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'The world is better with all this beautiful work seen at last.' – A. Delf, author

Last week from Clarendon House



Galaxy # 23: An Inner Circle Writers' Group Science Fiction and Fantasy Anthology

Mighty sorceresses, giant bats, the existential Abyss, an unsolved mystery in space, the power of luck, romance among the stars, gleaming swords and witches, time paradoxes, ghostly influences, communication with micro-organisms, escape from an underground city, circus demons, dystopian games, and another tale from the distant world of Emerald - *Galaxy # 23* is full of twists, turns, terror and wonder from the infinite worlds of science fiction and fantasy!



High Fantasy and Science Fiction Magazine # 2 COMPLETELY FREE



Welcome!

Welcome to the Clarendon House Newsletter for week ending 8th August 2025!

Last week: *Galaxy # 23: An Inner Circle Writers' Group Science Fiction and Fantasy Anthology* featuring the work of Raphael Merriman, Tony Fyler, the Birch Twins, Sultana Raza, Gareth Macready, A. L. Paradiso, Susanne Thomas, David Painter, DJ Elton, Jacek Wilkos, Jim Bates, Gabriella Balcom, Suranjit Gain, Timothy Law, Justin Wiggins, Allan Tierney and Alexander Marshall.

AND *High Fantasy and Science Fiction Magazine # 2* The completely FREE e-magazine is associated with the social media group *High Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

Coming soon: Issue # 79 of the *Inner Circle Writers' Magazine*, featuring the final entries in the Great Clarendon House Writing Challenge 2025! [Subscribe now](#), so you don't miss out on your chance to vote for the winner!

Feedback is welcome. Drop me a line at grant@clarendonhousebooks.com

Below is a popular blog item.



C. S. Lewis's First Novel: 'Almost Felt, Wholly Imagined'

Out of the Silent Planet, published in 1938, was Lewis's first novel and our first glimpse of how he would use fiction to express what he found so difficult to describe in letters, namely the precise effect that Dante had had upon him. It's not only the plot that is interesting; the techniques Lewis uses to engage us so that he can convey his deeper notions are also fascinating.

The novel's opening is conventional, designed to orientate us in a commonplace and very earthly setting:

The last drops of the thundershower had hardly ceased falling when the Pedestrian stuffed his map into his pocket, settled his pack more comfortably on his tired shoulders, and stepped out from the shelter of a large chestnut tree into the middle of the road. A violent yellow sunset was pouring through a rift in the clouds to westward, but straight ahead over the hills the sky was the colour of dark slate. Every tree and blade of grass was dripping, and the road shone like a river. The Pedestrian wasted no time on the landscape but set out at once with the determined stride of a good walker who has lately realized that he will have to walk farther than he intended.

Even here, though, we see Dante's influence: a Pilgrim in a dark wood, 'midway along the journey of life' is the opening scene of Dante's *Inferno*, inviting the more knowledgeable reader to begin a comparison of Elwin Ransom and Dante's Pilgrim and their journeys.

The plot begins straightforwardly: while on a walking tour, at the front door of a house in the country, the protagonist Ransom, a university philologist allegedly based on Lewis's friend J. R. R. Tolkien, hears shouting and struggling inside. When he investigates, he sees the villains Weston and Devine trying to force Harry, a dull-witted young man, to enter some kind of structure against his will. Ransom intervenes, and Devine, who sees Ransom as a better prospect than Harry for whatever he and Weston have in mind, persuades Ransom to have a drink and accept accommodation for the night.

Ransom realises that he has been drugged and tries to escape but is subdued by Weston and Devine. On regaining consciousness he finds himself in a space vessel, a metallic sphere already on its way to a planet called Malacandra. This is where we get our first taste as readers of Lewis's vision of the universe outside the orbit of

the Moon: Ransom, at first terrified but slowly coming to terms with his confinement in the spacecraft, begins to observe the world through the porthole.

There was an endless night on one side of the ship and an endless day on the other: each was marvellous and he moved from the one to the other at his will delighted. In the nights, which he could create by turning the handle of a door, he lay for hours in contemplation of the skylight. The Earth's disc was nowhere to be seen; the stars, thick as daisies on an uncut lawn, reigned perpetually with no cloud, no moon, no sunrise to dispute their sway. There were planets of unbelievable majesty, and constellations undreamed of: there were celestial sapphires, rubies, emeralds and pin-pricks of burning gold; far out on the left of the picture hung a comet, tiny and remote: and between all and behind all, far more emphatic and palpable than it showed on Earth, the undimensioned, enigmatic blackness. The lights trembled: they seemed to grow brighter as he looked. Stretched naked on his bed, a second Dana, he found it night by night more difficult to disbelieve in old astrology: almost he felt, wholly he imagined, 'sweet influence' pouring or even stabbing into his surrendered body.





The key phrase is the last: 'almost he felt, wholly he imagined, "sweet influence" pouring or even stabbing into his surrendered body.' This is precisely the sensation which a younger Lewis must have 'almost felt, wholly imagined' on reading Dante's description of the universe in *Paradiso*.

*All Paradise began to ring with the sweet strain
'Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit!' -- which intoxicated me. I seemed to see the entire universe smile, and I was enraptured by both sound and sight. O joy! O indescribable ecstasy! O life of perfect love and peace! O endless unlimited riches!*

Lewis has Ransom clarify his thoughts about the Space through which he journeys in no uncertain terms:

A nightmare, long engendered in the modern mind by the mythology that follows in the wake of science, was falling off him. He had read of 'Space': at the back of his thinking for years had lurked the dismal fancy of the black, cold vacuity, the utter deadness, which was supposed to separate the worlds. He had not known how much it affected him till now - now that the very name 'Space' seemed a blasphemous libel for this empyrean ocean of radiance in which they swam. He could not call it 'dead'; he felt life pouring into him from it every moment. How indeed should it be otherwise, since out of this ocean the worlds and all their life had come? He had thought it barren: he saw now that it was the womb of worlds, whose blazing and innumerable offspring looked down nightly even upon the Earth with so many eyes - and here, with how many more! No: Space was the wrong name. Older thinkers had been wiser when they named it simply the heavens - the heavens which

declared the glory - the 'happy climes that lie Where day never shuts his eye Up in the broad fields of the sky.'

Not that Ransom immediately learns any broader lessons from these experiences, as of course Lewis needs his readers to progress vicariously through his protagonist's revelations, which must not come all at once. Ransom overhears Weston and Devine deliberating whether they will again drug him or keep him conscious when they turn him over as a sacrifice to the inhabitants of Malacandra. His reaction resembles the trained reaction of the reader, especially of the mid-Twentieth Century:

His mind, like so many minds of his generation, was richly furnished with bogies. He had read his H. G. Wells and others. His universe was peopled with horrors such as ancient and mediaeval mythology could hardly rival. No insect-like, vermiculate or crustacean Abominable, no twitching feelers, rasping wings, slimy coils, curling tentacles, no monstrous union of superhuman intelligence and insatiable cruelty seemed to him anything but likely on an alien world.

Ransom doesn't 'connect the dots' despite his vision of the stars; he has not yet begun to suspect that the nature of the universe through which he is travelling is any different from the one which Wells and other conventional authors have portrayed from their 'modern' perspective. At this point in the story, he is a man of the Twentieth Century, subject to fears and anxieties based on the culture in which he has grown up.

Upon landing on the strange planet, Ransom escapes into the unknown landscape just after he sees tall alien creatures who terrify him as he expected. He wanders around, exploring lakes, streams, rivers, plants and mountains and thus enabling the reader to find some bearings in this new landscape. But then he meets another native of Malacandra, a *hross* named Hyoi, a tall, thin, and furry otter-like creature who is quite intelligent and is part of a species with a culture and civilisation. As a guest for several months in Hyoi's village, Ransom uses his philological skills to learn the creatures' language, discovering that gold, known to the *hrossa* as 'sun's blood', is plentiful on Malacandra, perceiving its acquisition to be Devine's motivation for making the voyage. His slow acclimatisation to this otherworldly culture begins to 'detoxify' his imagination.

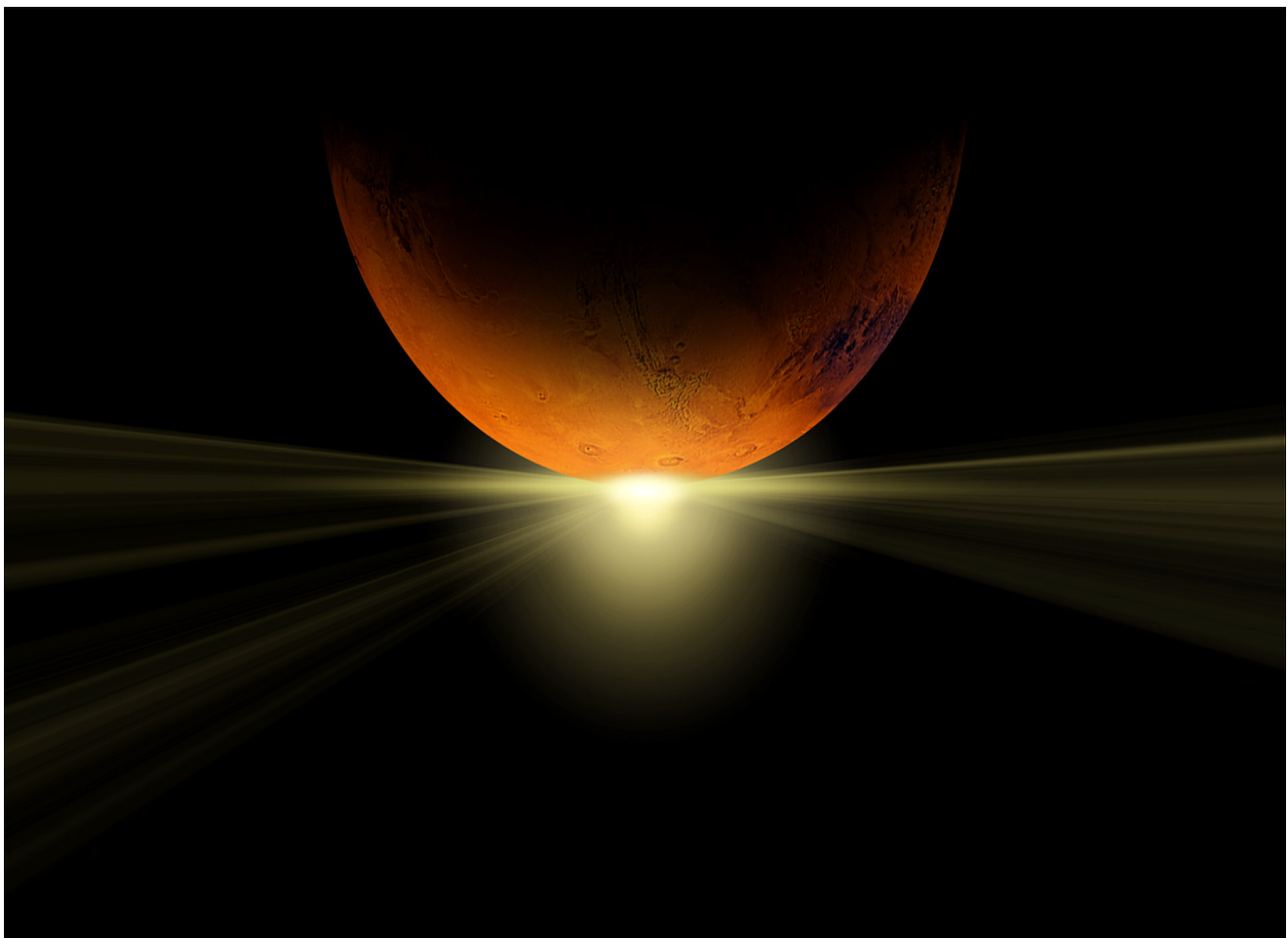
Ransom also discovers that there is a different type of being on this new world: an eldil. These are not fleshly creatures, but pure spirit, as Hyoi tries to explain to him:

Eldila are hard to see. They are not like us. Light goes through them. You must be looking in the right place and the right time; and that is not likely to come about unless the eldil wishes to be seen. Sometimes you can mistake them for a sunbeam or even a moving of the leaves; but when you look again you see that it was an eldil and that it is gone. But whether your eyes can ever see them I do not know.

After many adventures, Ransom finally makes it to Meldilorn, the home of Oyarsa, the eldil who is the true ruler of Malacandra, and a long-awaited conversation begins. Lewis begins to outline a different solar system to the one with which we are accustomed. In the course of

this conversation it is explained that there are Oyéresu (the plural) for each of the planets in our solar system; in the four inner planets, which have organic life (intelligent and non-intelligent), the local Oyarsa is responsible for that life. The ruler of Earth (Thulcandra, 'the silent planet'), has turned evil (become 'bent') and has been restricted to Thulcandra, after 'great war,' by the Oyéresu and the authority of Maleldil, the ruler of the universe. Lewis's construction of this new universe parallels that described by Dante.

Devine and Weston are also brought before Oyarsa, but are guarded by hrossa, because they have killed three of that race. Weston makes a long speech outlining his proposed invasion of Malacandra, justifying it as part of humanity's inevitable progression and evolution. Ransom attempts to translate this into Malacandrian, thus exposing the blunt brutality of Weston's ambitions.



Though Oyarsa listens studiously to Weston's speech and even acknowledges that the scientist is acting out of a sense of duty to his species, and not mere greed, the details of the philosophies which are part of the novel at this point are less important than the shift that has taken place overall: the protagonist Ransom has undergone a shift of viewpoint not only of the nature of the inhabitants of other worlds but also of the essence of the universe itself - Ransom has found that the cosmos isn't what he thought it was. Like Lewis himself, Ransom has come to understand that the material, Earth-centred reality he has been brought up in is not the only reality.

Weston is so 'bent', so out-of-touch with the Dantean reality which Lewis has created, that he only sees through the lens of his preconceived notions: the creatures around him are 'savages', unworthy of his attention. The species on Malacandra, *sorns*, *hrossa*, and *pfifltriggi*, laugh at Weston but (like Uncle Andrew in Lewis's later *The Magician's Nephew*) Weston is unable to interpret their laughter as anything other than roarings and noise. Weston will sacrifice himself for a philosophy he believes in, even when it is disconnected from reality, but Devine, a man driven by greed alone, terrified by now, exclaims 'Oh, Hell!' Both men are in fact trapped in a Hell of their own making. As the Oyarsa says of Devine

this Thin One who sits on the ground he [the Bent Eldil] has broken, for he has left him nothing but greed. He is now only a talking animal and in my world he could do no more evil than an animal. If he were mine I would unmake his body for the hnau in it is already dead.

Weston, Devine and Ransom are despatched back to Earth and survive the trip, but the novel concludes with the notion that Ransom and Lewis are collaborating to compose and publish *Out of the Silent Planet* under the guise of fiction when it actually happened as fact. They suppose that only a few readers will recognise the story as describing factual events, but are

preparing (in the context of the story) for further conflict with Weston or the 'Bent Oyarsa'. This sets the tale up for a sequel.

Out of the Silent Planet is indeed to be the first of a trilogy of books which are grouped together and called 'the Ransom trilogy', 'the Space trilogy' or even 'the Cosmic trilogy'. But while they have much in common - especially the figure of Ransom - they are in fact three quite different usages of fiction: *Out of the Silent Planet* is more distinctly 'science fiction' and is Lewis's attempt to use the tools of that genre to convey his point about the different viewpoints of the universe from Dante; but *Perelandra* or *Voyage to Venus* is something quite different, more of a fantasy; and *That Hideous Strength*, the third book, bears more of a resemblance to a thriller than anything else.

In fact, Lewis uses three different genres, each to make the same point, as we shall see.

For more, get [How Stories Really Work](#) - and [The Myth Makers: Essays on C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien](#).





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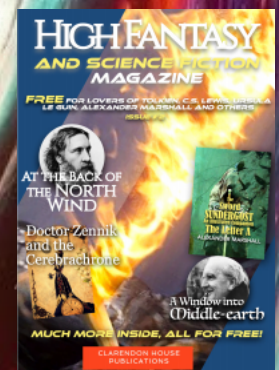
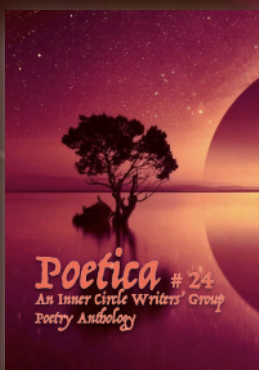
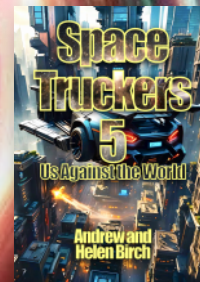
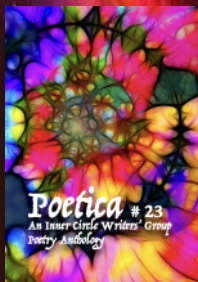
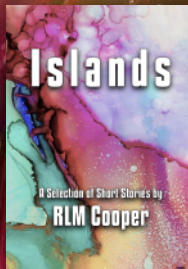
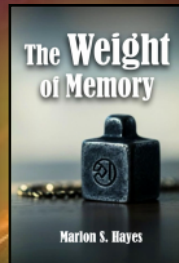


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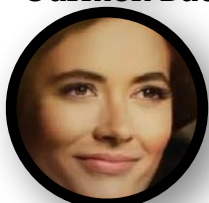
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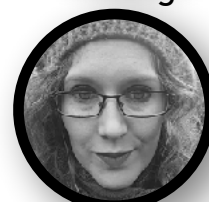
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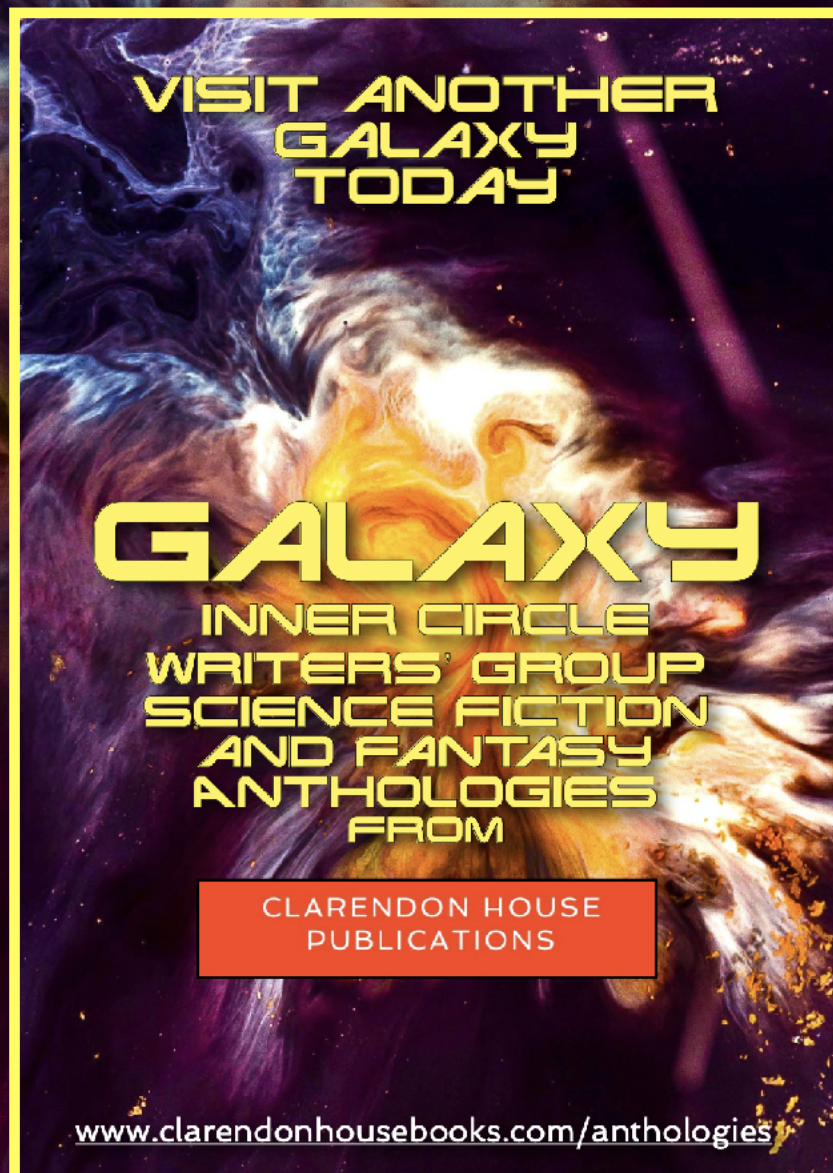


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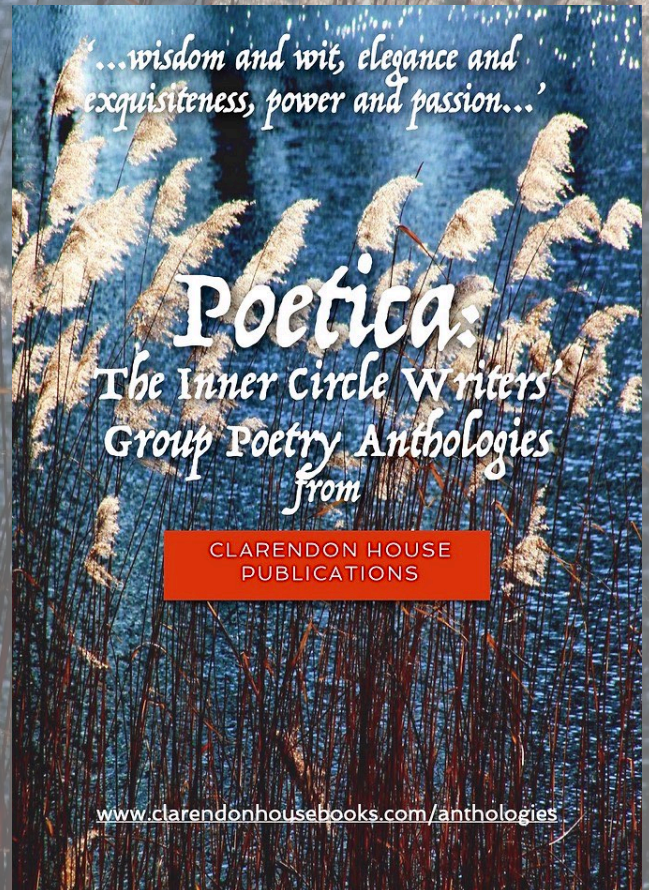
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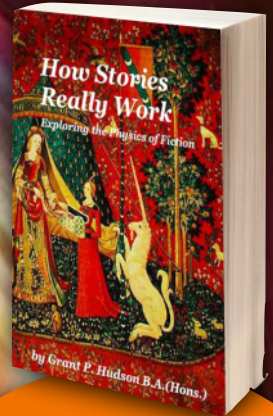


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