

Science Fiction and Religion: A parallel between *The Time Machine* and *Perelandra**

Fecha de recepción: 17 de julio de 2020

Fecha de aprobación: 02 de septiembre de 2020


Abstract

C. S. Lewis's Space Trilogy is the only daring excursion the author does in the world of science fiction genre. Thus, this article has as main goal to raise discussion on the elements of science fiction and religion present on *Perelandra* (1943), core novel of C. S. Lewis's Space Trilogy and H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895). To this end, it is drawn a parallel between these novels in order to demonstrate the deep discussion on religious and scientific issues explored by Lewis and Wells, as well as shown their humanistic and religious views of the process of scientific development. As theoretical support, we build on the literary scholarship of Frye, (2004), Suvin (1979), McGrath (2020), among others. Through the discussion provided in this study it is possible to notice that *Perelandra* displays verisimilitude to *The Time Machine* in the narrative structure and plot. Both novels present eschatological characteristic, since the writers deal with the future of humanity, evolution process and its philosophical implications. For all those features, one can infer that both *Perelandra* and *The Time Machine* bring a deep reflection embedded in religious and humanistic knowledge and discussions.

Keywords: Perelandra, religion, science fiction, The time machine.

Naiara Sales Araújo


Doutora em Literatura Comparada pela Universidade Metropolitana de Londres; Professora do mestrado Acadêmico em Letras da Universidade Federal do Maranhão-Brasil. Naiara.sas2@gmail.com;

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9362-559X>

Livia Fernanda Diniz Gomes

Mestra em Letras pela Universidade Federal do Maranhão; Professora de Língua Inglesa do Instituto Federal do Maranhão, Brasil. livia.fd.gomes@gmail.com

* Artigo de investigação.

Citar: Araujo, N, Diniz, L. (2020). Relaciones entre la poesía de José Ángel Valente y la música espectral. *La Palabra*, (39), 71-84.  <https://doi.org/10.19053/01218530.n39.2020.10910>

Ciencia ficción y religión: un paralelo entre *La Máquina del Tiempo* y *Perelandra*

Resumen

La *Trilogía Espacial* de C.S. Lewis, a pesar de no ser una de sus obras de ficción más famosas, tiene una característica única entre el conjunto de sus escritos: es la única incursión atrevida que hace el autor en el mundo del género de la ciencia ficción. *La Máquina del Tiempo* es una de las novelas de ciencia ficción más famosas escritas por H. G. Wells. Este artículo tiene como objetivo principal plantear la discusión sobre los elementos de ciencia ficción y religión presentes en *Perelandra* (1943), novela central de la *Trilogía Espacial* de C.S. Lewis y *La máquina del tiempo* de H.G. Wells (1895). Para ello, se traza un paralelo entre estas novelas con el fin de demostrar la profunda discusión sobre temas religiosos y científicos explorados por Lewis y Wells, así como mostrar sus visiones humanistas y religiosas del proceso de desarrollo científico. Palabras llave: *Perelandra*; Religión; Ciencia ficción; *La Máquina del tiempo*.

Palabras clave: *La máquina del tiempo*, ciencia ficción, *Perelandra*, religión.

Ciência ficção e religião: um paralelo entre A máquina do tempo e *Perelandra*

Resumo

A Trilogia Espacial de C.S. Lewis, apesar de não ser uma das suas obras de ficção mais renomadas, tem uma característica única entre o conjunto dos seus escritos: é a única incursão arriscada que o autor faz no mundo do gênero da ciência ficção. A máquina do tempo é um dos romances de ciência ficção mais famosos escritos por H. G. Wells. Este artigo tem como objetivo principal propor uma discussão sobre os elementos da ciência ficção e da religião presentes em *Perelandra* (1943), romance central da Trilogia Espacial de C.S. Lewis e A máquina do tempo de H.G. Wells (1895). Assim, é elaborado um paralelo entre esses dois romances com o propósito de demonstrar a profunda discussão sobre temas religiosos e científicos trabalhados por Lewis e Wells, e mostrar suas visões humanistas e religiosas do processo de desenvolvimento científico.

Palavras-chave: *Perelandra*, religião, ciência ficção, A máquina do tempo.

Introduction

In his most recent work, *Science & Religion: A New Introduction* (2020) Alister E. McGrath states that the study of Science and Religion brings two of the most significant and different forces in human culture: spirituality and the great mysteries of human nature and destiny. I would say that Literature does the same: a literary narrative is able to construct an imaginative universe that can transport man to other planets or universes in order to provide a reflection about the real world. In this sense, C. S. Lewis and H. G. Wells prominent writers and they probably found inspiration in religious narratives.

For the critic Frederic Kreuziger (1986), Science Fiction historians, fans and critics have traced the genre roots down through centuries of adventurous tales and speculative fabrication:

Gilgamesh certainly deserves the honor of being the first and earliest protagonist, and *Frankenstein* one of the more notoriously recent. In between, the litany of forerunners includes the works of Lucian, Campanella, Bacon, de Bergerac, and Voltaire. But rarely, if ever, does one find mention of Daniel, John, Moses, Baruch, or Ezra as being among the earliest of visionaries and tellers of the

future, in whose works are described planetary systems, heavenly beings, war of the worlds and the longed for coming of the new age. (Kreuziger, 1986, p. 3)

Indeed, the importance of *Bible* as inspiration for the first literary works or even for the first scientific inventions seems to be acceptable for a huge number of scholars, such as the ones we have mentioned in this study. The importance of the Bible for the scientific task of understanding the natural world has conflicted the minds of religious people at least as far back as the time of Augustine¹. Recently, there has been an increasing number of studies and researches seeking to analyze the role of scripture in episodes that explore scientific experiments. In this sense, Science Fiction genre seems to be a fertile field to provide discussion dealing with Religion and Science.

In this line of discussion, Andrew Tate (2009) points that literary studies itself has been reinvigorated during the last twenty years by its encounter with Theology in a variety of manifestations, and it briefly considers the significance of Religion in period research on the Renaissance, Romanticism, Victorian literature, and Post-modernism. According to

Tate, works such as *Towards a Christian Literary Theory* (2003), by Luke Ferretter, *Nineteenth-century Religion and Literature* (2006), by Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *Literature, Theology and Feminism* (2007), by Heather Walther have contributed to an increasing of number of studies focusing on the relation between Literature and Religion.

The human being, despite of other animals, is not simply immersed in nature. Humanity is part of a mythological universe formed by a set of assumptions and beliefs developed from its existential concerns. Fragments of this set are (consciously or unconsciously) embedded within peoples' cultures, independent of how different they may be, and can be recognized when displayed in arts in general. Myths and literature have been walking together for as long as they came to being. In the epic *Gilgamesh*, in Homer's *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* and in the oldest parts of the Bible myth and literature are inseparable elements, one being an integral part of the development of the other.

Greco-Roman mythology, for instance, has had great influence in Western literature. Homer, Virgil and Ovid among others were translated and became influential

¹ **Augustine** (354—430 C.E.) **St. Augustine** is a fourth century philosopher whose groundbreaking philosophy infused Christian doctrine with Neoplatonism. He is famous for being an inimitable Catholic theologian and for his agnostic contributions to Western philosophy (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2019).

on writers in the Medieval Period, Renaissance, in the eighteenth century (despite of the Enlightenment thinkers' focus on scientific and philosophical achievements instead of myths), in Romanticism, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in both Europe and America. Dante Alighieri in Italy during the 1300's; Geoffrey Chaucer during Middle English period and William Shakespeare in High Renaissance, both in England; Jean Racine and his classicist plays in seventeenth century France, as well as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and his Weimar Classicism in eighteenth century Germany; John Keats, Lord Byron and Percy Shelley in English Romanticism in late eighteenth century, Nathaniel Hawthorne and his retelling of Greek myths for children in nineteenth century in the United States, T.S. Eliot and James Joyce in their modernist works: many great occidental writers, poets and playwrights from all times had classical mythology as influence and inspiration for their works.

Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Celtic, Anglo-Saxon and Norse mythologies were also relevant in literature, but as influential as the Greco-Roman is the Judeo-Christian mythology. Most writers mentioned above and many others –John Milton, William Blake, Bunyan, John Dryden, Mary Shelley, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Alfred Tennyson and C.S. Lewis– had Christianity as a source for their greatest works. Northrop

Frye in the introduction of his book *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (2004), explained the importance of biblical knowle-

dge when he was lecturing about Milton and writing about Blake, exposing that an English literature student who doesn't know the Bible would have problems understanding great part of what he reads (Frye, 2004, p.10). Frye states that no book would have such a broad literary influence without having some literary characteristics itself and that making a literary approach of the Bible would be legit. Poetry, heroic narratives, parables, epistles, proverbs, allegories and metaphors are some examples of this.

Frye (2004) also states that Bible is a gigantic myth, a narrative extending over the whole of time from creation to apocalypse, unified by a body of recurring imagery that «freezes» into a single metaphor cluster, the metaphors all being identified with the body of the Messiah, the man who is all men, the totality *logoi* who is one Logos, the grain of sand that is the world. Notwithstanding the fact that the Bible was written by dozens of people in three different languages during a thousand-year-long period, Frye considered the unified aspect of it which he would call «U-Shaped plot». It would start with the Genesis paradise and the creation of Adam and Eve to be followed by the fall and then a regular alternation of disasters and triumphs until the rise of the eternal city of Jerusalem in the end of Revelation. This U-Shaped pattern of fall and rise is present in plots concerning to Joseph's, Moses', Da-

vid's, Job's, Peter's and Paul's stories, among others, implying that those minor events carry a greater and significant symbolism in parallel to major plot of Israel's path through the axis creation-fall-exodus-destruction-redemption. Several recurrent images appear throughout Old and New Testament, such as bread, wine, bride, lamb, sheep, shepherd, oil, river, tree, garden, mountain, city and many others.

When it comes to speculative fiction, myths and Religions are discussed, questioned, reinvented, allegorized and displayed in infinite ways. Dogmas, rules, rituals, entities and deities are a rich source for speculative writers to create new worlds (in fantasy, mostly, but it also happens in other subsets of speculative fiction), set a supernatural atmosphere in their stories (in gothic and horror, for instance), or simply deny any spirituality at all (as it happens in part of science fiction works). As Samuel R. Delany once wrote on *Extrapolation* magazine: «Virtually all the classics of speculative fiction are mystical» (Delany, 1969, p. 2). Indeed, the relationship between mythology and speculative fiction has been close and deep over time.

The British writer J. R. R. Tolkien, for instance, was greatly influenced by many mythologies and Religions. His works on *Middle Earth* –his wizards,

dwarves, elves, orcs, hobbits, men and the nomenclature of several realms— had much borrowed from Norse, Celtic, Finnish, Greek mythologies, Christianity and Arthurian legends. Tolkien along with his own mythological sources has become a great influence for speculative manifestations in literature, as for high fantasy and science fantasy writers, and beyond: video games, RPG, television series and movies.

H. P. Lovecraft's most famous tales are concerned to invented deities, sacred texts and rituals; his poetry also presents religious features. From his character «Cthulhu», protagonist of the short story *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928), the shared fictional universe Cthulhu Mythos was formulated. In the short story cited above, Lovecraft established a pantheon of ancient powerful deities from space. This group crossed the limits of this singular work and showed up on many other writings by Lovecraft and contemporary writers he corresponded with.

Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Atlantean series* (1983-87), *Avalon Series* (1983-2009) co-written by Diana L. Paxson, and *Darkover Series* (1958-99) were heavily based on Atlantis and King Arthur's legends, besides having mystical and pagan characteristics. Neil Gaiman's novel, *American Gods* (2001), is a miscellaneous of

mythologies as it brings Norse gods Odin, Loki and Baldr, Slavic god Czernobog, trickster character of African folklore Anansi (which is the main character of *Anansi Boys*, release four years later), Thoth and Anubis Egyptian gods, Germanic goddess Eostre, Algonquian mythological figure Wisakejak, among others. The novel *Stardust* (1999), which brings references to Scottish folklore, is just another example of how supernatural and influenced by mythologies Gaiman's works can be.

Those are just a few examples of how present Mythology and Religion are in speculative fiction and literature as a whole. For non-specialist, considering that Religion and science are opposing forces, science fiction wouldn't have anything to do with Religion and mythology. Darko Suvin in his *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979) wrote that «All attempts to transplant the metaphysical orientation of mythology and Religion into SF [...] will result only in private pseudomyths, in fragmentary fantasies or fairy tales» (Suvin, 1979, p. 26), and by this set a very rigid barrier dividing science fiction and

fantasy. Science fiction should neither deal with Religion beyond its pure historical and anthropological aspect nor make of inexplicable occurrences its methodical analysis object un-

der the risk of being distorted by it. The estranged non-cognitive should be fantasy's interest instead.

At the mention of C. S. Lewis's name, many people recall his most famous set of fiction works, *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1946-1956), or his Christian apologetic books, such as *Mere Christianity* (1952). Not as famous as the books mentioned before, there is the *Space Trilogy*, also known as *Cosmic Trilogy* or *Ransom Trilogy*, in which Lewis experiments with Science Fiction genre, although not leaving behind his characteristic—and, according to him, mostly non-intentional— tendency of inserting some of his own set of beliefs in the narrative. The idea, he wrote on a letter to the American scholar Charles A. Brady, was that «scientifiction» appeal could be combined with supernatural appeal, wondering what terrific results would be produced by the union of those two kinds of fiction which are usually kept apart from each other: science fiction and religious literature.

By the time Lewis started writing his *Ransom Trilogy*, it was still a current belief that, since science and Religion stand on different sides of human thinking, Religions and mythologies in general could not be mixed with scientific knowledge in order to create a respectable work of science fiction,

leading such productions to the field of fantasy genre. What this stream of thought would leave aside is the fact that mythology and literature have been side by side since ancient times and that myths have provided several motifs for speculative fiction works, as well as for science fiction, which is included on that hall.

The central book in C.S. Lewis's *Space Trilogy* and object of analysis of this work is *Perelandra*, novel published in 1943. In it, Lewis develops a plot on the idea of a utopian planet where Earth's initial state of paradise, according to Genesis's narrative, is still happening but is in great risk and it may encounter different outcomes after the arrival of earthly beings boosted by technological apparatus and spiritual forces. The goal of this work is to raise discussion on the elements of science fiction and Religion present on *Perelandra* (1943), core novel of Lewis's *Space Trilogy* and H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895).

***Perelandra*: A Soft Science Fiction**

Lewis's *Ransom Trilogy* has been the object of discussions about whether it should be considered as part of science fiction genre or not. One of the most eloquent critics on Lewis's creation was J. B. S. Haldane, scientist and writer, who was

one of the main inspirations for the character Weston. In his review of the trilogy entitled *Auld Hornie R. R. S.*, Haldane writes, among other critics, that Lewis did not understand science enough to write convincing science fiction. In response, Lewis wrote a reply to Haldane, which was found among other papers after his death, for he never submitted it to publication.

In "Reply to Professor Haldane", Lewis addresses to several points of the critic, starting by pointing out some mistakes committed by Haldane's criticism. As a specialist in Medieval History and Literature, Lewis demonstrates that medieval scientists had a far more accurate picture of the Earth than Haldane claimed they did, and about that he concludes: «in other words, the Professor is about as good a historian as I am a scientist. The difference is that his false history is produced in works intended to be true, whereas my false science is produced in romances» (Lewis, 1966, p. 76).

In his essay *On Stories, and Other Essays on Literature*, Lewis admits he does not handle so well «the fiction of Engineers», which is how he called Hard Science Fiction subgenre, for he is «too uneducated scientifically» (and also too «out of sympathy of

the projects» they are interested in (Lewis, 1982, p. 58). Lewis trilogy would fit the subgenre of Soft Science Fiction, which Gary K. Wolfe in his text "Coming to Terms" would define as a formation «used sometimes to refer to Science Fiction based on so-called "soft" sciences (anthropology, sociology, etc.), and sometimes refer to Science Fiction in which there is little science or awareness of science at all» (Wolfe, 2005, p. 21).

Perelandra, as well as the other two novels in *Space Trilogy*, may be called Soft Science Fiction, for they are less concerned with scientific accuracy and more interested in human, social and psychological aspects. The focus, especially in *Out of the Silent Planet* (1965a) and *Perelandra* (1965b) –if compared to the third and last book in the trilogy, *That Hideous Strength* (1943)– is on human mind and behavior as it experiments the new environment, rather than in technical possibilities. It does not mean necessarily that Lewis did not care about adding scientific elements to the story. On the contrary, Lewis experiments on hard science: astronomy, for instance. On chapter 2, Ransom and the

narrator have a pre-trip discussion about Venus's temperature, atmosphere and revolutions on itself and around the Sun.

As to conditions, well, I don't know much. It will be warm: I'm to go naked. Our astronomers don't know anything about the surface of Perelandra at all. The outer layer of her atmosphere is too thick. The main problem, apparently, is whether she revolves on her own axis or not, and at what speed. There are two schools of thought. There's a man called Schiaparelli who thinks she revolves once on herself in the same time it takes her to go once round Arbol – I mean, the Sun. The other people think she revolves on her axis once in every twenty-three hours. That's one of the things I shall find out.

If Schiaparelli is right there'd be perpetual day on one side of her and perpetual night on the other?

He nodded, musing. (Lewis, 1965b, p. 26)

Despite of other circumstances in which Lewis created certain scientists and scholars on his trilogy, Giovanni Schiaparelli existed indeed. He was an Italian astronomer and science historian who observed and studied Mars and other planets in 1877 and 1878. He came to the conclusion that the planet keeps the same hemisphere turned sunward, and that it took it the same time to revolve around itself and the sun, 224 days, 16 hours and 48 minutes. On this same chapter, when the narrator

describes Ransom's first statements on his return, he prioritizes his announcement that Schiaparelli's idea is wrong, for Venus has ordinary days and nights there. C. S. Lewis also considered Pierre Simon Laplace's hypothesis that planets were formed when a great cloud of gas and dust contracted and spun, throwing off large unshaped matter objects which would become planets, in order to divide the planets in his fiction in outer (and older) ones and inner (younger) ones.

Still about Venus's atmosphere and the albedo (thick cloud cover), it is based on scientific discoveries that Lewis describes how the sun shone the surface of the planet through this albedo, providing the golden scenario that prevails on Perelandra most part of the novel. Readers learn about that right in the beginning of the following chapter, in Ransom's description of his landing on Perelandra: «There is no doubt it was the albedo, the outer veil of very dense atmosphere with which Venus is surrounded and which reflects the sun's rays with intense power. [...] The prevailing colour, as far as he could see through the sides of the casket, was golden or coppery» (1965b, p. 33-34). One more time, Lewis's care with astronomic information is made clear.

When the narrator sees the coffin in which Ransom will travel, he

asks questions a science fiction would promptly do: «Ransom, how on earth are you going to travel in the thing? What's the motive power? What about the air – and food – and water?» for what Ransom

replies: «The Oyarsa of Malacandra himself will be the motive power» (1965b, p. 27). On *Out of the Silent Planet*, Ransom was taken to Malacandra on Weston's spaceship, and it's on this same device that he arrives in Perelandra.

You have already heard that Ransom had been in that world which men call Mars but whose true name is Malacandra. But he had not been taken thither by the Eldila. He had been taken by men, and taken in a space-ship, a hollow sphere of glass and steel. [...] In Professor Weston the power had at last met the dream. The great physicist had discovered a motive power for his space-ship. And that little black object, now floating beneath him on the sinless waters of Perelandra, looked to Ransom more like the space-ship every moment. (1965b, p. 82)

Weston's spaceship has a broader meaning on the trilogy, for besides being his means of transportation to other planets, it also represents his desire of spreading humanity throughout the galaxy.

“The utility of human race”, continued Weston, “in the long run depends rigidly on the possibility of interplanetary, and even inter-sidereal, travel. That problem I solved. The key of human destiny was placed in my hands”. (1965b, p. 90)

But then he switches from this stream of thought he has carried since the beginning of the previous novel to a new a sort of spirituality, which he explains to Ransom during their only conversation before Weston’s possession. At first, Weston believed his duty was to fight for nan and against nature, if necessary. Now, he became a convinced believer in emergent evolution. In his new view, Man in himself is nothing, «the forward movement of Life – the growing spirituality – is everything» (1965b, p. 91). The villain admits that liquidating Malacandra’s population would have been wrong, for spreading spirituality, and not human race, became his main mission now.

When explaining his new philosophy, Weston refers to a Force, a Life-Force which is the main agent of emergent evolution. Emergent evolution is a hypothesis that aims to an explanation of how mind and consciousness became relevant elements on critical moments of evolution, because of unpredictable arrangements or pre-existing entities. It started as a way of explaining how nature

produced variety before natural selection could act. Alfred Russel Wallace, who was one of the pioneers in this stream of thought, was the first to add the idea of existence of Life Principle, which involves creative power, directive mind and ultimate purpose.

Weston’s speech on his new spirituality also leads to Henry Bergson’s theory developed in his seminal text *Creative evolution* (1907). He was not a Darwinian kind of evolutionist, for he believed that evolutionary changes do not happen by random variation, but by *elan vital*, which is a current of consciousness and an explosive force that acted and is still acting on evolution process, showing its dynamic and essential relevance on creative potential. Lewis criticism to those evolutionary developments is clear when he displays Weston’s possession on the right moment he invokes the Force into him.

It does not mean, though, that Lewis stands against evolution in this novel –or in the trilogy as a whole–, as a matter of fact. He accepts the scientific theory of how it happened, but denies philosophical (and why not say moral) implications generally thought as consequence of it. When Ransom is riding a fish through Perelandra’s seas and first encounter mermen and mermaids, he speculates on the possibility of the pair of humans

in planet to have evolved from them: «He wondered also whether the King and Queen of Perelandra, though doubtless the first human pair of this planet, might on the physical side have a marine ancestry» (1965b, p. 102). More of evolutionary aspects of the novel will be shown on the following subtopic, in which family resemblances between Wells’s *The Time Machine* (1895) and Lewis’s *Perelandra* (1943) will be explored.

The Time Machine and Perelandra: a comparative analysis

Some SF works include trips to other worlds, as well as quests, exploration of outer space and interplanetary warfare –but not all do–. Some portray utopias or dystopias, but many do not. Many are set in a futuristic context, some others in a revisited (and somehow different) past, while others don’t care about neither: they display contemporary settings

that differ from our realistic present, maybe for being developed in a parallel world, maybe for massive presence or invasion of alien beings... Some are close to hard SF, for they care mostly about technological and scientific development while others are identified with what is called soft science fiction (the one which relates to anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc.); and so on.

During the current topic, some of those characteristics have been spotted in *Perelandra* already, while others are still to be discussed in the following ones: it brings a trip to another world, portrays a utopia and is close to what is called soft science fiction. Now, a parallel between *Perelandra* and *The Time Machine*, two novel which share several features on the net of family resemblances, will be analyzed and compared in this subtopic.

On that same way, *Perelandra* displays verisimilitude to *The Time Machine* (1895), for the narrative structure and plot outline of both novels touch in several moments and Lewis starts with Wells's premises to build a new (and most times opposing) perspective. Both novels present an eschatological characteristic, for both writers deal with the future of humanity, evolution process and its philosophical implications – in this last one, differences are more evident.

In terms of structure of narrative, both novels have their travelers' adventures told in flashback from the third chapter on, being the first and second dedicated to explaining some particularities before they depart and the narrators' first impression by the hero's return. The time traveler arrives at night, in a pitiful state:

He was in an amazing plight. His coat was dusty and dirty, and smeared with green down the sleeves; his hair disordered, and as it seemed to me grayer – either with dust and dirt or because its color had actually faded. His face was ghastly pale; his chin had a brown cut on it – a cut half healed, his expression was haggard and drawn, as by intense suffering. (Wells, 1980, p. 18)

He leaves to wash himself and dress properly for dinner. He is suffering from a lame foot and is «starving for a bit of meat» (1980, p. 19) and agrees to tell his story, if his audience refrains from interruptions. In his pocket, the time traveler had flowers put there by Weena, his friend from the future. In *Perelandra*, things have a way more optimistic tone:

Ransom coming back happens early in the morning; he seems to be seriously injured at first, but then the narrator understands that the red thing covering Ransom is not blood, but an amount of flowers the King and the Queen covered him with before he left Venus. He doesn't look tired or sad as the Time Traveler, on the contrary:

[...] [A]lmost a new Ransom, glowing with health and rounded with muscle and seemingly ten years younger. In the old days he had been beginning to show a few grey hairs; but now the beard

which swept his chest was pure gold. (Lewis, 1965b, p. 30)

He keeps asking his friends if they were really all right, for they looked ill to him. Ransom, as the Time Traveler did, also leaves his companies to take a bath before he joins them for a meal, this time breakfast. He refuses bacon and eggs that are offered to him, and is disappointed to find out there is no fruit available. Ransom seems to have felt more at home in *Perelandra* than the Time Traveler in the futuristic Earth. Ransom is also hurt in his inferior member, for he was bitten by the Un-man and his heel has an unstoppable hemorrhage. After those details being explained, he starts telling his story.

About their adventures, both arrive in a mild climate place and right after their arrival a precipitation takes place: a hail to the Time Traveler, a storm to Ransom. Both heroes encounter people living on fruit who seem to have no responsibilities, only leisure; both develop profound friendship and protective behavior toward female inhabitants: Weena, an Eloi, for the Time Traveler; Tinidril, the Green Lady, for Ransom. Both travelers have a fight underground: the Time Traveler fights the Morlocks, Ransom fights the Un-man. Both have a glance of humanity's destiny, for the Time Traveler uses his machine

to go even further into the future, while Ransom learns about things to come from the *Oyéresu* and Majesties of Perelandra during their oratorio about the Great Dance that later turns into visions.

For Lewis, the answer for the things to come can be found in the past, in the original sin. It indicates that Ransom's trip is, as in Wells, time-traveling; this time for the past though. In the final page of *Out of the Silent Planet*, Lewis indicates that «Now that Weston has closed the door, the way to other planets will be through the past. If there is to be any more space-traveling, it will have to be time-traveling as well» (Lewis, 1965a, p. 220). Instead of being sent to the Garden of Eden, Ransom goes to Venus, which is a newer world than Earth, considering Laplace's hypothesis. There, humankind's history is just

starting; the planet is in a very young stage of development, which once Earth had been to and suffers the same risk of falling through the sins of their original couple, as it happened on Earth long ago, according to the novel's story.

In *The Time Machine*, three hypotheses about mankind's future are developed throughout the story, each one of them fo-

cus in a specific aspect of the evolutionary theory and being replaced by the following one. In *Perelandra*, Ransom has three conversations with the Green Lady which are analogous to those hypotheses, being Malacandra an interesting counterpoint to the implications of evolutionary theory.

The first hypothesis raised by the Time Traveler is that the Eloi are childlike and fragile because at some point in evolution strength and intelligence were no longer necessary, which would justify the survival of the fittest. About that same hypothesis, but developing on the opposite idea, the Green Lady and Ransom have their first conversation and talk about the species in Malacandra, which are not human like and are soon to disappear, since all population in the new planets are human-shaped.

“I think,” said Ransom, “I have no more understanding than a beast. I do not well know what I am saying. But I loved the furry people whom I met in Malacandra, that old world. Are they to be swept away? Are they only rubbish in the Deep Heaven?”

“I do not know what rubbish means,” she answered, “nor what you are saying. You do not mean they are worse because they come early in the history and do not come again? They are their own

part of the history and not another. We are on this side of the wave and they on the far side. All is new”. (Lewis, 1965a, p. 63)

The Green Lady explains to Ransom that the Malacandrians are not inferior or unfit because they are a dying race in an ancient world: she refutes the idea that in evolution whatever is new is better. They were and still are relevant, but a new order was established, and they no longer are part of it. It's just the other side of the wave.

The second evolutionary hypothesis concerns to men as a social being. In Victorian times, there was an idea that the survival of the fittest would explain the existence of different social classes. The Time Traveler speculates that Eloi are the result of the evolution of the nineteenth century aristocracy, as well as the Morlocks descend from the working class. Class distinction is also the core of the second conversation between Ransom and the Green Lady. When she finds out Ransom is not the father of his world as she is of hers, she treats him in a different way:

“[...] I thought you were the King and Father of your world. But there are children of children by now, and you perhaps are the one of these.”

“Yes,” said Ransom.

“Greet your Lady and Mother well from me when you return to your own world,” said the Green Woman. And now for the first time there was a note of deliberate courtesy, even of ceremony in her speech. Ransom understood. She knew now at last that she was not addressing an equal. She was a queen sending a message to a queen through a commoner, and her manner to him was henceforward more gracious. (Lewis, 1965a, p. 67)

Ransom had finished the first conversation, after feeling he had gathered enough information for a day. This time, it is the Green Lady who has decided when they have talked enough and dismisses him: «The audience was at an end» (Lewis, 1965a, p.71). Ransom bows down and leaves her presence. Another evidence of hierarchy in *Perelandra* is the way the Green Lady treats the animals in her land. Considering she still lacks people to rule, she demonstrates and carries authority over them, for their own benefit.

It was not really like a woman making much of a horse, nor yet a child playing with a puppy. There was in her face an authority, in her caresses a condescension, which by taking seriously the inferiority of her adorers made them somehow less inferior – raised them from the status of pets to that of slaves. (Lewis, 1965a, p. 65)

When Ransom makes an observation about how smart animals in *Perelandra* are, she replies by saying they (the King as well) make them older (which in *Perelandrian* context means wise) every day, exactly on the same way Maleldil does to her. She rules the animals and Maleldil rules her. It’s on this moment she realizes her relationship of obedience with Maleldil: «I thought that I was carried in the will of Him I love, but now I see that I walk with it» (ibid, p. 69).

Time Traveler’s third hypothesis is about Eloi being cattle for the Morlocks. This idea raises a plausible explanation for the fact that Morlocks run all technology and machinery that allow Eloi to live their duty-free routine. And this is the core of this third section of *The Time Machine*: humankind and its relationship with scientific knowledge, especially technology and control over the environment. As the Time Traveler keeps moving and exploring the forest, he lights matches in order to keep Morlocks away from him. H. G. Wells talks about the representation and symbolism of matches in “The Rediscovery of the Unique”:

Science is a match that man has just got alight. ... It is a curious sensation, now that the preliminary splutter is over and the flame burns up clear, to see his hands lit and just a glimpse of himself and the patch he stands on visi-

ble, and around him ... darkness still. (Wells, 1891, p. 3)

Those matches, symbolizing science, knowledge and safety, are for the Time Traveler what the Fixed Land could be to the Green Lady. From the high mountain there, she can see most islands and look for her future husband, the King. She could build herself a house there, keep and storage things she would like and need, as the Un-man explains to her during temptation. Doing it, she would be the «mistress of your own days» (Lewis, 1965b, p. 138) and wouldn’t have to live day after day, as the animals do – but it would require disobeying a clear order from Maleldil. Lewis is saying technology usage is subordinate to moral choice and obedience, for the Fixed Land is no longer prohibited by the end of the book. As the King Tor says near the end of the story: «[w]hen the time is ripe for it ... we will tear the sky curtain and Deep Heaven shall become familiar to the eyes of our sons» (Lewis, 1965b, p. 211). The Traveler’s matches failed him, for the fire leads to the forest burning, Weena’s death and almost his own destruction, besides only lighting in their original box; but technology will not fail Tor and his offspring, for he is in an unfallen world under higher protective power (*Perelandra*’s Oyarsa and Maleldil).

As one of the great specialist in C. S. Lewis's works, the scholar Doris T. Myers argues in her *C. S. Lewis in Context* (1994),

[b]ecause of the lack of a dominating mechanical gadget, *Perelandra* seems less scientific in tone than *The Time Machine* or even *Out of the Silent Planet*; nevertheless, it is not completely improbable because the planet is created by combining common speculations about the actual physical state of Venus. (p. 63)

And, on Lewis retaking Wells's narrative structure, she says «Lewis went beyond his source by adding moral seriousness, reversing popular views on the meaning of evolution [...] His eschatology asserts a wonderful beginning at the end of time» (ibid.). If compared to what Wells displays on his novel, C. S. Lewis has a quite optimistic perspective, probably because of his contact with religious conception of life as well as his own beliefs and experiences about religion.

The meaning of green and red colors in the final part of each novel is a good example of these different perspectives. When the time traveler gets on his machine and goes even

further into the future, he has a glimpse of the end of all civilization. The red is displayed as the color of a dying sun, while

green is slime, soon disappearing in a deeper, silent and cold black night. In *Perelandra*, Tinidril and Tor, glowing as emeralds in their vivid green skin color, arrive for their coronation in a mountain valley full of red flowers for the dawn of Perelandrian civilization. It's the beginning of the Venusian paradise.

Final considerations

Despite of not being a great expert in science as it is usually displayed in Hard Science Fiction works, Lewis developed his own way of creating science fictional plots. In *Perelandra*, he experimented Venus's astronomical knowledge of his time, speculated on biological and philosophical (mis)interpretations of evolutionary theory. Besides, he invested on psychology, cultural criticism and social sciences, characteristic that places *Perelandra* in Soft Science Fiction canon.

When writing *Perelandra*, Lewis surely kept in mind the one who was his most influent writer in this genre, H.G. Wells, for approval or disagreement purposes; and that is why it is possible to notice several resemblances of his novel with *The Time Machine*. For all those features, it was possible to infer that both *Perelandra* and *The Time Machine* bring a deep reflection embedded in religious and humanistic knowledge and discussions.

Lewis's choice of adopting science fiction as a vehicle for this project called *Space Trilogy*, of which *Perelandra* is part of, shows his enthusiasm and acquaintance with this genre, specifically in what concerns to its early writers, such as H. G. Wells and Jules Verne. In *Perelandra*, it is possible to see many of C. S. Lewis faces: Lewis, the scholar; Lewis, the avid reader of everything that varied from medieval literature (his official field of study) to science fiction; Lewis the Christian apologist; Lewis, the poet.

Both C. S. Lewis and H. G. Wells present a very imaginative and pleasant experience through which they reach means of expressing their own truth; and, although they may not start with the idea of conveying some truth in their writings, it is connected to the shape their works eventually take. This is the reason why it is possible to find several Christian allusions on Lewis works of fiction, and with *Perelandra* it would not be any different.

Parallels such as Jesus Christ and Maleldil, the Un-man and Satan, the eldila and the angels, Tinidril and Eve, Tor and Adam, Ransom and many of God's prophets and faith heroes can be noticed in Lewis' Science Fiction novel. Once Lewis set out to develop a paradise retained in his novel, much of what a utopian place means can be found

on the background scenarios for his Edenic story. His ability to describe his perfect planet, of perfect people and perfect ruler took him to hall of utopian fiction writer, without a doubt.

References

- Delany, S. R. (1969). About Five Thousand One Hundred and Seventy-Five Words. *Extrapolation*, 10(2). Wooster, The College of Wooster.
- Frye, N. (2004). *O Código dos Códigos: a Bíblia e a Literatura*. São Paulo: Boitempo.
- Ferreter, L. (2003). *Towards a Christian Literary Theory*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Knight, M. & Mason, E. (2006). *Nineteenth-Century Religion an Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kreuziger, F. (1986). *The Religion of Science Fiction*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.
- Lewis, C. S. (1982). *On Stories: and Other Essays on Literature*. Ed. Walter Hooper. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Lewis, C. S. (1965a). *Out of the Silent Planet*. New York: MacMillian Publishing Co.
- Lewis, C. S. (1965b). *Perelandra*. New York: MacMillian Publishing Co.
- Lewis, C. S. (1966). *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*. Ed. Walter Hooper. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- McGrath, A. E. (2020). *Science & Religion: A New Introduction* (3.a. ed). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.
- Myers, D. T. (1994). *C. S. Lewis in Context*. Kent: The Kent State University Press.
- Suvin, D. (1979). *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.
- Wells, H. G. (1980). *The Time Machine*. New Jersey: Watermill Press.
- Wells, H. G. (1891). The Rediscovery of the Unique. *The Fortnightly Review*, 56, 106-111.

Wolfe, G. K. (2005). Coming to terms. In J. Gunn and M. Candelaria (eds.), *Speculations on Speculation: theories of science fiction* (pp. 8-22). Oxford: The Scarecrow Press.