

Dorothy L. Sayers and C. S. Lewis: Christian Postmodernism Beyond Boundaries

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Modern critics do not consider science fiction and mystery novels to be “serious reading”, but Dorothy L. Sayers and C. S. Lewis questioned the boundaries between “popular” and “serious” literature. Both Christian writers critically discuss the spiritual crisis of the modern world in each fiction genre. This paper will discuss Sayers and Lewis from a Christian postmodernist perspective, that is, the acceptance of both human constructions, such as multiple views on genres, and divine revelation, or what transcends the limitations of humanity. Both Sayers and Lewis agreed in terms of their understanding that a writer is limited by human language, but also in terms of their acceptance of the transcendental guidance offered in the interactive relationship with the divine being. The discussion will present Sayers and Lewis as Christian postmodernist writers who re-evaluate generally overlooked genres, begin to argue in their respective genres that gender matters, and introduce the reader to another world beyond the boundaries of the known literary genres.

Keywords: Christian postmodernism, Dorothy L. Sayers, C. S. Lewis, science fiction, mystery novel, gender , women’s vocation

Introduction

Modern critics do not consider science fiction and mystery novels to be “serious reading”, but Dorothy L. Sayers and C. S. Lewis disagreed, questioning the boundaries between “popular” and “serious” borders. Lewis called the modernist novelists (Pound) “serious” writers, in his letter to Arthur C. Clarke (2007) (*The CCL III (collected letters of C. S. Lewis III)*, p. 52). Both of Christian writers critically discuss the spiritual crisis of the modern world in their respective fictional works. From the perspective of Christian postmodernism, this paper will explore the vocations of women, comparing Sayers’ (1935) detective novel *Gaudy Night* with Lewis’ with science fiction novel *That Hideous Strength* (1945). The discussion will present Sayers and Lewis as Christian postmodernist writers who re-evaluated generally overlooked genres in the 1930s and 1940s, arguing in their respective genres that gender matters and introducing the reader to a world beyond the boundaries of the commonly known literary genres.

The term “Christian postmodernism” in this paper is used to refer to the acceptance of both human constructions, such as multiple views on genres, and divine revelation or what transcends the limitations of humanity. Sayers and Lewis agreed not only in their understanding of a writer’s limitation in working with human language, but also in accepting transcendental guidance through an interactive relationship with the divine being.

Sayers’ (1941) theological essay “The Mind of the Maker” evaluated “a diversity within its unity” with

respect to an imaginative work, as she draws a comparison between the communication among the Trinity of God (father, son and holy spirit) and the three-fold creative activity of an author (idea, energy and power). Lewis shared her concept of multiple perspectives when he affirmed in his essay “Meditation in a Toolshed” that the human construction of language was so limited that the two experiences, namely, hyperrealism (human interpretations) and supernaturalism (divine revelation), could never occur at the same time. However, he has faith in ultimately reaching an understanding that transcended this limitation. Both authors admit to the variety of human perspectives, even though they have faith in divinity.

Sayers and Lewis were both raised in Edwardian Britain early in the 20th century. The Edwardian era covers the reign of King Edward VII (1901-1910). This period was a socially turbulent time that spanned both the hierarchal tradition of the 19th century Victorian age and the modernization of the materialism and individualism of the 20th century. When Lewis started working as an Oxford scholar in the 1920s, Oxford University was a society of dominantly male bachelor scholars. Celibacy was obligatory until the 19th century. Most of the scholars had living quarters on the campus, based on a monastic history. Marriage was considered as a sign of degraded scholarship (Van Leeuwen, 2010, pp. 83-96). Female students were allowed to attend only segregated classes for women in 1879, but had to graduate without a degree¹. Even though Dorothy L. Sayers, in 1912, was admitted to Oxford’s Somerville College, she had to wait until 1920 to obtain both her BA and MA degrees². In the 1920s, there was a counter-reaction to the open-door policy that allowed female students’ admittance to Oxford, and C. S. Lewis was one of the professors who opposed co-education (Van Leeuwen, 2010, pp. 83-96).

Lewis’s gender theory was ambiguous in the 1940s, but had become systematized in the 1960s. In his work, *Oxford English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (orally presented in 1944, and published in 1954), Lewis introduced Renaissance female writer Mary Herbert not as an “interpreter” of *The Bible*, but merely as a “collaborator” with her brother Philip Sidney (1580), in his work *The Arcadia*. Lewis’ deliberated silence on Herbert’s translation may be considered to reflect his ambivalent views on gender and sexuality at that time. In addition to his silence on the issue of a woman writing for the public arena, Lewis (1970) negated the idea of a woman delivering a sermon on *The Bible* in his essay “Priestesses in the Church?”. On the other hand, he discussed the significance of gender in his fictional works in the 1940s, including *That Hideous Strength* (1945). Therefore, when considering Lewis’ literary expression of sexuality, especially in non-fiction, it is necessary to understand his background in gender that he probably unconsciously visualized his reader as a member of the male-oriented sheltered society of 20th century Oxford.

This paper will compare the female protagonists between Sayers’ (1935) detective novel *Gaudy Night* and the last book in Lewis’ (1945) science fiction series *That Hideous Strength*: Both of them feature female writers—Harriet and Jane—who were highly educated twentieth century women, but who faced the ambivalent question of the relationship between work and marriage. The paper will discuss Harriet and Jane’s notions of work by referring to the French philosopher Jacques Maritain’s assessment of the ethical value of work: Maritain demanded that we distinguished “the end pursued by the workman” (profit) and “the end to be served by the work” (beauty) (Sayers, 1949, p. 115). Finally, the paper will discuss Sayers’ literary impact on Lewis’ concept of sexuality in *That Hideous Strength*, which is his first novel to feature a female adult as the protagonist.

¹ *The Dorothy L. Sayers Society* (UK). Retrieved from <http://www.sayers.org.uk/society.html>

² *The History of Somerville College, Oxford*. Retrieved from http://www.some.ox.ac.uk/175/all/1/The_College.aspx

Sayers' Mystery Novel

Sayers re-defined her mystery novel as the integration of both the plot and theme, directing her literary style to the popular “novels of manners” of the nineteenth century writers, instead of assuming that humanity should be removed from a detective story.

The novel of manners is a literary genre that deals with aspects of behavior, language, customs and values characteristic of a particular class of people in a specific historical context, such as novels about social conflicts in Britain from the 18th to 19th centuries, and authors including Horace Walpole and Jane Austen.

In her essay, “*Gaudy Night*”, Sayers (1946) mentioned two particular novelists, Collins and Le Fanu:

We also took occasion to preach at every opportunity that if the detective story was to live and develop, it must get back to where it began in the hands of Collins and Le Fanu, and become once more a novel of manners instead of a pure crossword puzzle. (p. 209)

In another essay, “The Omnibus of Crime” (written in 1928/1929, and published in 1946), Sayers regarded the “detective” as the “hero” (p. 78) of a story, who was created in the establishment of a police organization in a big city in the 19th century—the period when the undeveloped frontiers of the world began to shrink at a surprising rate. In the same anthology, Chesterton (1946) compared the city detective story with *The Iliad*, observing the chaos of unconscious forces, wild and obvious in both the city and the countryside: “Every twist of the road is like a finger pointing to it; every fantastic skyline of chimneypots seems wildly and derisively signaling the meaning of the mystery” (p. 4).

Unlike the classical heroic adventurer and knight, the modern hero no longer hunts mythical animals, but instead, hunts down murderers and analyzes poisoners to protect the weak. Sayers (1928/1929, p. 76) described the detective as “the latest of the popular heroes, the true successor of Roland and Lancelot”. Howard Haycraft (1946) believed that Sayers advocated amateurism and democracy embodied in a detective, that was, the spirit of thinking freely, acting on one’s own volition, and democratically criticizing.

Although Sayers acknowledges Poe as her forerunner in developing detective fiction, she also applauds a different trend of detective writing evident among the British writers of “sensational novels” during the pre-Doyle period (1860s and 1870s). In the 1840s and 1850s, Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) perfected a combination of the three typical motifs of detective fiction: the wrongly suspected man, the sealed death-chamber and the solution by unexpected means (Sayers, 1928/1929, p. 81). The sensational novel is a literary genre of fiction of 19th century Britain that includes novelists such as Ellen Wood, Wilkie Collins and Sheridan Le Fanu. In her essay, “Omnibus of Crime”, Sayers (1928/1929) presented the 19th century development of detective stories in three stages: Poe, pre-Doyle (intelligent novels and sensational novels) and Doyle (scientific detective stories).

Sayers affirmed that Le Fanu and Collins sought a more varied and imaginative world in which they connected the detective field with the terrors of the weird and supernatural. The stories of the Irish writer Le Fanu (1814-1873) featured the Irish landscape which blended with the spectral atmosphere of another world. Sayers (1928/1929, p. 88) touted *The House by the Churchyard* (1863) as his masterpiece with regard to the supernatural. Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) is the English author of *The Moonstone* (1868), which Sayers referred to as “probably the very finest detective story ever written” as compared to modern mystery fiction, which “looks thin and mechanical”. Furthermore, Haycraft (1936) states that T. S. Eliot estimated *The Moonstone* as “the first and greatest of English detective novels” (Haycraft, 1936, p. 145).

Through the voice of the female protagonist Harriet Vane of *Gaudy Night*, Sayers praised the excellent writing ability of Le Fanu as exceeding that of Collins. In this work, Sayers described Harriet as a female mystery writer, detective and Oxford alma mater who researches Le Fanu at the Bodleian, the central library of Oxford University:

His (Collins) dream-fantasies and apparitions are too careful to tuck their shrouds neatly about them and leave no loose ends to trouble us. It is in Le Fanu that we find the natural maker of—natural master of—the master of the uncanny whose mastery comes by nature. (p. 187)

Although Le Fanu exceeded Collins in his treatment of the weird, Sayers affirmed that Collins was better at humor, character-drawing, and especially at the architecture of his plots. In *The Moonstone*, Collins (1868) used the convention of telling the story in a series of narratives from the perspectives of various characters: 13 stories were narrated by a total of nine people, including the head servant, Betteredge, as the first narrator³. Sayers appreciated Collins' approach of using multiple viewpoints, in counter to the modernist realistic novel, which is prejudiced against multiple perspectives. She stated that the modern approach is "too closely wedded to externals" ("The Omnibus of Crime", p. 89). In *Gaudy Night*, just as Collins uses a specific Yorkshire setting, Sayers was eager to integrate both the plot and the theme into a specified Oxford setting, through the female protagonist's detective mystery story as well as her struggle to form her identity.

Sayers: Vocation

In *Gaudy Night*, Lord Peter Wimsey and Harriet Vane (1935) were the protagonists in the sequence of novels including *Strong Poison* (1930), *Have His Carcase* (1932) and *Gaudy Night* (1935). The detective story reflects the heroine struggling to find her self-recognition as well as four themes proposed by Barbara Reynolds. Barbara Reynolds established four themes in Sayers' writing, both fiction and non-fiction: the need for redemptive human activity; the image of the Triune God; Sayers' grief over a mechanistic, capitalist society that devalues work from God-given vocation to a mere means of sustenance; and the capitalist society that degrades education to commercial ends⁴.

Although Harriet Vane was a "female detective" in *Gaudy Night*, rather than an irrefutable "hero", she was a fragile human being. She was not immune to an inferiority complex, unhealthy pride and the threat of the evil attacker. She got lost, and disoriented herself in work and marriage. The female writer by occupation, however, recovered her identity in writing a sonnet—a process in which she must attach her life to a supreme good, namely, "detecting" the most appropriate words for the structure of a 14-line poem as the infinite transcendent good. Thus, she did detective work in two senses: in composing poetry and in detecting the scandal at Oxford University.

Harriet loses her place as a mystery writer in a changing commercial world, which is an echo of Sayers' real experience in the consumptive society. Sayers felt as if she were "a house built upon sand" ("Why Work?", Sayers, 1942, p. 94). Harriet similarly not only loses the meaning of working, but also lacks the confidence to

³ The perspectives include: (1) Gabriel Betteredge, the head servant; (2) Miss Clack, a prudish woman who likes to leave Christian tracts around for people to find; (3) Mr. Bruff, a family solicitor; (4) Franklin Blake, Rachel Verinder's cousin and suitor; (5) Ezra Jennings, Dr. Candy's unpopular and odd looking assistant, who suffers from an incurable illness and uses opium to control the pain; (6) Franklin Blake, Rachel Verinder's cousin and suitor; (7) Sergeant Cuff, a famous detective with a fondness for roses; (8) Dr. Candy, the family physician, who loses his sanity due to a fever; and (9) Mr. Murthwaite, a noted adventurer who has traveled frequently in India; he provides the epilogue to the story.

⁴ From an interview with Barbara Reynolds by Chris Armstrong, published in his article, "Dorothy Sayers: 'The dogma is the drama'". Retrieved from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/2005/issue88/5.45.html>

return to seek academic achievements. She is anxious about maturing into solidity like the beeches in her alma mater (Sayers, 1935, p. 16). Sayers visualized the imaginary Shrewsbury College based on her experience at Somerville College, Oxford.

In addition, Harriet experiences a dilemma in her relationship with Lord Peter Wimsey (1930), who saved her from death in the previous story, *Strong Poison*. While she feels grateful for his support, she also feels depressed at her position where she has to be obliged to him. This inferiority complex prevents her from accepting his proposal.

Harriet, however, is unexpectedly asked by her former mentor to solve the poltergeist-like mystery-scandal in Oxford. The opportunity to work as a detective provides Harriet with a secluded sanctuary to which she can retreat from the hurried world and from which she can re-realize the academic, moral and spiritual assets that she acquired in Oxford. She gradually overcomes her depression through her scholarly dialogues with her former mentor, through her academic research on Irish writer Sheridan Le Fanu in the Bodleian Library, and through the aesthetic landscape of Oxford. Sitting on the hill of Shotover (in the Oxford suburb), looking down at the distant view of the Oxford spires, Harriet writes down her concealed emotions in the form of a sonnet, struggling to fit her ideas into the verse-form of metre, stress and line. She feels the delight at the earthly paradise: “looking over the spires of the city, deep-down, fathom-drowned striking from the round bowl of the river-basin, improbably remote and lovely as the tower of Ti-nan-Og beneath the green sea-rollers” (Sayers, 1935, p. 220).

The act of writing leads to her liberation from the oppressive dilemma to an ecstasy of living: “And this is the release that all writers... seek for as men seek for love; and having found it, they doze off happily into dreams and trouble their hearts no further” (Sayers, 1935, p. 222). To Harriet, the world looks as if it is sleeping “like a great top on its everlasting spindle” (Sayers, 1935, p. 220). This phrase is a reflection of Dorothy Sayers’ (Sayers, 1941) theological concept of the world, as she sees “a diversity within its unity” in the vital power of an imaginative work:

Here, then, at home, by no more storms distrest,
Folding laborious hands we sit, wings furled;
Here in close perfume lies the rose-leaf curled,
Here the sun stands and knows not east nor west,
Here no tide runs; we have come, last and best,
From the wide zone through dizzying circles hurled,
To that still centre where the spinning world
Sleeps on its axis, to the heart of rest. (Sayers, 1935, p. 220; outlined by the author)

Harriet’s action seems like a synthesis of dual ways of inventing poetry, as C. S. Lewis (1961) mentioned in his work, *Preface to Paradise Lost*. Lewis distinguished the two parents of every poem: Its mother is “the matter” or the mass of experience, thought inside the poet; and its father is the pre-existing “form” (epic, tragedy and the novel). In other words, Lewis (1961) saw the two parents as Logos (the poet’s opinion and emotions) and Poiema (an organization of words that the poet chooses): “The matter inside the poet wants the Form: in submitting to the Form it becomes really original, really the origin of great work” (p. 3).

As a mystery writer, Harriet fails to see the beauty of mystery fiction in its own right. Her writing becomes devalued in the business world that advertises the work not for its beauty, but for its anticipated profits. Thinking of Harriet’s concept of work from the perspective of Maritain, she arguably mistakes the difference

between “the end by the workman” and “the end to be served by the work”. Maritain (Sayers, 1942) stated that:

What is required is the perfect practical discrimination between the end pursued by the workman (*finis operantis*, said the Schoolmen) and the end to be served by the work (*finis operas*), so that the workman may work for his wages but the work be controlled and set in being only in relation to its own proper good and nowise in relation to the wages earned. (p. 115)

Harriet’s self-awakening can be compared with what Maritain (2010) (*The Responsibility of the Artist*, Chapter 1) believed to be the experience of the daughter of Oedipus Antigone, who prefers the good for the sake of the good: “She (Antigone) directs her life, knowingly or unknowingly, toward a good which is supreme in a given order”. Harriet discovers the synthesis of meaning and form through the composition of poetry. The process of composing embodies a combination of what she means and what she receives in the form. She intends what she wants to write as the author, but receives the revealed spirit in the form, while she must accept herself as the human construction, imperfect and limited. The whole process not only helps her comprehend the true meaning of vocation, but also enables her to overcome her problem in her relationship with Peter.

Through the composition of her sonnet, Harriet likely comes to see the integration of literature and theology. The harmony of creative writing and theological understanding, thus, probably enables her to gain confidence. Sayers affirms in her theological essay, “The Mind of the Maker”, the three-fold creative activity of an author (idea, energy and power), comparing it with the communication among the Trinity of God (father, son and holy spirit). Through the creative activity of writing, Harriet comes to recognize the complementary relationship between literature and theology. This recognition enables her to recover her self-confidence, which positively leads her to accept Peter as he is. The recovery from her complex, conversely, gives way to an evil attack on her via the “poison pen” writer who has created the scandal at Shrewsbury.

Mary McDermott Shideler claimed that Sayers prophetically declared to modern society that the category of “personhood” was adequate for meeting the needs of women or of society as a whole. In *Gaudy Night*, Dorothy L. Sayers presented a world that contains both a mystery fiction and a novel of manners, demonstrating how Harriet seriously handles life as a human—a term that includes both women and men.

Lewis: Science Fiction

Lewis re-interprets his science fiction as the reality of an unknown world, contrary to the conventional image of a technically advanced “scientific” world. In his essay, “On Science Fiction”, Lewis (1955, p. 70) challenged modern critics who label science fiction as “a vice”, “escape” and “contemptible” and treat it with “critical contempt”. Lewis affirmed that most of the articles in question were not very well informed, as they were written by people who hated the genre; thus, they did not satisfactorily explain the science fiction genre. Lewis (1955, p. 71) claimed that their “hatred obscures all distinctions”. He proposed that science fiction should not be evaluated based on the novels of manners (character and description based), the usual standard for judging the realistic novels of British literature during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Lewis proposed that scientific fiction should be evaluated by five exponents of science fiction, to whom he refers as five “sub-species”: (1) commercial authors; (2) engineers; (3) scientific but speculative; (4) eschatological; and (5) supernatural. The first “sub-species”, commercial authors, do not want to write science fiction, but write a veneer of science fiction over their normal work, because they wish to benefit from the financial boom that the genre has experienced. Lewis referred to these authors as “displaced persons”—tasteless and unimaginable. The second type covers the stories of the engineers, who are primarily interested in scientific possibilities in

which they imagine space travel through the actual universe and explore undiscovered techniques. The third is the narratives of those whose interest is “scientific but speculative”. They learn from the sciences that no human being has experienced; there is, in normal men, an impulse to imagine these sciences (as is explored in Homer’s *Odysseus*, Dante and H. G. Wells). The fourth is the fiction of the eschatological (theology focusing on the end of time). This type of fiction encourages us to speculate about the ultimate destiny of our species, in both political and social contexts, and is evident in such works as H. G. Wells’ *Time Machine*, Olaf Stapledon’s *Last and First Men* and Arthur Clarke’s *Childhood’s End*. Lewis advised not readers to criticize the genre they have no taste for, but the book they enjoy, because he is convinced that it will be better to reveal a positive diagnosis of whatever faults the book has, while also understanding how the book has failed:

Nor do I see much use in discussing, as someone did, whether books that use it can be called “novels” or not. That is merely a question of definition. You may define the novel either so as to exclude or so as to include them. The best definition is that which proves itself most convenient. And of course to devise a definition for the purpose of excluding either *The Waves* in one direction or *Brave New World* in another, and then blame them for being excluded, is foolery. (Lewis, 1955, pp. 72-73).

The last category of science fiction is Lewis’ most preferred, but also the most ignored “supernatural” genre. By the 18th century, due to the increase in geographical knowledge, the human race had the actual opportunity to visit strange regions. The only undeveloped area left in fiction is travel to other planets, and through the stars in search of the beauty, awe and terror that are obviously not at hand on earth. In *That Hideous Strength*, Lewis (1945) considered earth as the evil planet, presupposing the materialistic modern society as the wicked invaders of humanity and imagining supernatural saviors not only from the planets of Venus and Mars, but also from the myths of King Arthur and Merlin the magician.

Lewis: Vocation

The female protagonist of *That Hideous Strength*, Jane, is described as a modernist and atheist. Belonging to the first half of the 20th century, the woman regards human relationships (including marriage) as mechanisms to satisfy her desire. She is a student who intends to write a dissertation on the 17th century poet John Donne’s “triumphant vindication of the body”. As the modernist poet, T. S. Eliot revalued the conceits in Donne’s metaphysical poetry, John Donne would be a popular choice for a Ph.D. student like Jane, who desires to complete academic achievements during this period.

Although Jane has lost enthusiasm for her subject, she pretends that she intends to write a paper, if she can lay out all the necessary information, but makes no effort to work on it. She wastes time in doing nothing except repeating her decision: “I must do some work” (Lewis, 1945, p. 7). By work, at this moment, she means her doctorate thesis on Donne. Unlike Harriet, whose theme of life is the spinning world on its axis, Jane has no words to express her life.

Her academic deadlock may be attributed to her inability to comprehend Donne’s adaptation of the double expression of laying sacred verses beneath secular lyrics, revealing agape beneath the façade of erotic affections. Jane hopelessly recalls a line from John Donne’s lyric poem, “Love’s Alchemy”: “Hope not for mind in women”. Donne expresses despondency at his failure to grasp beauty eternally: “Hope not for mind in women; at their best/Sweetness and wit they are, but mummy, possessed” (Lewis, 1945, pp. 22-23; underlined by the author). In his essay, “Donne and Love Poetry in the Seventeenth Century”, C. S. Lewis (1969) affirmed that the modern critics of John Donne failed to sufficiently distinguish: “between Donne’s best and Donne’s

most characteristic” (p. 110). Jane has the same problem.

In the first scene of the novel, Lewis introduced to the reader the female protagonist, Jane, who is in the kitchen, a lifeless wife, like the mummy that John Donne compares to a woman captured by a man in “Love’s Alchemy”. Although she regards the kitchen as a place of solitary confinement, Jane is not imprisoned; she instead imprisons herself. She may have regarded her relationship with her husband Mark as a mechanism to boost her lost passion for “work”, expecting the marriage to inspire a religious understanding of agape through their sexual relationship, but the rationalistic woman seems unable to gain what she wished for from her marriage⁵. As Howard (1999) stated, Jane’s lack of desire to continue writing is connected to her failure to understand the vindication of the body, as she avoids having children in order to continue her scholastic career.

She feels as if her intellectual mind has been ignored. She is miserable, like the poet of “Love’s Alchemy”, who attempts unsuccessfully to seek the elixir that turns all metal into gold:

Some that have deeper diged love’s mine than I,
Say, where his centric happiness doth lie.
I have loved, and got, and told,
But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,
I should not find that hidden mystery. (*The Poems of John Donne*, 1957, p. 35)

As Jane fails to find what she seeks, she may overreact to the question of whether she hates being kissed. By “kiss”, her acquaintance Mrs. Dimple probably refers to a simple affectionate greeting, but Jane is emotionally disturbed by the word, as she perhaps perceives the question to pertain to a deeper dimension, connecting it as a rejection of the intellectual mind: “‘Do I hate being kissed?’ thought Jane to herself. ‘That indeed is the question. Hope not for mind in women’ She intended to reply ‘Of course not’, but inexplicably, and to her great annoyance, found herself crying instead” (Lewis, 1945, p. 18). Therefore, Mrs. Dimple’s question causes Jane to deconstruct her mental obsession with her “work”⁶. Writing on Donne for Jane is an experience that allows her to accept her own defenselessness and confront the reality of the limitations of language.

Jane’s rational thoughts are more shaken by unnatural visions, including the head of a French criminal, a sleeping pre-historic monk and a mythological giantess standing in the garden. Jane feels nauseated disgust at the first vision, compassionate pity at the second one and extreme anger at the weird woman who looks like “a mythological picture by Titian come to life” (Lewis, 1945, p. 193). Titian (1488-1567) is a 16th century Venetian artist. The Titianesque woman seems to have two faces: One resembles that of Mrs. Dimple and the other looks like “something left out of Mother Dimple” (Lewis, 1945, p. 194). The other Dimple seems to serve as an archetype of the baptized Magna Mater (Latin for “Great Mother”)⁷, who works to baptize this world to prepare the way for Ransom whose name literally means the Savior. Mother Dimple is just like the Baptist John, who prepared the way for Jesus Christ the Savior. The third image is the giantess who looks like a “raw-untransformed, demoniac” (Lewis, 1945, p. 194). The lady who sets fire to the room, enrages Jane: “She (giantess) touched a vase on the mantelpiece. Instantly, there rose from it a streak of color which Jane took for

⁵ Chapter 14 (p. 197) demonstrates how Jane may have been seduced to exploit her spiritual experience for the sake of her research on John Donne.

⁶ In Chapter 17, Jane receives Ransom’s kiss upon his lips and his words in her ears, suggestive of her humble attitude towards her sexuality (p. 251).

⁷ Magna Mater is another name for the Phrygian goddess. *The Chiron Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology* (1994). Elizabeth Burr (Trans.). Wilmette, Ill.: Chiron, p. 180.

fire”⁸ (Lewis, 1945, p. 187).

Jane is not satisfied with Ransom’s interpretation of her rage. Ransom attributes her anger to her misunderstanding of sexuality, because she is possessed not with the rejection of biological man per se, but with indignation against masculinity as a whole: “But the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it” (Lewis, 1945, p. 194). Ransom is head of St. Anne’s, a small group of people opposed to the evil scientific organization N.I.C.E., and he is personified as the latest of the secret inheritors of King Arthur, the spiritual King of old Britain.

Since her rage is always triggered by the memories of her bachelor uncles and Ransom’s masculine laughter, Jane fails to calmly comprehend the true meaning of Ransom’s comment on her sexuality. She does, however, come to understand Ransom’s intention when she actually experiences closeness with the divine giantess in the garden. The divine woman is described as “a world” or “a Person” or “the presence of a Person” or “something expectant, patient and inexorable” (pp. 196-197). When Jane meets the mysterious woman, her distorted self-image naturally “drops down” and “vanishes”. Through the spiritual technique of alchemy (encounter with the Divine Person), Jane finds gold (acceptance of her sexuality). In other words, Jane finds Love’s Alchemy, as she had originally wished.

Ultimately, Jane is able to understand vocation as the inheritor of Ransom, not through her active participation in the creative performance of writing a paper, but through passive involvement in supernatural experience: seeing visions in dreams and encountering mythological entities. Unlike Harriet in *Gaudy Night*, C. S. Lewis did not describe Jane’s spiritual transformation in terms of her creative struggle.

Both Harriet and Jane become appropriate players in a concert with their partners. In *Education at the Crossroads*, Jack Maritain (2010) compared the cooperative human relationship of marriage to two musicians playing complementary parts of a concerto. In *The Responsibility of the Artist*, Maritain (2010) emphasized the importance of a woman “directing her life knowingly or unknowingly toward a good” (n. p. Ch. 1). It is certain that Harriet does so knowingly, whereas Jane does so unknowingly.

Although Lewis (2004) wrote that he did not prefer detective stories (CCL Vol. II, p. 505), he had already read *Gaudy Night* before Sayers’ first correspondence with him. By correspondence and also in person, Sayers and Lewis (1942) exchanged thoughts on the themes of love and marriage, and especially about career being “replaced by the new contrast of love and misery” (CCL Vol. II, p. 515). Among the six novels that Lewis wrote in the 1930s and 1940s, *That Hideous Strength* (1945) is the only one with a female protagonist⁹. Although Dorothy L. Sayers and her literature greatly influenced his concept of sexuality, Lewis, in the 1940s, was probably not fully prepared to introduce this style to the process in which a woman writer finds her identity through a creative performance.

Conclusions

Readers in the 20th and the 21st centuries have had to visit strange regions in search of the numinous beauty that is obviously no longer at hand. Due to the spread of geographical knowledge in the modern era, undeveloped exotic continents disappeared, while large modern cities and the invisible darkness of the mind

⁸ Lewis’ description of the mythological giantess is suggestive of Titian’s mythological work, “*Sacred and Profane Love*” (also called “*Venus and the Bride*”) in the Borghese Gallery, Rome.

⁹ Lewis’ 14 novels include *The Pilgrim’s Regress* (1933), *The Screwtape Letters* (1942), *Out of the Silent Planet* (1943), *Perelandra* (1943), *That Hideous Strength* (1945), *The Great Divorce* (1946), *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), *Prince Caspian* (1951), *The Voyage of the “Dawn Treader”* (1952), *The Silver Chair* (1953), *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), *The Magician’s Nephew* (1955), *The Last Battle* (1956) and *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956).

became the new settings for the new genre of the mystery novel, and other planets and stars for the new genre of science fiction. Our interest in humanity and sexuality, not settled in the known genres, expressed themselves in these new spheres. Mystery fiction, science fiction and fantasy found their place in the postmodern world, as they were all categorized as unconventional literary groups, which were more prosperous after World War II.

Dorothy L. Sayers and C. S. Lewis were early 20th century theological writers within their respective genres, mystery and science fiction. They read one another's writings and exchanged critical comments, and both their lives and literature made great academic impression on each other. Sayers' protagonist Harriet is socially independent as a mystery writer, scholar of Le Fanu, and detective investigating the scandal in Oxford. Lewis, an academic friend of hers, in contrast, creates the protagonist Jane, who does not positively involve herself in creating work, but passively encounters mysterious beings and consequently discovers her true vocation.

Harriet rather reflects Lewis' concept of creativity, because her act of composing a sonnet on Shotover is an ideal combination of C. S. Lewis' proclaimed duality: two parents of Logos and Poïema. We must wait for his last novel, *Till We Have Faces* (1956), to see how Lewis reveals to the readers his ideal integration of the metamorphosis of humanity embodied in the life of a woman who assumes multiple roles as narrator, author, character and reader. This discussion presents Sayers and Lewis as postmodernist writers from the Christian perspective, re-evaluating the often overlooked mystery and science fiction novels, and introducing the reader to another world that exists beyond conventional boundaries.

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