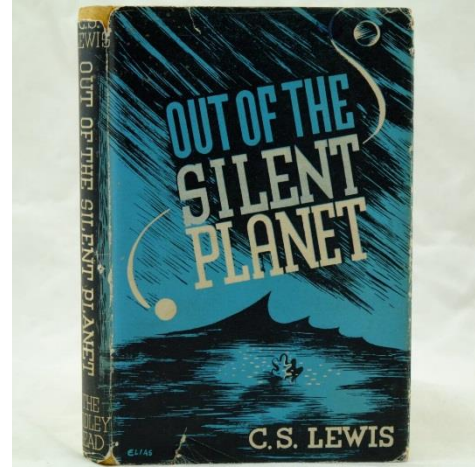
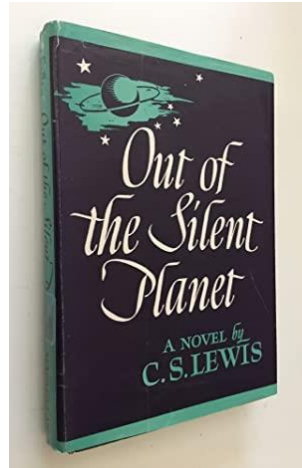
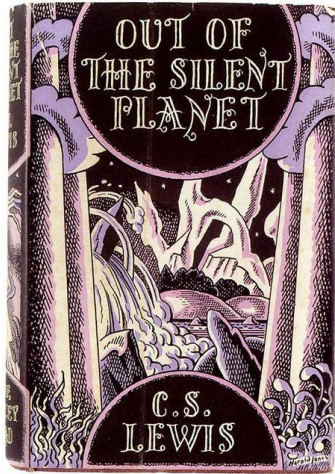


Out of the Silent Planet Readers Guide

by Ted Lewis - August 2022



by C. S. Lewis

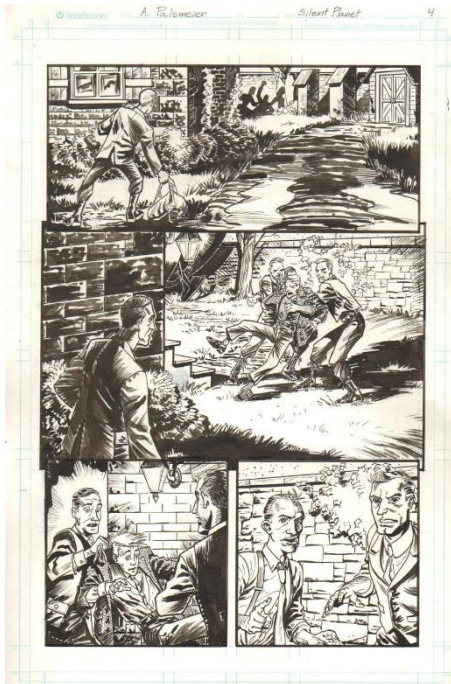
A Clash of Worldviews

Weston: "We have learned how to jump off the speck of matter on which our species began. Infinity, and therefore perhaps eternity, is being put into the hands of the human race. You cannot be so small minded as to think that the rights or life of an individual or of a million individuals are of the slightest importance in comparison with this."

Ransom: "I consider your philosophy of life raving lunacy. I suppose all that stuff about infinity and eternity means that you think you are justified in doing anything—absolutely anything—here and now, on the off chance that some creatures or other descended from man as we know him may crawl about a few centuries longer in some part of the universe."

Weston: "Yes—anything whatever," returned the scientist sternly, "and all educated opinion—for I do not call classics and history and such trash education—is entirely on my side."

First Published in 1938



Kidnapped



Transported



Escaped



Survived

(Artwork: [AaronTP](#) at Deviant Art)

Deep Heaven or Outer Space?

...the tension between Medieval and Modern Frameworks

(Ransom) 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? ... No: space was the wrong name. Older thinkers had been wiser when they named it simply the heavens—the heavens which declared the glory... (chapter 5)



"Whatever else a modern feels when he looks at the night sky, he certainly feels that he is looking *out* -- like one looking out from the saloon entrance on to the dark Atlantic or from the lighted porch upon dark and lonely moors. But if you accepted the medieval Model you would feel like one looking *in*." C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 119.

The most extensive online resource for *Out of the Silent Planet* can be found at this LitCharts website:

<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/out-of-the-silent-planet>

Note the 4 themes presented in this resource:

1. Christian Imagery and Thought
2. Civilization and Utopia
3. Human Nature and Morality
4. Acceptance and Curiosity vs. Fear of the Unknown



Based on early theories of canals on Mars, Lewis created a terrain of highlands and lowlands, with water systems in the lower realm.

Check out this website about Malacandran geography and lore:

<https://the-silent-planet.fandom.com/wiki/Malacandra>

Main Characters from Earth:

- **Dr. Elwin Ransom** – A professor of philology at a college of the University of Cambridge
- **Dr. Weston** – A thick-set physicist, ruthless and arrogant, who believes in extending and expanding human control throughout the solar system.
- **Dick Devine** – A businessman and technocrat; Weston's accomplice who "was quite ready to laugh at Weston's solemn scientific idealism."



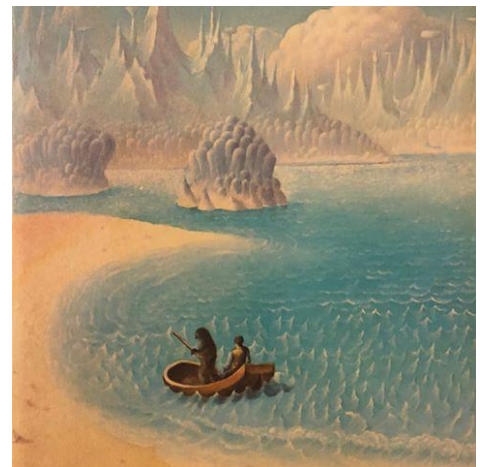
Main Characters on Malacandra:

- **Hyoï** – Ransom's first *hross* contact and boat mate.
- **Hnohra** – An older *hross* who acts as Ransom's language teacher.
- **Augray** – A mountain-dwelling *sorn* that Ransom meets.
- **Kanakaberaka** – A *pfifltrigg* who carves Ransom's portrait onto a stone at Meldilorn.
- **Oyarsa** – The spirit ruler of Malacandra whose demand to meet a human before allowing further exploration of his planet precipitates the kidnapping of Ransom.

Glossary of *Old Solar* on Malacandra:

Field of Arbol terms: (Solar System)

- *Arbol* — The Sun
- *Perelandra* — A compound noun, formed with the prefix *Perel* and the noun *handra*; Venus
- *Thulcandra* — A compound noun, formed with the prefix *Thulc*, meaning "silent", and *handra*; "Silent Planet" or Earth
- *Malacandra* — A compound noun, formed with the prefix *Malac* and the noun *handra*, referring to the fourth planet from the Sun; Mars



Spirit Beings:

- *Eldil*, pl. *eldila* — Being of light, similar to a spirit.
- *Oyarsa*, pl. *Oyéresu* — (Title) = Ruler of a planet, a higher-order *eldil*.
- *Maleldil* — Ruler of the *Oyéresu*

The three main species of *hnau*:

- *Hross*, pl. *hrossa*
- *Pfifltrigg*, pl. *pfifltriggi*
- *Sorn*, pl. *séroni*

Other words of the *hnau*:

- *Crah* — Final section of a poem.
- *Handra* — Land or planet.
- *Harandra* — High earth; plateau.
- *Handramit* — Low earth; valley.
- *Hlab* — Language.
- *Hluntheline* — Long for, yearn for, desire (for the future).
- *Hnakra*, pl. *hnéraki* — A vicious aquatic beast hunted by the *hrossa*.
- *Hnakrapunt*, pl. *hnakrapunti* — *Hnakra*-slayer.
- *Hnau* — Rational creature.
- *Honodraskrud* — Ground-weed.
- *Hressa Hlab* - Language of the *hrossa*.
- *Hressni* — Female *hrossa*.
- *Surnibur* - Language of the *séroni*.
- *Wondelone* — Long for, yearn for, miss (from the past).

“The creature was talking. It had a language. If you are not yourself a philologist, I am afraid you must take on trust the prodigious emotional consequences of this realization in Ransom's mind. A new world he had already seen—but a new, an extra-terrestrial, a non-human language was a different matter. Somehow, he had not thought of this in connection with the *sorns*; now, it flashed upon him like a revelation. The love of knowledge is a kind of madness. In the fraction of a second which it took Ransom to decide that the creature was really talking, and while he still knew that he might be facing instant death, his imagination had leaped over every fear and hope and probability of his situation to follow the dazzling project of making a *Malacandrian* grammar.”

Is Progress Possible?

In 1958 Lewis was invited to submit an article to *The Observer*, answering the question: Is Progress Possible? His submission included the subtitle: Willing Slaves of the Welfare State. As you can imagine, Lewis, with Tolkien, was not a big fan of modern technological advancements. As a medievalist, he understood the dangers of discarding a model of the universe that had both beauty and harmony in its framework. But his main worry was how modern proponents of humanity's advancement were discarding traditional moral values. This sort of trend, as he developed in his book *The Abolition of Man*, could only lead to dire outcomes.



All three of Lewis' Space Trilogy books take on this clash between the Old and the New. Consider this quote from Weston from *Out of the Silent Planet*:

I bear on my shoulders the destiny of the human race. Your tribal life with its stone-age weapons and bee-hive huts, its primitive coracles and elementary social structure, has nothing to compare with our civilization – with our science, medicine and law, our armies, our architecture, our commerce, and our transport system which is rapidly annihilating space and time. Our right to supersede you is the right of the higher over the lower.

It goes without saying that Lewis felt compelled to prophetically critique this mindset which he encountered in the mid-century that treats Science with a capital 'S' as if there is no place for questioning the technological advancements of our day. His greatest concerns were in the bio-sciences. One can only imagine how he would respond to our contemporary 'advancements' in genetic engineering and pharmaceuticals.