

The *eldila* of C. S. Lewis's science fiction trilogy hold a unique position in the author's cosmology. Although Lewis derived these spirits, angels, or *daimones* from pagan sources, Apuleius' *De Deo Socratis* in chief, he acknowledged their existence in "the actual universe" (*Letters*, ed. Hooper, 1988, 476). His willingness to accept a pagan divinity results from his understanding of Graeco-Roman myth as a distorted revelation of truth.

Lewis had a special affinity with Apuleius. He read the complete works of the Latin sophist in 1917 while at Oxford, and the experience seems to have remained with him for the rest of his life (Hooper, 1996, 246-8). Although the popular theologian claimed that Apuleius was only a "source" and not a "model" for his novel *Till We Have Faces*, he cared enough about his source to read in the secondary literature (Lewis, 1956, 313). Apuleius also figured prominently in Lewis's classes on medieval literature; he cites *De Deo Socratis* as one of five classical works crucial to interpreting the medieval worldview (Lewis, 1964, 40-44). It is consequently not surprising that the ideas of *De Deo Socratis* should find voice in Lewis's fiction as well.

The authorial voice in the science fiction trilogy cites the works of Bernardus Silvestris (*Out of the Silent Planet* 153) and Natvilcius (*Perelandra* 17) as experts on the earth's own *eldila*. We should not overemphasize the medieval influence in order to save Lewis from paganism, however. Natvilcius appears to be a fiction (Downing, 1992, 70-71), and nearly all the substantive material on *daimones* found in Silvestris is derived from Apuleius and other classical works. There are, moreover, several characteristics of the *eldila* which are mentioned only briefly in Silvestris but are key to Apuleius' interpretation of *daimones*. Both Apuleius' *daimones* (*De Deo* 6-7, 19) and Lewis's *eldila* (*That Hideous Strength* 65-67, *Perelandra* 20, etc.) are conveyors of signifying dreams and directly intervene in human affairs. Secondly, Silvestris has little to say about the physical nature of *daimones* but this topic is treated rather fully by Lewis (*Perelandra* 170-1) and Apuleius (*De Deo* 11). Finally, the basic premise of Lewis's trilogy is dependent upon Apuleius' tripartite division of the universe. The role of *daimones* in the atmosphere is to act as an intermediary between humans on earth and the gods in the heavens (*De Deo* 4). In the trilogy that premise is nullified with the invention of the spaceship. Humans no longer need an intermediary (*That Hideous Strength* 290-1) to contact the gods.

Lewis's fascination with myth pervades nearly all of his fiction. Elwin Ransom in *Perelandra* (172) thinks to himself, "The Muse is a real thing. A faint breath, as Virgil says, reaches even the late generations." To the hero of the trilogy as well as Lewis himself, spirits, even pagan ones, can reveal a greater truth. The defender of the faith once replied to a complaint that the world was turning pagan with the exclamation, "Utinam fieret," for that would put humanity closer to the source of that faint breath (*Latin Letters*, Moynihan, ed., 1998, 84).