scholar N. T. Wright comments that Lewis' approach to Jesus' identity, by ignoring his Jewish background, "doesn't work as history, and it backfires dangerously when historical critics question his reading of the gospels."

Lewis used a similar argument in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, when Digory Kirke advises the young heroes that their sister's claims of a magical world must logically be taken as either lies, madness, or truth.

In response to critiques of this argument, philosophers Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli have expanded Lewis's Trilemma into a quadralemma (Lord, Liar, Lunatic, or Legend).

Universal morality

One of the main theses in Lewis's apologia is that there is a common morality known throughout humanity. In the first five chapters of *Mere Christianity* Lewis discusses the idea that people have a standard of behaviour to which they expect other people to adhere. This standard has been called Universal Morality or

Natural Law. Lewis claims that people all over the earth know what this law is and when they break it. He goes on to claim that there must be someone or something behind such a universal set of principles.

These then are the two points that I wanted to make. First, that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly, that they do not in fact behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it. These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in.

Lewis also portrays Universal Morality in his works of fiction. In *The Chronicles of Narnia* he describes Universal Morality as the "deep magic" which everyone knew.

In the second chapter of *Mere Christianity* Lewis recognises that "many people find it difficult to understand what this Law of Human Nature [...] is". And he responds first to the idea "that the Moral Law is simply our herd instinct" and second to the idea "that the Moral Law is simply a social convention". In responding to the second idea Lewis notes that people often complain that one set of moral ideas is better than another, but that this actually argues for there existing some "Real Morality" to which they are comparing other moralities. Finally he notes that sometimes differences in moral codes are exaggerated by people who confuse differences in beliefs about morality with differences in beliefs about facts:

I have met people who exaggerate the differences, because they have not distinguished between differences of morality and differences of belief about facts. For example, one man said to me, "Three hundred years ago people in England were putting witches to death. Was that what you call the Rule of Human Nature or Right Conduct?" But surely the reason we do not execute witches is that we do not believe there are such things. If we did – if we really thought that there were people going about who had sold themselves to the devil and received supernatural powers from him in return and were using these powers to kill their neighbours or drive them mad or bring bad weather, surely we would all agree that if anyone deserved the death penalty, then these filthy quislings did. There is no difference of moral principle here: the difference is simply about matter of fact. It may be a great advance in knowledge not to believe in witches: there is no moral advance in not executing them when you do not think they are there. You would not call a man humane for ceasing to set mousetraps if he did so because he believed there were no mice in the house.

Lewis also had fairly progressive views on the topic of "animal morality", in

particular the suffering of animals, as is evidenced by several of his essays: most notably, On Vivisection and "On the Pains of Animals."

Legacy

The statue of C. S. Lewis in front of the wardrobe from his book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in East Belfast, Northern Ireland

Lewis continues to attract a wide readership. In 2008, *The Times* ranked him eleventh on their list of "the 50 greatest British writers since 1945". Readers of his fiction are often unaware of what Lewis considered the Christian themes of his works. His Christian apologetics are read and quoted by members of many Christian denominations (Pratt 1998).

Lewis has been the subject of several biographies, a few of which were written by close friends, such as Roger Lancelyn Green and George Sayer. In 1985 the screenplay *Shadowlands* by William Nicholson, dramatising Lewis's life and relationship with Joy Davidman Gresham, was aired on British TV (starring Joss Ackland as Lewis and Claire Bloom as Joy). In 1989 this was staged as a theatre play (starring Nigel Hawthorne) and in 1993 *Shadowlands* became a feature film, starring Anthony Hopkins as Lewis and Debra Winger as Joy. In 2005, a one-hour made-for-TV movie entitled *C. S. Lewis: Beyond Narnia* (starring Anton Rodgers) provided a general synopsis of Lewis's life.

Many books have been inspired by Lewis, including *A Severe Mercy* by his correspondent and friend Sheldon Vanauken. The *Chronicles of Narnia* have been particularly influential. Modern children's literature such as Daniel Handler's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl*, Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* have been more or less influenced by Lewis's series (Hilliard 2005). Pullman, an atheist and so fierce a critic of Lewis's work as to be dubbed "the anti-Lewis", considers him a negative influence and has accused Lewis of featuring religious propaganda, misogyny, racism and emotional sadism (BBC News 2005) in his books. Authors of adult fantasy literature such as Tim Powers have also testified to being influenced by Lewis's work.

Most of Lewis' posthumous work has been edited by his literary executor, Walter Hooper. An independent Lewis scholar, the late Kathryn Lindskoog, argued that Hooper's scholarship is not reliable and that he has made false statements and attributed forged works to Lewis (Lindskoog 2001). C. S. Lewis's stepson, Douglas Gresham, denies the forgery claims, saying that "The whole controversy thing was engineered for very personal reasons... Her fanciful theories have been

pretty thoroughly discredited." (Gresham 2007).

A mural depicting Lewis and characters from the Narnia series, Convention Court, Ballymacarrett Road, east Belfast

A bronze statue of Lewis's character Digory, from *The Magician's Nephew*, stands in Belfast's Holywood Arches in front of the Holywood Road Library (BBC News 2004).

Lewis was strongly opposed to the creation of live-action versions of his works. His major concern was that the anthropomorphic animal characters "when taken out of narrative into actual visibility, always turn into buffoonery or nightmare".

Several C. S. Lewis Societies exist around the world, including one which was founded in Oxford in 1982 to discuss papers on the life and works of Lewis and the other Inklings, and generally appreciate all things Lewisian. His name is also used by a variety of Christian organisations, often with a concern for maintaining conservative Christian values in education or literary studies.

The 2005 film adaptation of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* was based on the first instalment of the Narnia series. Film adaptations have been made of two other books he wrote: *Prince Caspian* (released on 16 May 2008) and *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (released on 2 December 2010). A film adaptation of *The Great Divorce* is slated for release in 2013.

Lewis is featured as a main character in *The Chronicles of the Imaginarium Geographica* series by James A. Owen. He is one of two characters in Mark St. Germain's 2009 play *Freud's Last Session*, which imagines a meeting between Lewis, aged 41, and Sigmund Freud, aged 83, at Freud's house in Hampstead, London, in 1939, as the Second World War is about to break out.

After Prayers, Lie Cold

Arise my body, my small body, we have striven
Enough, and He is merciful; we are forgiven.
Arise small body, puppet-like and pale, and go,
White as the bed-clothes into bed, and cold as snow,
Undress with small, cold fingers and put out the light,
And be alone, hush'd mortal, in the sacred night,
-A meadow whipt flat with the rain, a cup
Emptied and clean, a garment washed and folded up,
Faded in colour, thinned almost to raggedness
By dirt and by the washing of that dirtiness.
Be not too quickly warm again. Lie cold; consent
To weariness' and pardon's watery element.
Drink up the bitter water, breathe the chilly death;
Soon enough comes the riot of our blood and breath.

Clive Staples Lewis

Alexandrines

There is a house that most of all on earth I hate.
Though I have passed through many sorrows and have been
In bloody fields, sad seas, and countries desolate,
Yet most I fear that empty house where the grasses green
Grow in the silent court the gaping flags between,
And down the moss-grown paths and terrace no man treads
Where the old, old weeds rise deep on the waste garden beds.
Like eyes of one long dead the empty windows stare
And I fear to cross the garden, I fear to linger there,
For in that house I know a little, silent room
Where Someone's always waiting, waiting in the gloom
To draw me with an evil eye, and hold me fast—
Yet thither doom will drive me and He will win at last.

Clive Staples Lewis

An Expostulation

Against too many writers of science fiction

Why did you lure us on like this,
Light-year on light-year, through the abyss,
Building (as though we cared for size!)
Empires that cover galaxies
If at the journey's end we find
The same old stuff we left behind,
Well-worn Tellurian stories of
Crooks, spies, conspirators, or love,
Whose setting might as well have been
The Bronx, Montmartre, or Bedinal Green?

Why should I leave this green-floored cell,
Roofed with blue air, in which we dwell,
Unless, outside its guarded gates,
Long, long desired, the Unearthly waits
Strangeness that moves us more than fear,
Beauty that stabs with tingling spear,
Or Wonder, laying on one's heart
That finger-tip at which we start
As if some thought too swift and shy
For reason's grasp had just gone by?

Clive Staples Lewis

Apology

If men should ask, Despoina, why I tell
Of nothing glad nor noble in my verse
To lighten hearts beneath this present curse
And build a heaven of dreams in real hell,

Go you to them and speak among them thus:
"There were no greater grief than to recall,
Down in the rotting grave where the lithe worms crawl,
Green fields above that smiled so sweet to us."

Is it good to tell old tales of Troynovant
Or praises of dead heroes, tried and sage,
Or sing the queens of unforgotten age,
Brynhild and Maeve and virgin Bradamant?

How should I sing of them? Can it be good
To think of glory now, when all is done,
And all our labour underneath the sun
Has brought us this-and not the thing we would?

All these were rosy visions of the night,
The loveliness and wisdom feigned of old.
But now we wake. The East is pale and cold,
No hope is in the dawn, and no delight.

Clive Staples Lewis

As The Ruin Falls

All this is flashy rhetoric about loving you.
I never had a selfless thought since I was born.
I am mercenary and self-seeking through and through:
I want God, you, all friends, merely to serve my turn.

Peace, re-assurance, pleasure, are the goals I seek,
I cannot crawl one inch outside my proper skin:
I talk of love --a scholar's parrot may talk Greek--
But, self-imprisoned, always end where I begin.

Only that now you have taught me (but how late) my lack.
I see the chasm. And everything you are was making
My heart into a bridge by which I might get back
From exile, and grow man. And now the bridge is breaking.

For this I bless you as the ruin falls. The pains
You give me are more precious than all other gains.

Clive Staples Lewis

Ballade Mystique

The big, red-house is bare and lone
The stony garden waste and sere
With blight of breezes ocean blown
To pinch the wakening of the year;
My kindly friends with busy cheer
My wretchedness could plainly show.
They tell me I am lonely here—
What do they know? What do they know?

They think that while the gables moan
And easements creak in winter drear
I should be piteously alone
Without the speech of comrades dear;
And friendly for my sake they fear,
It grieves them thinking of me so
While all their happy life is near—
What do they know? What do they know?

That I have seen the Dagda's throne
In sunny lands without a tear
And found a forest all my own
To ward with magic shield and spear,
Where, through the stately towers I rear
For my desire, around me go
Immortal shapes of beauty clear:
They do not know, they do not know.

L'ENVOI

The friends I have without a peer
Beyond the western ocean's glow,
Whither the faerie galleys steer,
They do not know: how should they know?

Clive Staples Lewis

Cliche Came Out Of Its Cage

1

You said 'The world is going back to Paganism'.
Oh bright Vision! I saw our dynasty in the bar of the House
Spill from their tumblers a libation to the Erinyes,
And Leavis with Lord Russell wreathed in flowers, heralded with flutes,
Leading white bulls to the cathedral of the solemn Muses
To pay where due the glory of their latest theorem.
Hestia's fire in every flat, rekindled, burned before
The Lardergods. Unmarried daughters with obedient hands
Tended it By the hearth the white-armd venerable mother
Domum servabat, lanam faciebat. at the hour
Of sacrifice their brothers came, silent, corrected, grave
Before their elders; on their downy cheeks easily the blush
Arose (it is the mark of freemen's children) as they trooped,
Gleaming with oil, demurely home from the palaestra or the dance.
Walk carefully, do not wake the envy of the happy gods,
Shun Hubris. The middle of the road, the middle sort of men,
Are best. Aidos surpasses gold. Reverence for the aged
Is wholesome as seasonable rain, and for a man to die
Defending the city in battle is a harmonious thing.
Thus with magistral hand the Puritan Sophrosune
Cooled and schooled and tempered our uneasy motions;
Heathendom came again, the circumspection and the holy fears ...
You said it. Did you mean it? Oh inordinate liar, stop.

2

Or did you mean another kind of heathenry?
Think, then, that under heaven-roof the little disc of the earth,
Fortified Midgard, lies encircled by the ravening Worm.
Over its icy bastions faces of giant and troll
Look in, ready to invade it. The Wolf, admittedly, is bound;
But the bond wil1 break, the Beast run free. The weary gods,
Scarred with old wounds the one-eyed Odin, Tyr who has lost a hand,
Will limp to their stations for the Last defence. Make it your hope
To be counted worthy on that day to stand beside them;
For the end of man is to partake of their defeat and die
His second, final death in good company. The stupid, strong

Unteachable monsters are certain to be victorious at last,
And every man of decent blood is on the losing side.
Take as your model the tall women with yellow hair in plaits
Who walked back into burning houses to die with men,
Or him who as the death spear entered into his vitals
Made critical comments on its workmanship and aim.
Are these the Pagans you spoke of? Know your betters and crouch, dogs;
You that have Vichy water in your veins and worship the event
Your goddess History (whom your fathers called the strumpet Fortune).

Clive Staples Lewis

De Profundis

Come let us curse our Master ere we die,
For all our hopes in endless ruin lie.
The good is dead. Let us curse God most High.

Four thousand years of toil and hope and thought
Wherein man laboured upward and still wrought
New worlds and better, Thou hast made as naught.

We built us joyful cities, strong and fair,
Knowledge we sought and gathered wisdom rare.
And all this time you laughed upon our care,

And suddenly the earth grew black with wrong,
Our hope was crushed and silenced was our song,
The heaven grew loud with weeping. Thou art strong.

Come then and curse the Lord. Over the earth
Gross darkness falls, and evil was our birth
And our few happy days of little worth.

Even if it be not all a dream in vain
—The ancient hope that still will rise again—
Of a just God that cares for earthly pain,

Yet far away beyond our labouring night,
He wanders in the depths of endless light,
Singing alone his musics of delight;

Only the far, spent echo of his song
Our dungeons and deep cells can smite along,
And Thou art nearer. Thou art very strong.

O universal strength, I know it well,
It is but froth of folly to rebel;
For thou art Lord and hast the keys of Hell.

Yet I will not bow down to thee nor love thee,
For looking in my own heart I can prove thee,
And know this frail, bruised being is above thee.

Our love, our hope, our thirsting for the right,
Our mercy and long seeking of the light,
Shall we change these for thy relentless might?

Laugh then and slay. Shatter all things of worth,
Heap torment still on torment for thy mirth—
Thou art not Lord while there are Men on earth.

Clive Staples Lewis

Death In Battle

Open the gates for me,
Open the gates of the peaceful castle, rosy in the West,
In the sweet dim Isle of Apples over the wide sea's breast,

Open the gates for me!

Sorely pressed have I been
And driven and hurt beyond bearing this summer day,
But the heat and the pain together suddenly fall away,
All's cool and green.

But a moment ago,
Among men cursing in fight and toiling, blinded I fought,
But the labour passed on a sudden even as a passing thought,

And now—alone!

Ah, to be ever alone,
In flowery valleys among the mountains and silent wastes untrod,
In the dewy upland places, in the garden of God,
This would atone!

I shall not see
The brutal, crowded faces around me, that in their toil have grown
Into the faces of devils—yea, even as my own—
When I find thee,

O Country of Dreams!
Beyond the tide of the ocean, hidden and sunk away,
Out of the sound of battles, near to the end of day,
Full of dim woods and streams.

Clive Staples Lewis

Dungeon Grates

So piteously the lonely soul of man
Shudders before this universal plan,
So grievous is the burden and the pain,
So heavy weighs the long, material chain
From cause to cause, too merciless for hate,
The nightmare march of unrelenting fate,
I think that he must die thereof unless
Ever and again across the dreariness
There came a sudden glimpse of spirit faces,
A fragrant breath to tell of flowery places
And wider oceans, breaking on the shore
From which the hearts of men are always sore.
It lies beyond endeavour; neither prayer
Nor fasting, nor much wisdom winneth there,
Seeing how many prophets and wise men
Have sought for it and still returned again
With hope undone. But only the strange power
Of unsought Beauty in some casual hour
Can build a bridge of light or sound or form
To lead you out of all this strife and storm;
When of some beauty we are grown a part
Till from its very glory's midmost heart
Out leaps a sudden beam of larger light
Into our souls. All things are seen aright
Amid the blinding pillar of its gold,
Seven times more true than what for truth we hold
In vulgar hours. The miracle is done
And for one little moment we are one
With the eternal stream of loveliness
That flows so calm, aloft from all distress
Yet leaps and lives around us as a fire
Making us faint with overstrong desire
To sport and swim for ever in its deep—
Only a moment.

O! but we shall keep
Our vision still. One moment was enough,
We know we are not made of mortal stuff.
And we can bear all trials that come after,
The hate of men and the fool's loud bestial laughter

And Nature's rule and cruelties unclean,
For we have seen the Glory—we have seen.

Clive Staples Lewis

Evolutionary Hymn

Lead us, Evolution, lead us
Up the future's endless stair;
Chop us, change us, prod us, weed us.
For stagnation is despair:
Groping, guessing, yet progressing,
Lead us nobody knows where.

Wrong or justice, joy or sorrow,
In the present what are they
while there's always jam-tomorrow,
While we tread the onward way?
Never knowing where we're going,
We can never go astray.

To whatever variation
Our posterity may turn
Hairy, squashy, or crustacean,
Bulbous-eyed or square of stern,
Tusked or toothless, mild or ruthless,
Towards that unknown god we yearn.

Ask not if it's god or devil,
Brethren, lest your words imply
Static norms of good and evil
(As in Plato) throned on high;
Such scholastic, inelastic,
Abstract yardsticks we deny.

Far too long have sages vainly
Glossed great Nature's simple text;
He who runs can read it plainly,
'Goodness = what comes next.'
By evolving, Life is solving
All the questions we perplexed.

On then! Value means survival-
Value. If our progeny
Spreads and spawns and licks each rival,
That will prove its deity

(Far from pleasant, by our present,
Standards, though it may well be).

Clive Staples Lewis

French Nocturne (Monchy-Le-Preux)

Long leagues on either hand the trenches spread
And all is still; now even this gross line
Drinks in the frosty silences divine
The pale, green moon is riding overhead.

The jaws of a sacked village, stark and grim;
Out on the ridge have swallowed up the sun,
And in one angry streak his blood has run
To left and right along the horizon dim.

There comes a buzzing plane: and now, it seems
Flies straight into the moon. Lo! where he steers
Across the pallid globe and surely nears
In that white land some harbour of dear dreams!

False mocking fancy! Once I too could dream,
Who now can only see with vulgar eye
That he's no nearer to the moon than I
And she's a stone that catches the sun's beam.

What call have I to dream of anything?
I am a wolf. Back to the world again,
And speech of fellow-brutes that once were men
Our throats can bark for slaughter: cannot sing.

Clive Staples Lewis

Here The Whole World

Here the whole world (stars, water, air,
And field, and forest, as they were
Reflected in a single mind)
Like cast off clothes was left behind
In ashes, yet with hopes that she,
Re-born from holy poverty,
In lenten lands, hereafter may
Resume them on her Easter Day.

Clive Staples Lewis

Hesperus

Through the starry hollow
Of the summer night
I would follow, follow
Hesperus the bright,
To seek beyond the western wave
His garden of delight.

Hesperus the fairest
Of all gods that are,
Peace and dreams thou bearest
In thy shadowy car,
And often in my evening walks
I've blessed thee from afar.

Stars without number,
Dust the noon of night,
Thou the early slumber
And the still delight
Of the gentle twilit hours
Rulest in thy right.

When the pale skies shiver,
Seeing night is done,
Past the ocean-river,
Lightly thou dost run,
To look for pleasant, sleepy lands,
That never fear the sun.

Where, beyond the waters
Of the outer sea,
Thy triple crown of daughters
That guards the golden tree
Sing out across the lonely tide
A welcome home to thee.

And while the old, old dragon
For joy lifts up his head,
They bring thee forth a flagon
Of nectar foaming red,

And underneath the drowsy trees
Of poppies strew thy bed.

Ah! that I could follow
In thy footsteps bright,
Through the starry hollow
Of the summer night,
Sloping down the western ways
To find my heart's delight!

Clive Staples Lewis

How He Saw Angus, The God

I heard the swallow sing in the eaves and rose
All in a strange delight while others slept,
And down the creaking stair, alone, tip-toes,
So carefully I crept.

The house was dark with silly blinds yet drawn,
But outside the clean air was filled with light,
And underneath my feet the cold, wet lawn
With dew was twinkling bright.

The cobwebs hung from every branch and spray
Gleaming with pearly strands of laden thread,
And long and still the morning shadows lay
Across the meadows spread.

At that pure hour when yet no sound of man,
Stirs in the whiteness of the wakening earth,
Alone through innocent solitudes I ran
Singing aloud for mirth.

Till I had found the open mountain heath
Yellow with gorse, and rested there and stood
To gaze upon the misty sea beneath,
Or on the neighbouring wood,

—That little wood of hazel and tall pine
And youngling fir, where oft we have loved to see
The level beams of early morning shine
Freshly from tree to tree.

Through the denser wood there's many a pool
Of deep and night-born shadow lingers yet
Where the new-wakened flowers are damp and cool
And the long grass is wet.

In the sweet heather long I rested there
Looking upon the dappled, early sky,
When suddenly, from out the shining air
A god came flashing by.

Swift, naked, eager, pitilessly fair,
With a live crown of birds about his head,
Singing and fluttering, and his fiery hair,
Far out behind him spread,

Streamed like a rippling torch upon the breeze
Of his own glorious swiftness: in the grass
He bruised no feathery stalk, and through the trees
I saw his whiteness pass.

But when I followed him beyond the wood,
Lo! He was changed into a solemn bull
That there upon the open pasture stood
And browsed his lazy full.

Clive Staples Lewis

Hymn (For Boys' Voices)

All the things magicians do
Could be done by me and you
Freely, if we only knew.

Human children every day
Could play at games the faeries play
If they were but shown the way.

Every man a God would be
Laughing through eternity
If as God's his eyes could see.

All the wizardries of God—
Slaying matter with a nod,
Charming spirits with his rod,

With the singing of his voice
Making lonely lands rejoice,
Leaving us no will nor choice,

Drawing headlong me and you
As the piping Orpheus drew
Man and beast the mountains through,

By the sweetness of his horn
Calling us from lands forlorn
Nearer to the widening morn—

All that loveliness of power
Could be man's peculiar dower,
Even mine, this very hour;

We should reach the Hidden Land
And grow immortal out of hand,
If we could but understand!

We could revel day and night
In all power and all delight
If we learn to think aright.

Clive Staples Lewis

In Praise Of Solid People

Thank God that there are solid folk
Who water flowers and roll the lawn,
And sit and sew and talk and smoke,
And snore all through the summer dawn.

Who pass untroubled nights and days
Full-fed and sleepily content,
Rejoicing in each other's praise,
Respectable and innocent.

Who feel the things that all men feel,
And think in well-worn grooves of thought,
Whose honest spirits never reel
Before man's mystery, overwrought.

Yet not unfaithful nor unkind,
with work-day virtues surely staid,
Theirs is the sane and humble mind,
And dull affections undismayed.

O happy people! I have seen
No verse yet written in your praise,
And, truth to tell, the time has been
I would have scorned your easy ways.

But now thro' weariness and strife
I learn your worthiness indeed,
The world is better for such life
As stout suburban people lead.

Too often have I sat alone
When the wet night falls heavily,
And fretting winds around me moan,
And homeless longing vexes me

For lore that I shall never know,
And visions none can hope to see,
Till brooding works upon me so
A childish fear steals over me.

I look around the empty room,
The clock still ticking in its place,
And all else silent as the tomb,
Till suddenly, I think, a face

Grows from the darkness just beside.
I turn, and lo! it fades away,
And soon another phantom tide
Of shifting dreams begins to play,

And dusky galleys past me sail,
Full freighted on a faerie sea;
I hear the silken merchants hail
Across the ringing waves to me

—Then suddenly, again, the room,
Familiar books about me piled,
And I alone amid the gloom,
By one more mocking dream beguiled.

And still no neared to the Light,
And still no further from myself,
Alone and lost in clinging night
—(The clock's still ticking on the shelf).

Then do I envy solid folk
Who sit of evenings by the fire,
After their work and doze and smoke,
And are not fretted by desire.

Clive Staples Lewis

In Prison

I cried out for the pain of man,
I cried out for my bitter wrath
Against the hopeless life that ran
For ever in a circling path
From death to death since all began;
Till on a summer night
I lost my way in the pale starlight
And saw our planet, far and small,
Through endless depths of nothing fall
A lonely pin-prick spark of light,
Upon the wide, enfolding night,
With leagues on leagues of stars above it,
And powdered dust of stars below—
Dead things that neither hate nor love it
Not even their own loveliness can know,
Being but cosmic dust and dead.
And if some tears be shed,
Some evil God have power,
Some crown of sorrow sit
Upon a little world for a little hour—
Who shall remember? Who shall care for it?

Clive Staples Lewis

Irish Nocturne

Now the grey mist comes creeping up
From the waste ocean's weedy strand
And fills the valley, as a cup
If filled of evil drink in a wizard's hand;
And the trees fade out of sight,
Like dreary ghosts unhealthily,
Into the damp, pale night,
Till you almost think that a clearer eye could see
Some shape come up of a demon seeking apart
His meat, as Grendel sought in Harte
The thanes that sat by the wintry log—
Grendel or the shadowy mass
Of Balor, or the man with the face of clay,
The grey, grey walker who used to pass
Over the rock-arch nightly to his prey.
But here at the dumb, slow stream where the willows hang,
With never a wind to blow the mists apart,
Bitter and bitter it is for thee. O my heart,
Looking upon this land, where poets sang,
Thus with the dreary shroud
Unwholesome, over it spread,
And knowing the fog and the cloud
In her people's heart and head
Even as it lies for ever upon her coasts
Making them dim and dreamy lest her sons should ever arise
And remember all their boasts;
For I know that the colourless skies
And the blurred horizons breed
Lonely desire and many words and brooding and never a deed.

Clive Staples Lewis

L'apprenti Sorcier

Suddenly there came to me
The music of a mighty sea
That on a bare and iron shore
Thundered with a deeper roar
Than all the tides that leap and run
With us below the real sun:
Because the place was far away,
Above, beyond our homely day,
Neighbouring close the frozen clime
Where out of all the woods of time,
Amid the frightful seraphim
The fierce, cold eyes of Godhead gleam,
Revolving hate and misery
And wars and famines yet to be.
And in my dreams I stood alone
Upon a shelf of weedy stone,
And saw before my shrinking eyes
The dark, enormous breakers rise,
And hover and fall with deafening thunder
Of thwarted foam that echoed under
The ledge, through many a cavern drear,
With hollow sounds of wintry fear.
And through the waters waste and grey,
Thick-strown for many a league away,
Out of the toiling sea arose
Many a face and form of those
Thin, elemental people dear
Who live beyond our heavy sphere.
And all at once from far and near,
They all held out their arms to me,
Crying in their melody,
"Leap in! Leap in and take thy fill
Of all the cosmic good and ill,
Be as the Living ones that know
Enormous joy, enormous woe,
Pain beyond thought and fiery bliss:
For all thy study hunted this,
On wings of magic to arise,
And wash from off thy filmed eyes

The cloud of cold mortality,
To find the real life and be
As are the children of the deep!
Be bold and dare the glorious leap,
Or to thy shame, go, slink again
Back to the narrow ways of men."
So all these mocked me as I stood
Striving to wake because I feared the flood.

Clive Staples Lewis

Le Roi S'amuse

Jove gazed
On woven mazes
Of patterned movement as the atoms whirled.
His glance turned
Into dancing, burning
Colour-gods who rushed upon that sullen world,
Waking, re-making, exalting it anew –
Silver and purple, shrill-voiced yellow, turgid crimson, and virgin blue.

Jove stared
On overbearing
And aching splendour of the naked rocks.
Where his gaze smote,
Hazily floated
To mount like thistledown in countless flocks,
Fruit-loving, root-loving gods, cool and green
Of feathery grasses, heather and orchard, pollen'd lily, the olive and the bean.

Jove laughed.
Like cloven-shafted
Lightning, his laughter into brightness broke.
From every dint
Where the severed splinters
Had scattered a Sylvan or a Satyr woke;
Ounces came pouncing, dragon-people flew,
There was spirited stallion, squirrel unrespectful, clanging raven and kangaroo.

Jove sighed.
The hoving tide of
Ocean trembled at the motion of his breath.
The sigh turned
Into white, eternal,
Radiant Aphrodite unafraid of death;
A fragrance, a vagrant unrest on earth she flung,
There was favouring and fondling and bravery and building
and chuckling music and suckling of the young.

Jove thought.
He strove and wrought at

A thousand clarities; from his brows sprang
With earnest mien
Stern Athene;
The cold armour on her shoulders rang.
Our sires at the fires of her lucid eyes began
To speak in symbols, to seek out causes, to name the creatures; they became
Man.

World and Man
Unfurled their banner –
It was gay Behemoth on a sable field.
Fresh-robed
In flesh, the ennobled
Spirits carousing in their myriads reeled;
There was frolic and holiday. Jove laughed to see
The abyss empeopled, his bliss imparted, the throng that was his and no longer
he.

Clive Staples Lewis

Lullaby

Lullaby! Lullaby!

There's a tower strong and high
Built of oak and brick and stone,
Stands before a wood alone.
The doors are of the oak so brown
As any ale in Oxford town,
The walls are builded warm and thick
Of the old red Roman brick,
The good grey stone is over all
In arch and floor of the tower tall.
And maidens three are living there
All in the upper chamber fair,
Hung with silver, hung with pall,
And stories painted on the wall.
And softly goes the whirring loom
In my ladies' upper room,
For they shall spin both night and day
Until the stars do pass away.
But every night at evening.
The window open wide they fling,
And one of them says a word they know
And out as three white swans they go,
And the murmuring of the woods is drowned
In the soft wings' whirring sound,
As they go flying round, around,
Singing in swans' voices high
A lonely, lovely lullaby.

Clive Staples Lewis

Milton Read Again (In Surrey)

Three golden months while summer on us stole
I have read your joyful tale another time,
Breathing more freely in that larger clime
And learning wiselier to deserve the whole.

Your Spirit, Master, has been close at hand
And guided me, still pointing treasures rare,
Thick-sown where I before saw nothing fair
And finding waters in the barren land,

Barren once thought because my eyes were dim.
Like one I am grown to whom the common field
And often-wandered copse one morning yield
New pleasures suddenly; for over him

Falls the weird spirit of unexplained delight,
New mystery in every shady place,
In every whispering tree a nameless grace,
New rapture on the windy seaward height.

So may she come to me, teaching me well
To savour all these sweets that lie to hand
In wood and lane about this pleasant land
Though it be not the land where I would dwell.

Clive Staples Lewis

Night

After the fret and failure of this day,
And weariness of thought, O Mother Night,
Come with soft kiss to soothe our care away
And all our little tumults set to right;
Most pitiful of all death's kindred fair,
Riding above us through the curtained air
On thy dusk car, thou scatterest to the earth
Sweet dreams and drowsy charms of tender might
And lovers' dear delight before to-morrow's birth.
Thus art thou wont thy quiet lands to leave
And pillared courts beyond the Milky Way,
Wherein thou tarriest all our solar day
While unsubstantial dreams before thee weave
A foamy dance, and fluttering fancies play
About thy palace in the silver ray
Of some far, moony globe. But when the hour,
The long-expected comes, the ivory gates
Open on noiseless hinge before thy bower
Unbidden, and the jewelled chariot waits
With magic steeds. Thou from the fronting rim
Bending to urge them, whilst thy sea-dark hair
Falls in ambrosial ripples o'er each limb,
With beautiful pale arms, untrammelled, bare
For horsemanship, to those twin chargers fleet
Dost give full rein across the fires that glow
In the wide floor of heaven, from off their feet
Scattering the powdery star-dust as they go.
Come swiftly down the sky, O Lady Night,
Fall through the shadow-country, O most kind,
Shake out thy strands of gentle dreams and light
For chains, wherewith thou still art used to bind
With tenderest love of careful leeches' art
The bruised and weary heart
In slumber blind.

Clive Staples Lewis

Night (Ii)

I know a little Druid wood
Where I would slumber if I could
And have the murmuring of the stream
To mingle with a midnight dream,
And have the holy hazel trees
To play above me in the breeze,
And smell the thorny eglantine;
For there the white owls all night long
In the scented gloom divine
Hear the wild, strange, tuneless song
Of faerie voices, thin and high
As the bat's unearthly cry,
And the measure of their shoon
Dancing, dancing, under the moon,
Until, amid the pale of dawn
The wandering stars begin to swoon. . . .
Ah, leave the world and come away!

The windy folk are in the glade,
And men have seen their revels, laid
In secret on some flowery lawn
Underneath the beechen covers,
Kings of old, I've heard them say,
Here have found them faerie lovers
That charmed them out of life and kissed
Their lips with cold lips unafraid,
And such a spell around them made
That they have passed beyond the mist
And found the Country-under-wave. . . .

Kings of old, whom none could save!

Clive Staples Lewis

Noon

Noon! and in the garden bower
The hot air quivers o'er the grass,
The little lake is smooth as glass
And still so heavily the hour
Drags, that scarce the proudest flower
Pressed upon its burning bed
Has strength to lift a languid head:
—Rose and fainting violet
By the water's margin set
Swoon and sink as they were dead
Though their weary leaves be fed
With the foam-drops of the pool
Where it trembles dark and cool
Wrinkled by the fountain spraying
O'er it. And the honey-bee
Hums his drowsy melody
And wanders in his course a-straying
Through the sweet and tangled glade
With his golden mead o'erladen,
Where beneath the pleasant shade
Of the darkling boughs a maiden
—Milky limb and fiery tress,
All at sweetest random laid—
Slumbers, drunken with the excess
Of the noontide's loveliness.

Clive Staples Lewis

Ode For New Year's Day

Woe unto you, ye sons of pain that are this day in earth,
Now cry for all your torment: now curse your hour of birth
And the fathers who begat you to a portion nothing worth.
And Thou, my own beloved, for as brave as ere thou art,
Bow down thine head, Despoina, clasp thy pale arms over it,
Lie low with fast-closed eyelids, clenched teeth, enduring heart,
For sorrow on sorrow is coming wherein all flesh has part.
The sky above is sickening, the clouds of God's hate cover it,
Body and soul shall suffer beyond all word or thought,
Till the pain and noisy terror that these first years have wrought
Seem but the soft arising and prelude of the storm
That fiercer still and heavier with sharper lightnings fraught
Shall pour red wrath upon us over a world deform.

Thrice happy, O Despoina, were the men who were alive
In the great age and the golden age when still the cycle ran
On upward curve and easily, for them both maid and man
And beast and tree and spirit in the green earth could thrive.
But now one age is ending, and God calls home the stars
And looses the wheel of the ages and sends it spinning back
Amid the death of nations, and points a downward track,
And madness is come over us and great and little wars.
He has not left one valley, one isle of fresh and green
Where old friends could forgather amid the howling wreck.
It's vainly we are praying. We cannot, cannot check
The Power who slays and puts aside the beauty that has been.

It's truth they tell, Despoina, none hears the heart's complaining
For Nature will not pity, nor the red God lend an ear,
Yet I too have been mad in the hour of bitter paining
And lifted up my voice to God, thinking that he could hear
The curse wherewith I cursed Him because the Good was dead.
But lo! I am grown wiser, knowing that our own hearts
Have made a phantom called the Good, while a few years have sped
Over a little planet. And what should the great Lord know of it
Who tosses the dust of chaos and gives the suns their parts?
Hither and thither he moves them; for an hour we see the show of it:
Only a little hour, and the life of the race is done.
And here he builds a nebula, and there he slays a sun

And works his own fierce pleasure. All things he shall fulfill,
And O, my poor Despoina, do you think he ever hears
The wail of hearts he has broken, the sound of human ill?
He cares not for our virtues, our little hopes and fears,
And how could it all go on, love, if he knew of laughter and tears?

Ah, sweet, if a man could cheat him! If you could flee away
Into some other country beyond the rosy West,
To hide in the deep forests and be for ever at rest
From the rankling hate of God and the outworn world's decay!

Clive Staples Lewis

On A Vulgar Error

No. It's an impudent falsehood. Men did not
Invariably think the newer way Prosaic
mad, inelegant, or what not.

Was the first pointed arch esteemed a blot
Upon the church? Did anybody say How
modern and how ugly? They did not.

Plate-armour, or windows glazed, or verse fire-hot
With rhymes from France, or spices from Cathay,
Were these at first a horror? They were not.

If, then, our present arts, laws, houses, food
All set us hankering after yesterday,
Need this be only an archaising mood?

Why, any man whose purse has been let blood
By sharpers, when he finds all drained away
Must compare how he stands with how he stood.

If a quack doctor's breezy ineptitude
Has cost me a leg, must I forget straightway
All that I can't do now, all that I could?

So, when our guides unanimously decry
The backward glance, I think we can guess why.

Clive Staples Lewis

On Being Human

Angelic minds, they say, by simple intelligence
Behold the Forms of nature. They discern
Unerringly the Archtypes, all the verities
Which mortals lack or indirectly learn.
Transparent in primordial truth, unvarying,
Pure Earthness and right Stonehood from their clear,
High eminence are seen; unveiled, the seminal
Huge Principles appear.

The Tree-ness of the tree they know-the meaning of
Arboreal life, how from earth's salty lap
The solar beam uplifts it; all the holiness
Enacted by leaves' fall and rising sap;

But never an angel knows the knife-edged severance
Of sun from shadow where the trees begin,
The blessed cool at every pore caressing us
-An angel has no skin.

They see the Form of Air; but mortals breathing it
Drink the whole summer down into the breast.
The lavish pinks, the field new-mown, the ravishing
Sea-smells, the wood-fire smoke that whispers Rest.
The tremor on the rippled pool of memory
That from each smell in widening circles goes,
The pleasure and the pang --can angels measure it?
An angel has no nose.

The nourishing of life, and how it flourishes
On death, and why, they utterly know; but not
The hill-born, earthy spring, the dark cold bilberries.
The ripe peach from the southern wall still hot
Full-bellied tankards foamy-topped, the delicate
Half-lyric lamb, a new loaf's billowy curves,
Nor porridge, nor the tingling taste of oranges.
—An angel has no nerves.

Far richer they! I know the senses' witchery
Guards us like air, from heavens too big to see;

Imminent death to man that barb'd sublimity
And dazzling edge of beauty unsheathed would be.
Yet here, within this tiny, charmed interior,
This parlour of the brain, their Maker shares
With living men some secrets in a privacy
Forever ours, not theirs.

Clive Staples Lewis

Our Daily Bread

We need no barbarous words nor solemn spell
To raise the unknown. It lies before our feet;
There have been men who sank down into Hell
In some suburban street,

And some there are that in their daily walks
Have met archangels fresh from sight of God,
Or watched how in their beans and cabbage-stalks
Long files of faerie trod.

Often me too the Living voices call
In many a vulgar and habitual place,
I catch a sight of lands beyond the wall,
I see a strange god's face.

And some day this work will work upon me so
I shall arise and leave both friends and home
And over many lands a pilgrim go
Through alien woods and foam,

Seeking the last steep edges of the earth
Whence I may leap into that gulf of light
Wherein, before my narrowing Self had birth,
Part of me lived aright.

Clive Staples Lewis

Oxford

It is well that there are palaces of peace
And discipline and dreaming and desire,
Lest we forget our heritage and cease
The Spirit's work—to hunger and aspire:

Lest we forget that we were born divine,
Now tangled in red battle's animal net,
Murder the work and lust the anodyne,
Pains of the beast 'gainst bestial solace set.

But this shall never be: to us remains
One city that has nothing of the beast,
That was not built for gross, material gains,
Sharp, wolfish power or empire's gluttoned feast.

We are not wholly brute. To us remains
A clean, sweet city lulled by ancient streams,
A place of visions and of loosening chains,
A refuge of the elect, a tower of dreams.

She was not builded out of common stone
But out of all men's yearning and all prayer
That she might live, eternally our own,
The Spirit's stronghold—barred against despair.

Clive Staples Lewis

Prelude To Space

An Epithalamium

So Man, grown vigorous now,
Holds himself ripe to breed,
Daily devises how
To ejaculate his seed
And boldly fertilize
The black womb of the unconsenting skies.

Some now alive expect
(I am told) to see the large,
Steel member grow erect,
Turgid with the fierce charge
Of our whole planet's skill,
Courage, wealth, knowledge, concentrated will,

Straining with lust to stamp
Our likeness on the abyss-
Bombs, gallows, Belsen camp,
Pox, polio, Thais' kiss
Or Judas, Moloch's fires
And Torquemada's (sons resemble sires).

Shall we, when the grim shape
Roars upward, dance and sing?
Yes: if we honour rape,
If we take pride to Ring
So bountifully on space
The sperm of our long woes, our large disgrace.

Clive Staples Lewis

Re-Adjustment

I thought there would be a grave beauty, a sunset splendour
In being the last of one's kind: a topmost moment as one watched
The huge wave curving over Atlantis, the shrouded barge
Turning away with wounded Arthur, or Ilium burning.
Now I see that, all along, I was assuming a posterity
Of gentle hearts: someone, however distant in the depths of time,
Who could pick up our signal, who could understand a story. There won't be.

Between the new Hembidae and us who are dying, already
There rises a barrier across which no voice can ever carry,
For devils are unmaking language. We must let that alone forever.
Uproot your loves, one by one, with care, from the future,
And trusting to no future, receive the massive thrust
And surge of the many-dimensional timeless rays converging
On this small, significant dew drop, the present that mirrors all.

Clive Staples Lewis

Science-Fiction Cradlesong

By and by Man will try
To get out into the sky,
Sailing far beyond the air
From Down and Here to Up and There.
Stars and sky, sky and stars
Make us feel the prison bars.

Suppose it done. Now we ride
Closed in steel, up there, outside
Through our port-holes see the vast
Heaven-scape go rushing past.
Shall we? All that meets the eye
Is sky and stars, stars and sky.

Points of light with black between
Hang like a painted scene
Motionless, no nearer there
Than on Earth, everywhere
Equidistant from our ship.
Heaven has given us the slip.

Hush, be still. Outer space
Is a concept, not a place.
Try no more. Where we are
Never can be sky or star.
From prison, in a prison, we fly;
There's no way into the sky.

Clive Staples Lewis

Song Of The Pilgrims

O Dwellers at the back of the North Wind,
What have we done to you? How have we sinned
Wandering the Earth from Orkney unto Ind?

With many deaths our fellowship is thinned,
Our flesh is withered in the parching wind,
Wandering the earth from Orkney unto Ind.

We have no rest. We cannot turn again
Back to the world and all her fruitless pain,
Having once sought the land where ye remain.

Some say ye are not. But, ah God! we know
That somewhere, somewhere past the Northern snow
Waiting for us the red-rose gardens blow:

-The red-rose and the white-rose gardens blow
In the green Northern land to which we go,
Surely the ways are long and the years are slow.

We have forsaken all things sweet and fair,
We have found nothing worth a moment's care
Because the real flowers are blowing there.

Land of the Lotus fallen from the sun,
Land of the Lake from whence all rivers run,
Land where the hope of all our dreams is won!

Shall we not somewhere see at close of day
The green walls of that country far away,
And hear the music of her fountains play?

So long we have been wandering all this while
By many a perilous sea and drifting isle,
We scarce shall dare to look thereon and smile.

Yea, when we are drawing very near to thee,
And when at last the ivory port we see
Our hearts will faint with mere felicity:

But we shall wake again in gardens bright
Of green and gold for infinite delight,
Sleeping beneath the solemn mountains white,
While from the flowery copses still unseen
Sing out the crooning birds that ne'er have been
Touched by the hand of winter frore and lean;

And ever living queens that grow not old
And poets wise in robes of faerie gold
Whisper a wild, sweet song that first was told

Ere God sat down to make the Milky Way.
And in those gardens we shall sleep and play
For ever and for ever and a day.

Ah, Dwellers at the back of the North Wind,
What have we done to you? How have we sinned,
That yes should hide beyond the Northern wind?

Land of the Lotus, fallen from the Sun,
When shall your hidden, flowery vales be won
And all the travail of our way be done?

Very far we have searched; we have even seen
The Scythian waste that bears no soft nor green,
And near the Hideous Pass our feet have been.

We have heard Syrens singing all night long
Beneath the unknown stars their lonely song
In friendless seas beyond the Pillars strong.

Nor by the dragon-daughter of Hypocras
Nor the vale of the Devil's head we have feared to pass,
Yet is our labour lost and vain, alas!

Scouring the earth from Orkney unto Ind,
Tossed on the seas and withered in the wind,
We seek and seek your land. How have we sinned?

Or is it all a folly of the wise,
Bidding us walk these ways with blinded eyes

While all around us real flowers arise?

But, by the very God, we know, we know
That somewhere still, beyond the Northern snow
Waiting for us the red-rose gardens blow.

Clive Staples Lewis

The Ass

I woke and rose and slipt away
To the heathery hills in the morning grey.

In a field where the dew lay cold and deep
I met an ass, new-roused from sleep.

I stroked his nose and I tickled his ears,
And spoke soft words to quiet his fears.

His eyes stared into the eyes of me
And he kissed my hands of his courtesy.

"O big, brown brother out of the waste,
How do thistles for breakfast taste?

"And do you rejoice in the dawn divine
With a heart that is glad no less than mine?

"For, brother, the depth of your gentle eyes
Is strange and mystic as the skies:

"What are the thoughts that grope behind,
Down in the mist of a donkey mind?

"Can it be true, as the wise men tell,
That you are a mask of God as well,

"And, as in us, so in you no less
Speaks the eternal Loveliness,

"And words of the lips that all things know
Among the thoughts of a donkey go?

"However it be, O four-foot brother,
Fair to-day is the earth, our mother.

"God send you peace and delight thereof,
And all green meat of the waste you love,

"And guard you well from violent men
Who'd put you back in the shafts again."

But the ass had far too wise a head
To answer one of the things I said,

So he twitched his fair ears up and down
And turned to nuzzle his shoulder brown.

Clive Staples Lewis

The Autumn Morning

See! the pale autumn dawn
Is faint, upon the lawn
That lies in powdered white
Of hoar-frost dight

And now from tree to tree
The ghostly mist we see
Hung like a silver pall
To hallow all.

It wreathes the burdened air
So strangely everywhere
That I could almost fear
This silence drear

Where no one song-bird sings
And dream that wizard things
Mighty for hate or love
Were close above.

White as the fog and fair
Drifting through the middle air
In magic dances dread
Over my head.

Yet these should know me too
Lover and bondman true,
One that has honoured well
The mystic spell

Of earth's most solemn hours
Wherein the ancient powers
Of dryad, elf, or faun
Or leprechaun

Oft have their faces shown
To me that walked alone
Seashore or haunted fen
Or mountain glen

Wherefore I will not fear
To walk the woodlands sere
Into this autumn day
Far, far away.

Clive Staples Lewis

The Condemned

There is a wildness still in England that will not feed
In cages; it shrinks away from the touch of the trainer's hand,
Easy to kill, not easy to tame. It will never breed
In a zoo for the public pleasure. It will not be planned.

Do not blame us too much if we that are hedgerow folk
Cannot swell the rejoicings at this new world you make -
We, hedge-hogged as Johnson or Borrow, strange to the yoke
As Landor, surly as Cobbett (that badger), birdlike as Blake.

A new scent troubles the air -- to you, friendly perhaps
But we with animal wisdom have understood that smell.
To all our kind its message is Guns, Ferrets, and Traps,
And a Ministry gassing the little holes in which we dwell.

Clive Staples Lewis

The Country Of The Blind

Hard light bathed them-a whole nation of eyeless men,
Dark bipeds not aware how they were maimed. A long
Process, clearly, a slow curse,
Drained through centuries, left them thus.

At some transitional stage, then, a luckless few,
No doubt, must have had eyes after the up-to-date,
Normal type had achieved snug
Darkness, safe from the guns of heavn;

Whose blind mouths would abuse words that belonged to their
Great-grandsires, unabashed, talking of light in some
Eunuch'd, etiolated,
Fungoid sense, as a symbol of

Abstract thoughts. If a man, one that had eyes, a poor
Misfit, spoke of the grey dawn or the stars or green-
Sloped sea waves, or admired how
Warm tints change in a lady's cheek,

None complained he had used words from an alien tongue,
None question'd. It was worse. All would agree 'Of course,'
Came their answer. "We've all felt
Just like that." They were wrong. And he

Knew too much to be clear, could not explain. The words --
Sold, raped flung to the dogs -- now could avail no more;
Hence silence. But the mouldwarps,
With glib confidence, easily

Showed how tricks of the phrase, sheer metaphors could set
Fools concocting a myth, taking the worlds for things.
Do you think this a far-fetched
Picture? Go then about among

Men now famous; attempt speech on the truths that once,
Opaque, carved in divine forms, irremovable,
Dear but dear as a mountain-

Mass, stood plain to the inward eye.

Clive Staples Lewis

The Future Of Forestry

How will the legend of the age of trees
Feel, when the last tree falls in England?
When the concrete spreads and the town conquers
The country's heart; when contraceptive
Tarmac's laid where farm has faded,
Tramline flows where slept a hamlet,
And shop-fronts, blazing without a stop from
Dover to Wrath, have glazed us over?
Simplest tales will then bewilder
The questioning children, "What was a chestnut?
Say what it means to climb a Beanstalk,
Tell me, grandfather, what an elm is.
What was Autumn? They never taught us."
Then, told by teachers how once from mould
Came growing creatures of lower nature
Able to live and die, though neither
Beast nor man, and around them wreathing
Excellent clothing, breathing sunlight –
Half understanding, their ill-acquainted
Fancy will tint their wonder-paintings
Trees as men walking, wood-romances
Of goblins stalking in silky green,
Of milk-sheen froth upon the lace of hawthorn's
Collar, pallor in the face of birchgirl.
So shall a homeless time, though dimly
Catch from afar (for soul is watchfull)
A sight of tree-delighted Eden.

Clive Staples Lewis

The Meteorite

Among the hills a meteorite
Lies huge; and moss has overgrown,
And wind and rain with touches light
Made soft, the contours of the stone.

Thus easily can Earth digest
A cinder of sidereal fire,
And make her translunary guest
The native of an English shire.

Nor is it strange these wanderers
Find in her lap their fitting place,
For every particle that's hers
Came at the first from outer space.

All that is Earth has once been sky;
Down from the sun of old she came,
Or from some star that travelled by
Too close to his entangling flame.

Hence, if belated drops yet fall
From heaven, on these her plastic power
Still works as once it worked on all
The glad rush of the golden shower.

Clive Staples Lewis

The Ocean Strand

O leave the labouring roadways of the town,
The shifting faces and the changeful hue
Of markets, and broad echoing streets that drown
The heart's own silent music. Though they too
Sing in their proper rhythm, and still delight
The friendly ear that loves warm human kind,
Yet it is good to leave them all behind,
Now when from lily dawn to purple night
Summer is queen,
Summer is queen in all the happy land.
Far, far away among the valleys green
Let us go forth and wander hand in hand
Beyond those solemn hills that we have seen
So often welcome home the falling sun
Into their cloudy peaks when day was done—
Beyond them till we find the ocean strand
And hear the great waves run,
With the waste song whose melodies I'd follow
And weary not for many a summer day,
Born of the vaulted breakers arching hollow
Before they flash and scatter into spray,
On, if we should be weary of their play
Then I would lead you further into land
Where, with their ragged walls, the stately rocks
Shunt in smooth courts and paved with quiet sand
To silence dedicate. The sea-god's flocks
Have rested here, and mortal eyes have seen
By great adventure at the dead of noon
A lonely nereid drowsing half a-swoon
Buried beneath her dark and dripping locks.

Clive Staples Lewis

The Philosopher

Who shall be our prophet then,
Chosen from all the sons of men
To lead his fellows on the way
Of hidden knowledge, delving deep
To nameless mysteries that keep
Their secret from the solar day!
Or who shall pierce with surer eye!
This shifting veil of bittersweet
And find the real things that lie
Beyond this turmoil, which we greet
With such a wasted wealth of tears?
Who shall cross over for us the bridge of fears
And pass in to the country where the ancient Mothers dwell?
Is it an elder, bent and hoar
Who, where the waste Atlantic swell
On lonely beaches makes its roar,
In his solitary tower
Through the long night hour by hour
Pores on old books with watery eye
When all his youth has passed him by,
And folly is schooled and love is dead
And frozen fancy laid abed,
While in his veins the gradual blood
Slackens to a marish flood?
For he rejoiceth not in the ocean's might,
Neither the sun giveth delight,
Nor the moon by night
Shall call his feet to wander in the haunted forest lawn.
He shall no more rise suddenly in the dawn
When mists are white and the dew lies pearly
Cold and cold on every meadow,
To take his joy of the season early,
The opening flower and the westward shadow,
And scarcely can he dream of laughter and love,
They lie so many leaden years behind.
Such eyes are dim and blind,
And the sad, aching head that nods above
His monstrous books can never know
The secret we would find.

But let our seer be young and kind
And fresh and beautiful of show,
And taken ere the lustyhead
And rapture of his youth be dead;
Ere the gnawing, peasant reason
School him over-deep in treason
To the ancient high estate
Of his fancy's principate,
That he may live a perfect whole,
A mask of the eternal soul,
And cross at last the shadowy bar
To where the ever-living are.

Clive Staples Lewis

The Satyr

When the flowery hands of spring
Forth their woodland riches fling,
Through the meadows, through the valleys
Goes the satyr carolling.

From the mountain and the moor,
Forest green and ocean shore
All the faerie kin he rallies
Making music evermore.

See! the shaggy pelt doth grow
On his twisted shanks below,
And his dreadful feet are cloven
Though his brow be white as snow-

Though his brow be clear and white
And beneath it fancies bright,
Wisdom and high thoughts are woven
And the musics of delight,

Though his temples too be fair
Yet two horns are growing there
Bursting forth to part asunder
All the riches of his hair.

Faerie maidens he may meet
Fly the horns and cloven feet,
But, his sad brown eyes with wonder
Seeing-stay from their retreat.

Clive Staples Lewis

The Spook

Last night I dreamed that I was come again
Unto the house where my beloved dwells
After long years of wandering and pain.

And I stood out beneath the drenching rain
And all the street was bare, and black with night,
But in my true love's house was warmth and light.

Yet I could not draw near nor enter in,
And long I wondered if some secret sin
Or old, unhappy anger held me fast;

Till suddenly it came into my head
That I was killed long since and lying dead-
Only a homeless wraith that way had passed.

So thus I found my true love's house again
And stood unseen amid the winter night
And the lamp burned within, a rosy light,
And the wet street was shining in the rain.

Clive Staples Lewis

The Star-Bath

A place uplifted towards the midnight sky
Far, far away among the mountains old,
A treeless waste of rocks and freezing cold,
Where the dead, cheerless moon rode neighbouring by-
And in the midst a silent tarn there lay,
A narrow pool, cold as the tide that flows
Where monstrous bergs beyond Varanger stray,
Rising from sunless depths that no man knows;
Thither as clustering fireflies have I seen
At fixed seasons all the stars come down
To wash in that cold wave their brightness clean
And win the special fire wherewith they crown
The wintry heavens in frost. Even as a flock
Of falling birds, down to the pool they came.
I saw them and I heard the icy shock
Of stars engulfed with hissing of faint flame
-Ages ago before the birth of men
Or earliest beast. Yet I was still the same
That now remember, knowing not where or when.

Clive Staples Lewis

The Witch

Trapped amid the woods with guile
They've led her bound in fetters vile
To death, a deadlier sorceress
Than any born for earth's distress
Since first the winner of the fleece
Bore home the Colchian witch to Greece-
Seven months with snare and gin
They've sought the maid o'erwise within
The forest's labyrinthine shade.
The lonely woodman half afraid
Far off her ragged form has seen
Sauntering down the alleys green,
Or crouched in godless prayer alone
At eve before a Druid stone.
But now the bitter chase is won,
The quarry's caught, her magic's done,
The bishop's brought her strongest spell
To naught with candle, book, and bell;
With holy water splashed upon her,
She goes to burning and dishonour
Too deeply damned to feel her shame,
For, though beneath her hair of flame
Her thoughtful head be lowly bowed
It droops for meditation proud
Impenitent, and pondering yet
Things no memory can forget,
Starry wonders she has seen
Brooding in the wildwood green
With holiness. For who can say
In what strange crew she loved to play,
What demons or what gods of old
Deep mysteries unto her have told
At dead of night in worship bent
At ruined shrines magnificent,
Or how the quivering will she sent
Alone into the great alone
Where all is loved and all is known,
Who now lifts up her maiden eyes
And looks around with soft surprise

Upon the noisy, crowded square,
The city oafs that nod and stare,
The bishop's court that gathers there,
The faggots and the blackened stake
Where sinners die for justice' sake?
Now she is set upon the pile,
The mob grows still a little while,
Till lo! before the eager folk
Up curls a thin, blue line of smoke.
'Alas!' the full-fed burghers cry,
'That evil loveliness must die!'

Clive Staples Lewis

To Sleep

I will find out a place for thee, O Sleep-
A hidden wood among the hill-tops green,
Full of soft streams and little winds that creep
The murmuring boughs between.

A hollow cup above the ocean placed
Where nothing rough, nor loud, nor harsh shall be,
But woodland light and shadow interlaced
And summer sky and sea.

There in the fragrant twilight I will raise
A secret altar of the rich sea sod,
Whereat to offer sacrifice and praise
Unto my lonely god:

Due sacrifice of his own drowsy flowers,
The deadening poppies in an ocean shell
Round which through all forgotten days and hours
The great seas wove their spell.

So may he send me dreams of dear delight
And draughts of cool oblivion, quenching pain,
And sweet, half-wakeful moments in the night
To hear the falling rain.

And when he meets me at the dusk of day
To call me home for ever, this I ask-
That he may lead me friendly on that way
And wear no frightful mask.

Clive Staples Lewis

Tu Ne Quaesieris

For all the lore of Lodge and Myers
I cannot heal my torn desires,
Nor hope for all that man can speer
To make the riddling earth grow clear.
Though it were sure and proven well
That I shall prosper, as they tell,
In fields beneath a different sun
By shores where other oceans run,
When this live body that was I
Lies hidden from the cheerful sky,
Yet what were endless lives to me
If still my narrow self I be
And hope and fail and struggle still,
And break my will against God's will,
To play for stakes of pleasure and pain
And hope and fail and hope again,
Deluded, thwarted, striving elf
That through the window of my self
As through a dark glass scarce can see
A warped and masked reality?
But when this searching thought of mine
Is mingled in the large Divine,
And laughter that was in my mouth
Runs through the breezes of the South,
When glory I have built in dreams
Along some fiery sunset gleams,
And my dead sin and foolishness
Grow one with Nature's whole distress,
To perfect being I shall win,
And where I end will Life begin

Clive Staples Lewis

Victory

Roland is dead, Cuchulain's crest is low,
The battered war-rear wastes and turns to rust,
And Helen's eyes and Iseult's lips are dust
And dust the shoulders and the breasts of snow.

The faerie people from our woods are gone,
No Dryads have I found in all our trees,
No Triton blows his horn about our seas
And Arthur sleeps far hence in Avalon.

The ancient songs they wither as the grass
And waste as doth a garment waxen old,
All poets have been fools who thought to mould
A monument more durable than brass.

For these decay: but not for that decays
The yearning, high, rebellious spirit of man
That never rested yet since life began
From striving with red Nature and her ways.

Now in the filth of war, the baresark shout
Of battle, it is vexed. And yet so oft
Out of the deeps, of old, it rose aloft
That they who watch the ages may not doubt.

Though often bruised, oft broken by the rod,
Yet, like the phoenix, from each fiery bed
Higher the stricken spirit lifts its head
And higher-till the beast become a god

Clive Staples Lewis

World's Desire

Love, there is a castle built in a country desolate,
On a rock above a forest where the trees are grim and great,
Blasted with the lightning sharp-giant boulders strewn between,
And the mountains rise above, and the cold ravine
Echoes to the crushing roar and thunder of a mighty river
Raging down a cataract. Very tower and forest quiver
And the grey wolves are afraid and the call of birds is drowned,
And the thought and speech of man in the boiling water's sound.
But upon the further side of the barren, sharp ravine
With the sunlight on its turrets is the castle seen,
Calm and very wonderful, white above the green
Of the wet and waving forest, slanted all away,
Because the driving Northern wind will not rest by night or day.
Yet the towers are sure above, very mighty is the stead,
The gates are made of ivory, the roofs of copper red.

Round and round the warders grave walk upon the walls for ever
And the wakeful dragons couch in the ports of ivory,
Nothing is can trouble it, hate of the gods nor man's endeavour,
And it shall be a resting-place, dear heart, for you and me.

Through the wet and waving forest with an age-old sorrow laden
Singing of the world's regret wanders wild the faerie maiden,
Through the thistle and the brier, through the tangles of the thorn,
Till her eyes be dim with weeping and her homeless feet are torn.

Often to the castle gate up she looks with vain endeavour,
For her soulless loveliness to the castle winneth never.

But within the sacred court, hidden high upon the mountain,
Wandering in the castle gardens lovely folk enough there be,
Breathing in another air, drinking of a purer fountain
And among that folk, beloved, there's a place for you and me

Clive Staples Lewis