A Spenserian in Space: The Faerie Queene in C.S. Lewis’s Perelandra

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Abstract

Explores the influence of The Faerie Queene, one of the works C.S. Lewis was particularly involved with as a scholar, and the literary and Biblical traditions it drew upon, on Lewis’s Ransom trilogy and in particular on Perelandra. Ransom is identified with the Red Cross Knight.

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The Faerie Queene is an English epic poem by Edmund Spenser. Books I–III were first published in 1590, and then republished in 1596 together with books IV–VI. The Faerie Queene is notable for its form: it is one of the longest poems in the English language as well as the work in which Spenser invented the verse form known as the Spenserian stanza. On a literal level, the poem follows several knights as a means to examine different virtues, and though the text is primarily an allegorical work, it can Lewis’s Perelandra, the focus of this article, builds around the quest of Red Cross Knight on behalf of the lady Una in Book I of Spenser's poem. That Hideous Strength, a space romance laced with strands of a sinister plot to bend all love to an agenda of social engineering, takes much of its inspiration and material from Books III and IV of The Faerie Queene, with occasional allusions to other parts of the poem in both novels. He then adds, "The other masterpiece of English poetry whose influence is most apparent in Perelandra is Spenser's Faerie Queene," for which he summarizes examples: The descriptions of the floating islands as paradisal gardens [in Perelandra] recall the Garden of Adonis ([Faerie Queene] bk. A Spenserian in space: The Faerie Queene in C.S. Lewis's Perelandra. An academic like Hadfield isn't allowed to believe that Spenser actually meant what he wrote about certain things, and so he continually reads ironically or obliquely, a process that begins with the very first line of The Faerie Queene. *"A gentle knight was pricking on the plain. An epic bogosity. The second line of Edmund Spenser's Fairie Queene (1596), Vol. Enduring accidental acrostics. Here's a great way to connect history class to an English class with this excerpt from Elizabeth I, which discusses...