

RE-ENCHANTING THE WORLD

Josh Herring on overcoming our modern
disenchantment.

This essay has three goals: to convince the reader that we inhabitants of late modernity suffer from a condition of disenchantment; to persuade the reader that a certain sort of 'enchantment' gives rise to a better kind of 'being-in-the-world'; and to demonstrate the ways in which the arts draw the imagination into a commonly imagined space equipping the reader to see hidden meaning in the surrounding (real) world. By the conclusion, I hope to leave you not longing for a non-existent fairy land, but seeking to find the good, the true, and the beautiful, which evidence the craftsmanship implicit in all creation.

A trip to the North Carolina Museum of Art allowed me to reflect on the difference between antiquity and modernity. The museum is organized chronologically, with exhibits displaying paintings, sculptures, and artifacts from antiquity through the late 20th century. My attention was caught by a Renaissance painting from the

workshop of Apollonio di Giovanni entitled *The Triumph of Chastity*.¹

The painting was dated between 1450 and 1460 and expresses a way of looking at the world abandoned between then and now. *The Triumph of Chastity* portrays a woman clad in gold and drawn upon a magnificent chariot by two unicorns. Cupid, representing lust, is bound at the woman's feet and she is accompanied by a party of ladies forming a wedding procession. The painting was intended as a wedding gift, and it celebrates the chaste bride on her wedding day. The painting is two sided, and two nude boys are shown on the reverse representing the fruit of marital love.

This painting, based on the poetry of Petrarch, demonstrates an allegorical approach to the world. For the medievals, it seems that nothing was *just* what it appears to be, but rather all things correspond to some higher meaning. The pure bride on her wedding day is not just a woman, but a triumphantly victorious representation of chastity. Her chaste status is not merely an absence of sexual opportunity, but a chaining of Cupid. It is the role of the artist not merely to

¹ Di Giovanni, Apollonio. *The Triumph of Chastity*, ca. 1450-1460. Tempera a gold leaf on panel. North Carolina Museum of Art. Accessed February 7, 2019. https://ncartmuseum.org/art/detail/the_triumph_of_chastity

commemorate the occasion, but to draw the viewer's mind to contemplate the higher meaning found in the mundane moment. The world has its obvious appearance, but behind the obvious lies the enchanted. Charles Taylor explains the enchanted *mentalité* in *A Secular Age*, writing "The enchanted world in this sense is the world of spirits, demons, and moral forces which our ancestors lived in."² As Peter Brown argues in his *Late Antiquity*, pre-modern civilizations had a real conviction that spiritual forces and meanings underlaid all physical phenomena.

It was this conviction of higher meanings which caused medieval intellectuals to develop their allegorical understanding of the world; as the masterpiece of God, the world resonated with meaning. It was the mark of the intellectual to be able to discern the higher meaning, the enchanted meaning, in the world. In this practice, medieval thinkers picked up on a tradition begun in antiquity; for the Greeks, the world was the meeting point of thousands of cosmic powers and the poet was the man who, through oral composition, could make meaning of the world through his myth-making. It is this idea of higher meanings packed into the mundane world

² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*. (Cambridge: Belknap Harvard, 2011), 26.

which distinguishes the early modern, medieval, and ancient eras from the modern in the mind of German sociologist Max Weber.

In 1918, Weber delivered a speech entitled “Science as a Vocation” to students at the university in Munich in the midst of that speech, Weber developed a concept he called the “disenchantment of the world” to explain the condition of modernity. He argued that previous eras viewed the world as a site of enchanted meaning, but that the modern era is distinguished by rejecting this enchantment, leaving modern man “disenchanted” in his pursuit of knowledge and view of the world. Three quotations from Weber’s essay will help illuminate what he means by “enchantment” and “disenchantment.”

We live as did the ancients when their world was not yet disenchanted of its gods and demons, only we live in a different sense. As Hellenic man at times sacrificed to Aphrodite and at other times to Apollo, and, above all, as everybody sacrificed to the gods of his city, so do we still nowadays, only the bearing of man has been disenchanted and denuded of its mystical but inwardly genuine plasticity.³

³ Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation.” Accessed online February 7, 2019.
<http://www.wisdom.weizmann.ac.il/~oded/X/WeberScienceVocation.pdf>

In comparison with modernity, Weber contrasts the Homeric world where Greeks saw the gods in the world with the modern turn to the inward man. As Hesiod and Homer portray the Greeks (and Herodotus seems to verify), the Greeks physically saw the sea yet understood it as Pontus; they physically saw lightning, yet they understood it as the manifestation of Zeus's order in the cosmos. It was the duty of each Greek to placate the gods; in this sense, Weber understands modern man still interacts with natural forces, yet without a sense of wonder. The disenchanted world is one "denuded" of its wonder and beauty.

Weber contends that the movement from mythological worship of the gods to scientific mastery of the world caused this disenchantment. He argues that modern man believes that "there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted."⁴ Weber identifies the shift from imagining the world as a mysterious place of wonder to envisioning it as a

⁴ Ibid.

laboratory where, if one but does the right experiment, he can gain total knowledge of the subject at hand. Whether one dedicates the time and effort to do this is irrelevant; the point remains that if one had the time to spend answering a certain question, science, in this modern sense, promises him total knowledge and control over the world. Such a shift in how western man imagines the world does not come without a cost. Weber goes on to argue:

The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and, above all, the 'disenchantment of the world.' Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations. It is not accidental that our greatest art is intimate and not monumental, nor is it accidental that today only within the smallest and intimate circles, in personal human situations, in *pianissimo*, that something is pulsating that corresponds to the prophetic *pneuma*, which in former times swept through the great communities like a firebrand, wielding them together.⁵

⁵ Ibid.

In this third passage, Weber articulates what he believes is lost in this disenchantment. Modern man no longer perceives fairies in the woods, gods in the clouds, or greatness in the world. Such aspects of humanity which called communities of the past to high ideals are either beyond the world or reduced to such circles of intimacy that they cannot issue forth a universal demand upon mankind. It was such enchantment, Weber argues, which undergirded the great monuments of antiquity; having rejected the enchantment which summoned individuals to larger community, modernity was incapable of art on a grand scale. Instead, we moderns and post-moderns are left with immediately intimate art operating between artist and observer rather than the art of an enchanted world drawing observers into a commonly imagined space.

Weber believes modern man is missing value his ancestors perceived, and that the world is a shallower place for the lack. He is not the only intellectual to perceive a hollowness to the post-Enlightenment west with its emphasis on Reason and scientific materialism; poets John Keats and William Wordsworth both articulated a Romantic vision of this concept of disenchantment.

Keats expresses the Romantic sense of wonder most clearly in his sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer." In it he captures the sense of wonder felt upon first entering the Homeric realm, a world where goddesses seduce men on islands, where shipwrecks

express the wrath of an injured god, where the heavens
thrum with life.

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.⁶

⁶ John Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer."
Accessed online December 14, 2017.
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44481/on-first-looking-into-chapmans-homer>.

Written in 1816, Keats's poem expresses a sense of wonder which stands in marked contrast to the industrialized England of his day. Wordsworth predates Keats by ten years, writing his poem "The World is Too Much with us; Late and Soon" in 1806. Here he expresses his distress at the change in imagination and loss of meaning in the world.

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.⁷

⁷ William Wordsworth, "The World is too Much With us Late and Soon." William Wordsworth. Accessed online December 14, 2017. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45564/the-world-is-too-much-with-us>.

Wordsworth contrasts the new economic possibilities of wealth and all the promise which scientific domination of nature extends with his view of the enchanted past. “We have given our hearts away” in the pursuit of forcing nature to yield her riches. The cost is a loss of meaning in the world: “It moves us not.” Rather than a meaningless industrial Christianity, Wordsworth would rather be the “Pagan suckled in a creed outworn” if he could but look upon the sea and see not salty H₂O but instead “Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;/Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.”

Wordsworth and Keats were both monumental poets of their day, and their poetry speaks to a lessening of the world. Have we lost something? Are we missing a greatness in the world that our ancestors could perceive, yet we are somehow blind to? In his 1968 novel *The Last Unicorn*. Peter Beagle makes a compelling case for disenchantment affecting our ability to perceive the marvelous and the beautiful in the world.

The Last Unicorn begins in a wood, home to the last unicorn. Beagle describes the unicorn as “very old” and “the color of snow falling on a moonlit night.” She combines the grace of deer with the strength of horses; her horn “shone and shivered with its own seashell light

even in the deepest midnight.”⁸ Blessed with immortality, the unicorn remained in her wood until she heard the speculation of hunters that she was the last of the unicorns. The unicorn then undertakes a quest to find her fellow unicorns. Once she leaves her forest, she interacts with other humans. These interactions are where Beagle highlights the meaning of the unicorn; she is something breathtakingly wonderful, verging upon the sublime. In the world of the story, unicorns are legendary but existent creatures (which presumably humans should recognize), a bit of enchantment in the world. The unicorn is spotted by a man who prepares to catch her; their interchange is worth quoting in full.

“Steady now, you pretty little thing.’

‘I’ve never really understood,’ the unicorn mused as the man picked himself up, ‘what you dream of doing with me once you’ve caught me.’ The man leaped again, and she slipped away from him like rain. ‘I don’t think you know yourselves,’ she said.

‘Ah, steady, steady, easy now.’ The man’s sweating face was striped with dirt, and he could hardly get his breath. ‘Pretty,’ he gasped. ‘You pretty little mare.’

⁸ Peter Beagle, *The Last Unicorn*, (New York: Roc, 1991), 1.

‘Mare?’ The unicorn trumpeted the word so shrilly that the man stopped pursuing her...”⁹

The unicorn is shocked that the man fails to perceive her as a unicorn; instead, he is the first of several humans who have seemingly lost the ability to see her as a mysterious part of the world. Each perceives her to be something special, but none see her for what she is. She is mistaken for a donkey, a mule, and a horse; no one recognizes her for the unicorn she is, except for a witch who captures her for economic exploitation.

In this novel, Beagle uses the unicorn as a metaphor for enchanted beauty. He proposes that there are moments of enchantment around us, like the unicorn wandering through a cultivated field, yet the vast majority of humanity remains incapable of perceiving the beauty as it truly is. This metaphor of the extraordinary unicorn mistaken for a common mare is the heart of Weber’s concept of *disenchantment*.

As children of the Enlightenment, we reflexively think scientifically. We ponder the meaning of the world and design experiments to test our theories. Rather than marveling at the *donnee* of the world or envisioning ourselves as players in a cosmic drama, disenchantment

⁹ Ibid, 6.

extends the promise of total knowledge, power, and control over a more vastly imagined space than that of our ancestors at the cost of removing us as active agents discovering a marvelous place in a wondrous world. Taylor puts it this way: “We move from an enchanted world, inhabited by spirits and forces, to a disenchanted one; but perhaps more important, we have moved from a world which is encompassed within certain bounds and static to one which is vast, feels infinite, and is in the midst of an evolution spread over aeons.”¹⁰ In this seemingly infinite of the disenchanted world, the quest for human identity loses the framework where man situates himself in relation to other beings; where the medieval “Great Chain of Being” positioned man lower than the angels and higher than the beasts, the disenchanted world removes these relationships and changes the story which man tells about himself. James K.A. Smith expresses the significance of this shift in *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*. He writes,

. . . our action emerges from how we *imagine* the world. What we do is driven by who we are, by the kind of person we have become. And that shaping of our character is, to a great extent, the effect of stories that have captivated us, that have sunk into our bones -

¹⁰ Taylor, 323.

- stories that 'picture' what we think life is all about, what constitutes 'the good life.' . . . And such stories capture our imaginations precisely because narrative trains our emotions, and those emotions actually condition our perception of the world.¹¹

Changing the story through which we process the world, moving from an enchanted cosmos filled with meaningful creatures to a disenchanting universe without purpose, illustrates both the dilemma of modernity and the way forward to a recovery of significance within existence. Literature can teach us how to find meaning and then to see it in the world around us.

As human beings, we are myth-makers and story-creators. While certain men and women rise to a high level of poetic making, the desire to explain who we are through story is a universal element of human identity. As Tolkien wrote in *Mythopoeia*,

Man, Sub-creator, the refracted light through whom is splintered from a single White to many hues, and endlessly combined in living shapes that move from mind to mind. Though all the crannies of the world we

¹¹ James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 32.

filled with Elves and Goblins, though we dared to build Gods and their houses out of dark and light, and sowed the seed of dragons, 'twas our right (used or misused). The right has not decayed. We make still by the law in which we're made.¹²

In reaching for the language of *Genesis* and idea of a “Sub-creator” who resembles his ultimate Creator through myth-making, Tolkien argues that the human instinct to take the raw materials of life, the world, traditions, and knowledge and weave them together into a narrative which explains the world and humanity in it is an *essential* part of human nature, not an *accidental* feature. If he is right, then Tolkien’s observation implies that human beings will always seek to narrativize the world; we cannot go through life in absence of a story which imparts meaning to the world. Smith puts it this way: “In short, the way to the heart [the seat of desires] is through the body, and the way into the body is through story.”¹³ Narrative, for Smith, is directly connected to our anthropology as embodied beings. Humans are not mere intellects shaped by rationality, but rather embodied

¹² J.R.R. Tolkien, “Mythopoeia.” Accessed online on December 14, 2017.
<http://home.agh.edu.pl/~evermind/jrrtolkien/mythopoeia.htm>.

¹³ Smith, 13-14.

souls. Story reaches us as such, and locates us in a nexus of meaning. We experience this meaning, and then move outward from it to process the world through the tales we tell.

The question becomes which sort of meaning will we put on the world? Is the world a beautiful gift to be celebrated and explored? Or rather, is the world a place hiding horror under its skin? Our task as human beings involves dwelling within the world and determining what meaning we will make of it. Literature is best understood as the collection of the best stories told and written by the generations of mankind and the fount from which contemporary writers draw inspiration. As such, it both highlights the possibility of recovering an enchanted view of the world, one which sees it as *meaningful* beyond its scientific value, and demonstrates two different approaches which accomplish this goal.

Two authors illustrate these approaches: H. P. Lovecraft appeals to a demonic enchantment, while C. S. Lewis appeals to a kindly enchantment. Neither of these authors invented their particular approaches, yet both exemplify an effort to find deeper meaning in the world in contrast to a scientific narrative.

Lovecraft stands out for intentionally employing a certain sense of enchantment in his short stories. Writing during the early 20th century, Lovecraft wrote at the height of modernism, and his writing seeks to move the reader to consider the mystery of the world. In

“Pickman’s Model” Lovecraft gives these lines to the narrator of the tale, speaking about his own 20th century day in contrast to the 18th century world:

There were witches and what their spells summoned; pirates and what they brought in from the sea; smugglers; privateers – and I tell you, people knew how to live, and how to enlarge the bounds of life, in the old times! This wasn’t the only world a bold and wise man could know – faugh! And to think of today in contrast, with such pale-pink brains that even a club of supposed artists gets shudders and convulsions if a picture goes beyond the feelings of a Bacon Street tea-table!¹⁴

Lovecraft sees the modern world as less meaningful than olden days, and one of his goals as a writer is to move the reader to imagine *more*. The direction of his imagining, however, marks Lovecraft as distinct from other authors. In each of his stories, Lovecraft portrays a demonic enchantment of the world.

Lovecraft reaches not for a kindly enchantment but for what he calls the “weird,” the deep darkness under the

¹⁴ H. P. Lovecraft, “Pickman’s Model.” Accessed online on December 14, 2017. <http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/fiction/pm.aspx>.

surface of reality. For Lovecraft, the world as we know it is a mask hiding unknowable fear below the surface. The tone of his stories is persistently negative; each of his adjectives and adverbs shades darker and more fearful connotations to his prose. In his most famous short story, "The Call of Cthulhu," Lovecraft opens with these words commenting on metaphysical reality:

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position herein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.¹⁵

The sciences, according to Lovecraft, are not blessings to mankind but hold the potential to shatter the illusions that protect our sanity; if we *really* understood

15 H.P. Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu." Accessed online on December 14, 2017.
<http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/fiction/cc.aspx>.

the world, we would go mad with terror. A Lovecraftian future does not evoke Arthur C. Clarke's vistas of evolved humanity but rather the "safety of a new dark age." Far from saving humanity, Lovecraft highlights the potential that science holds for damning mankind.

Later in the same story, Lovecraft has his protagonist learn of Cthulhu, the dark prophet who will one day summon the elder gods from the stars. The protagonist writes,

I shall never sleep calmly again when I think of the horrors that lurk ceaselessly behind life in time and in space, and of those unhallowed blasphemies from elder stars which dream beneath the sea, known and favored by a nightmare cult ready and eager to loose them on the world whenever another earthquake shall heave their monstrous stone city again to the sun and air.¹⁶

Here Lovecraft is clear: the world is more than we know, but the things which we do not know are terrifying "horrors," "unhallowed blasphemies" hiding behind the normality of time and space.

¹⁶ Ibid.

In “Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family” Lovecraft opens the narrative with the clearest articulation of his demonic enchantment of the world. He writes,

Life is a hideous thing, and from the background behind what we know of it peer daemonic hints of truth which make it sometimes a thousandfold more hideous. Science, already oppressive with its shocking revelations, will perhaps be the ultimate exterminator of our human species – if separate species we be – for its reserve of unguessed horrors could never be borne by mortal brains if loosed upon the world. If we knew what we are, we should do as Sir Arthur Jermyn did; and Arthur Jermyn soaked himself in oil and set fire to his clothing one night.¹⁷

Lovecraft agrees with Peter Beagle that the world has unknown mystery at its core; that mystery, however, is not one of beauty but of horror, not of majesty but of devouring, not of blessing but of cursing.

Lovecraft is one of the fathers of the horror genre, and part of his genius lies in tapping into the human desire for enchantment. We humans long to make much

¹⁷ H.P. Lovecraft, “Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and his Family.” Accessed online on December 14, 2017. <http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/fiction/faj.aspx>.

of the world; we want to think that there is more to the world than eating, working, sleeping, and dying. Lovecraft argues there is much more to the world than we know, and if we knew the unknowable our minds would shred in fear.

Lovecraft has many modern descendants who tap into a stream of fear to support their literary efforts. A Gnostic sense of mystery lies behind Stephen King's *Dark Tower* series, and a grotesque love of the macabre in mundane life fills the writing of Chuck Paluhniuk. More recently, the Netflix show *Stranger Things* capitalizes on the human desire for enchantment and, by the conclusion of Season 1, fully embraces a demonic enchantment.

If H. P. Lovecraft exemplifies the demonic sense of enchantment, C. S. Lewis exemplifies the kindly sense of enchantment. As an Oxford Don, Lewis brought an awareness of modernism to his writing of fiction. In his Ransom Trilogy (though published as the *Space Trilogy*), Lewis intentionally interacts with modernism, setting it in opposition in his enchanted view of the cosmos. Lewis harkens back to the medieval understanding of the universe and brings it forward to the mid-20th century, urging the reader to imagine a cosmos filled with joy.

Out of the Silent Planet follows the tale of Ransom's journey from Earth to Mars. He is kidnapped by two scientists, and on his voyage to Mars he meditates on a surprising development. Lewis writes,

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 ly

Where day never shuts his eye

Up in the broad fields of the sky."

He quoted Milton's words to himself lovingly,
at this time and often.¹⁸

Like Lovecraft, Lewis consciously sets this passage against a scientific mindset represented by the word "space." Lewis notes that "space" spawns a mythology, a sort of story in the reader's mind. While the astrophysicist may not intend to do so, his use of "space" in describing the area outside earth's atmosphere evokes certain images which Lewis calls "mythology." Rather than the living *cosmos* of the ancient Greeks, "space" connotes death, emptiness on a vast scale, and creates in the reader's imagination a void. Lewis envisions the same concept represented by the term "heavens." "Heavens" connotes a realm populated by personal beings, filled with light, and joyous. Throughout the trilogy, Ransom comes to a greater understanding of the cosmos and learns that Earth is the only planet which sees itself as a contained totality. Every other planet hangs in the heavens and participates in the Great Dance of the cosmos before Maleldil.

Lewis does not leave us wondering at the difference between these two visions of enchantment. Where Lovecraft's demonic enchantment produces terror,

¹⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*. (New York: Scribner, 2003), 34.

suspicion, and a sense of displacement in the world, Lewis's kindly enchantment leads Ransom to poetry, joy, and a sense of happy discovery. Lewis concludes *Out of the Silent Planet* with Ransom's return to Earth having dwelt for a time with the creatures of Mars. Ransom reflects on a memory of his time on Mars and in so doing ends the novel on a note of re-enchantment. Ransom recalls,

And then I see the night sky. The greater part of it is very like ours, though the depths are blacker and the stars brighter; but something that no terrestrial analogy will enable you fully to picture is happening in the west. Imagine the Milky Way magnified – the Milky Way seen through our largest telescope on the clearest night. And then imagine this, not painted across the zenith, but rising like a constellation behind the mountain tops – a dazzling necklace of lights brilliant as planets, slowly heaving itself up till it fills a fifth of the sky and now leaves a belt of blackness between itself and the horizon. It is too bright to look at for long, but it is only a preparation. Something else is coming...And now the true king of the night is set up, and now he is threading his way through that strange western galaxy and making its lights dim by comparison with his own. I turn my eyes away, for the little disk is far brighter than the Moon in her greatest splendor. The whole *handramit* is bathed in colorless light; I could count the stems of the forest on the far side of the lake; I see that my fingernails are broken and dirty. And now I guess what I have seen –

Jupiter rising beyond the Asteroids and forty million miles nearer than he has ever been to earthly eyes.¹⁹

Lewis concludes the novel with a depiction of Jupiter's rise in relation to Mars, but he does so with an eye towards replacing a scientific view with an enchanted one. Jupiter is not just a planet, but a mover in the Great Dance. The shift of stars is no mere astronomical occurrence, but a nightly movement of great beauty. After reading *Out of the Silent Planet*, one cannot look at the stars and see them as Pumbaa's "big balls of gas burning billions of miles away" but rather markers of a divine order perceivable to the human mind.

Both of these enchantments summon the reader to imagine himself within a certain kind of world; in one, the reader should be filled with terror. In the other, he should be filled with joy in response to the wonder of reality. In both cases, the authors seek to cause the reader to see himself within a meaningful existence, and literary narrative draws the reader into the constructed reality, and send him forth to find meaning in primary reality. Lovecraft and Lewis both illustrate the desire within modern man to find significance in the world around him, and offer opposing paths to finding that enchanted vision.

¹⁹ Ibid., 158.

The trouble with enchantment, of course, is that the lands of *faerie* and *fantasie* simply are not real in the same way that Oakland is real. We cannot return to an earlier day when imagined creatures were responsible for the quirks of fortune and misfortune; what we can do is inhabit the worlds in literature and cultivate the habit of seeking meaning where it may be found. When we leave the secondary world, we find that we can apply the same seeking in the primary world in which we dwell. The desire for a meaningful existence is a true longing.

As my wife and I wound our way through the North Carolina Museum of Art, we eventually ended our morning in the modern art exhibit. There I found a piece which struck me as a clear example of the disenchanted world - Ellsworth Kelly's *Blue Panel*, which was painted in 1980. The entire painting is a geometrically wrong blue shape; it looks like a rectangle oriented diagonally, but the angles are off. There is nothing more to the piece: no frame, no figures, just a blue shape. Kelly writes, "By removing the content from my work, I shifted the visual reality of painting to include the space around it." In this case, that space is an intentionally blank white wall focusing the viewer's eyes back to the blue shape. The nearby explanatory plaque concludes that Kelly's "shaped, monochromatic canvases distill painting to pure abstraction, immersing the viewer in a visceral, voluptuous field of color." Rather than creating a unique mental experience, Kelley's painting removes the viewer's ability to interact with it. In this sense *Blue Panel*

represents an unenchanted world, and if the world is nothing more than that which the physical sciences study and teach us to master, then there is no personality, no mystery, no grandeur to reality as a whole.

If instead we perceive an enchanted reality, one where the Creator has made all the world as a wonder for our enjoyment, suddenly the world and everything in it takes on the beauty of a unicorn, the danger of a dragon, the mystery of a sphinx. As Tolkien put it,

I would that I might with the minstrels sing
and stir the unseen with a throbbing string.
I would be with the mariners of the deep
that cut their slender planks on mountains
steep and voyage upon a vague and
wandering quest, for some have passed
beyond the fabled West. I would with the
beleaguered fools be told, that keep an inner
fastness where their gold, impure and scanty,
yet they loyally bring to mint in image blurred
of distant king, or in fantastic banners weave
the sheen heraldic emblems of a lord
unseen.²⁰

²⁰ Tolkien, "Mythopoeia."

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