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THEY WALKED TOGETHER:  
OWEN BARFIELD, WALTER O. FIELD,  
CECIL HARWOOD, C.S. LEWIS

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**Abstract**

For C. S. Lewis, the walks that he took each Eastertide with Owen Barfield, Walter O. Field, and Cecil Harwood epitomized friendship. Although they were distinctly unlike in personality and were not all interested in the same things, the four “cretaceous perambulators” shared core ideals and aspirations. Their writings evidence the wonderful strengths of their friendship.

**Keywords:** *Barfield, Field, Friendship, Great War, Harwood, Lewis*

*They Stand Together* is the title Walter Hooper chose for the collection of C. S. Lewis’s letters to Arthur Greeves. The title is derived from a passage in *The Four Loves* in which Lewis describes the finding of one’s kindred soul: “It is when two such persons discover one another, when, whether with immense difficulties and semi-articulate fumbings or with what would seem to us amazing and elliptical speed, they share their vision – it is then that Friendship is born. And instantly they stand together in an immense solitude.” (65) Lewis and Greeves truly did “stand together,” as Owen Barfield explains in his review of these letters: “his [Lewis’s] lifelong friendship with Arthur Greeves (it began when they were schoolboys and ended only with Lewis’s death) was *sui generis*. The nearest thing to a nutshell I can find to put the difference in is to say that with his other friends we hear him *exchanging* thoughts and experiences; with Arthur the emphasis is always on *sharing* them.” (“Sound” 13)

Even more than *standing* together, however, friendship was for Lewis a *walking* together. Friends, he wrote, are “travelling companions, but on a different kind of journey,” “fellow-travellers (...) on the same secret road.” (*Four Loves* 66, 67) Moreover, the journey is purposeful; the travellers are “on the same quest,” “joint seekers of the same God, the same beauty, the same truth.” (*Four Loves* 67) And the “walking together” can engender love, for

One knows nobody so well as one’s “fellow.” Every step of the common journey tests his metal; and the tests are tests we fully understand because we

are undergoing them ourselves. Hence, as he rings true, time after time, our reliance, our respect and our admiration blossom into an Appreciative love of a singularly robust and well-informed kind. (...)

In a perfect Friendship this Appreciative love is, I think, often so great and so firmly based that each member of the circle feels, in his secret heart, humbled before all the rest. Sometimes he wonders what he is doing there among his betters. He is lucky beyond desert to be in such company. Especially when the whole group is together, each bringing out all that is best, wisest, or funniest in all the others. Those are the golden sessions; when four or five of us after a hard day's walking have come to our inn; when our slippers are on, our feet spread out towards the blaze and our drinks at our elbows; when the whole world, and something beyond the world, opens itself to our minds as we talk; and no one has any claim on or any responsibility for another, but all are freemen and equals as if we had first met an hour ago, while at the same time an Affection mellowed by the years enfolds us. Life—natural life—has no better gift to give. Who could have deserved it? (*Four Loves* 71-72)

The “golden sessions” which Lewis had in mind when he wrote this passage certainly were ones that he had personally experienced. For many years, walking tours with friends and with his brother were a highlight of his vacations, as his letters attest. He began the practice in the mid-1920s, when two of his friends, Arthur Owen Barfield (1898-1997) and Alfred Cecil Harwood (1898-1975), invited him to join them on a walk during a vacation between terms at Oxford University, where the three of them were then students. Each year thereafter, until the Second World War made such excursions impossible, Lewis, Barfield, and Harwood, often together with one or two others, took an Eastertide walking holiday. These walks, particularly the ones he undertook with Barfield, Harwood and Walter Ogilvie Field (1893-1957), epitomized friendship for Lewis, as a letter he wrote to Field in May 1943 clearly brings out:

My dear Woff,

Thanks for your letter. You can dismiss all that stuff about being ‘out of the picture’. The whole point about the Walk is that the members are unlike and indispensable. Owen’s dark, labyrinthine pertinacious arguments, my bow-wow dogmatism, Cecil’s unmoved tranquility, your needle-like or grey-hound-like keenness, are four instruments in a quartette.

Anyway, you are under a simple illusion. You notice when Owen and I are talking metaphysics which you (and Cecil) don’t follow: you don’t notice the times when you and Owen are talking economics which I can’t follow. Owen is the only one who is *never* out of his depth. The thing is an image of what the world ought to be: wedded *unlikes*. Roll on the day when it can function again. (*Collected Letters* 2 572)

One of the unifying factors in the friendship of these four was that they all were veterans of the Great War, World War I. Indeed, Harwood and Field met during the war, in northern France, where they both were serving in the same battalion of the British Army's Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Harwood has written appreciatively of his first encounter with the battalion's "eccentric, voluble and lovable Intelligence Officer, with his eager mind and immense devotion to the men," and of the deep conversations the two of them had there, particularly "one—I believe it took place on the night of my arrival—on the subject of fear. I maintained that the brave man was he who felt no fear (we were being shelled and I badly wanted to be brave): Field, that he was the man who felt fear to the utmost extreme but overcame it." ("Field" 283, 284) A. A. Milne (who, as it happened, also served in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment during the Great War) wrote a story about Field, who was renowned among the soldiers for his courageous deeds. Only the names are altered in Milne's lively and insightful story about the remarkable officer for whom "whatever might come to him only offered him yet another of those spiritual adventures for which he hungered. Death least of all he feared. For to a man like Mullins [that is, Field], (...) every adventure is an adventure of the soul." (10)

Soon after the war concluded, Field and Harwood met again, at Oxford University. "Short as the first connection was, it was deep enough to make it inevitable that we should meet again," Harwood later recounted. "It was on a Summer's day in my first year at Oxford [1919] that there came a knock on the door of my room, and to my huge delight a torrent of exclamations brought Field into the room." ("Field" 284) Field had been a student in Oxford's Trinity College until the war broke out in 1914, when, with characteristic immediacy and decisiveness, he joined the army as a volunteer. Although he chose to accept a war degree rather than continue his university studies, he visited Oxford quite often during the first postwar years, and through Harwood he met Barfield and Lewis, who then were undergraduates there.

The four had many interests and tastes in common. Harwood's son Laurence notes, "A shared love of classics, myths and legends, philosophy and ancient history, Greek and Latin, English literature, opera and walking tours cemented the camaraderie of the three undergraduate friends [Barfield, Harwood and Lewis] during their time at Oxford—and for the rest of their lives"; (11) and Field very much "walked together" with them in this regard, although Laurence Harwood does not mention him.

In addition, they were deeply interested in poetry, as were a great many of the other newly demobilized veterans who thronged Oxford after the war. Literature, especially poetry, had been tremendously popular with the British soldiers in the Great War, for whom a favourite "haversack book" was *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, which was printed in a conveniently lightweight and slim India paper edition. The beauty, tenderness, and eloquence in poems

were a refreshing, often sustaining contrast to the horrific chaos of trench warfare. Moreover, new poets, such as Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke, Edmund Blunden, and Siegfried Sassoon, gave voice to what those on the warfront were experiencing. After the war, poetry continued to be widely felt as a necessity of life, and in postwar Oxford numerous informal small groups formed, drawn together by this feeling.<sup>1</sup>

Among them was the circle which included Lewis, Barfield, Harwood, and Field, and also two other undergraduates, Leo Baker and Eric Beckett. This group was actively engaged “in the search for some meaning in life” in the bleak new world. (Harwood, “Field” 285) They centred on poetry because each of the group’s participants had, as Barfield wrote of himself, “definitely concluded that (...) poetry was perhaps one of the best things in life, and certainly the most hopeful thing, in the prevailing materialistic climate of opinion.” (“Origin” 3) The poems which spoke to them, and the poems which they themselves composed, were not in the modes that were then fashionable, but rather poems which expressed the Romantic spirit and had musicality and imaginativeness at their core. Together, the friends planned what they hoped would become an annual anthology of their own and others’ poetry of this kind. Although the group did not succeed in finding a publisher for their volume and abandoned the project, they continued to encourage and support each other’s creative work throughout the rest of their lives.

For Lewis, Barfield, Harwood and Field, it was essential to live the values that they professed. Their endeavours to “walk the talk” were quite wide-ranging. For example, during their time at Oxford Barfield and Harwood were active members of the Falmouth Music Club and toured with the company as dancers. Barfield was a leading member of the Oxford University branch of the English Folk Dance Society as well. The “Prologue to Songs and Dances” which he wrote for the Falmouth Music Club expresses the ideal which motivated these and the many, many other music and dance groups that proliferated in the aftermath of the Great War—world peace through the arts:

This we believe: that nations truly live  
Not in the wealth which they from others take  
But in the wealth which to the world they give,  
The songs and dances that their people make. (“Prologue” 44)

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<sup>1</sup> For helpful information concerning these matters, see John Bremer, *C. S. Lewis, Poetry, and the Great War 1914-1918* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014); Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London, V. Gollanz Ltd.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930); Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); and David Reynolds, *The Long Shadow: The Legacies of The Great War in the Twentieth Century* (New York and London: W. W. Norton Co., 2014).

Music and dance also are centrally important in Barfield's first novel, *The Silver Trumpet* (1925), a richly imaginative fairy tale for children of all ages.

Postwar economic and social needs especially concerned Field. Harwood recalled, "It was a time of great economic depression and social unrest, and Field's heart was torn by the poverty and misery he saw around him, while his head increasingly told him that there was something wrong with an economic system which left millions all but starving, while industry was producing masses of goods that no one could afford to buy." ("Field" 285) Barfield, who thoroughly shared these concerns, wrote numerous articles, pamphlets, short stories, and novels which forthrightly portray the problems and point to possible solutions.<sup>1</sup>

For a time, Field and Barfield enthusiastically advocated the Social Credit Movement which began in the early 1920s, inspired by the ideas of C. H. Douglas. In 1923, however, they and Harwood began to investigate the ideas of the Austrian philosopher and reformer, Rudolf Steiner, who had been the featured speaker in the Conference on Spiritual Values in Education and Social Life held at Oxford's Manchester College in the summer of 1922. One of those who were lastingly inspired by what Steiner said in Oxford was Daphne Olivier (later Daphne Harwood), whom Harwood and Barfield had met in the Falmouth Music Club. It was through her that Harwood, Barfield, Field and Lewis first learned about anthroposophy, the "science of the spirit" inaugurated by Steiner, and found that "in Steiner's conception of the 'Threefold Commonwealth', with its harmony of the economic, political and spiritual spheres," there was "something which went far beyond Major Douglas, even in the limited sphere of monetary theory." ("Field" 286-87)

Lewis was horrified that his friends were interested in anthroposophy. His reaction to Anthroposophy was a tragedy, in a way," Barfield later said. "It was very much affected by the fact that in an earlier period of his life he had a time when he was rather attracted to occultism in the bad sense, which some Theosophists went in for, I think. And he had this rather phoney attraction for it. He mixed all this up in his mind. For he thought it was trying to come back again in Anthroposophy." (Barfield "Interview" 17) The debate that ensued between Lewis and Barfield was so vigorous and intense that when he was describing it in *Surprised by Joy* Lewis termed it their "Great War."

For their part, Harwood, Barfield and Field did not rush to embrace anthroposophy. For several months they read and discussed Steiner's writings and carefully examined his ideas by testing them against what they already knew and holding them up to Lewis's critical scrutiny. Gradually, their initial

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<sup>1</sup> See Astrid Diener's brilliant study of Barfield's writings in the 1920s and 1930s, *The Role of Imagination in Culture and Society: Owen Barfield's Early Work*. Leipzig: Galda + Wilch Verlag, 2002; 2nd ed. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013.

septicism was replaced by confidence that anthroposophy emphasized clear, wide-awake, independent thinking, and thus could rightfully appeal to all who felt themselves “spirits in bondage.”<sup>1</sup> As Barfield wrote in his first published statement about anthroposophy, “anybody who feels an instinctive distrust of authority and dogma, whether it emanates from a Church, a Mahatma Letter, or a Science lecture-room, and who at the same time believes that knowledge has a somewhat more inviting future before it than the prospect of tracing the law of cause and effect one step further back behind the electron, is making a great mistake if he does not put himself to the trouble of finding out whether Steiner has anything to tell him.” (“Theosophy” 250)

Harwood, Field, and Barfield were especially impressed by the practicality and constructiveness of Steiner’s ideas, which opened up promising new ways of working in a variety of other fields, including not only economics but also education, the arts, agriculture, and medicine. Together with three others, Cecil and Daphne Harwood founded the first Steiner School in the English-speaking world, where Field soon joined them as a teacher. Field’s article “The Early Teaching of Arithmetic” gives a vivid indication of how Steiner’s approach to education nurtures “the recovery of man in childhood,”<sup>2</sup> and of the imaginativeness, intelligence, and zest with which these pioneering Steiner School teachers made the classroom a space of “endless life and adventure.” (Field 97)

The Christ-centeredness of Rudolf Steiner’s outlook also was decisively important for Harwood, Field, and Barfield. Like Lewis, they were deeply religious men. Both Harwood and Field were strongly connected with The Christian Community, a worldwide movement for religious renewal which was founded soon after the Great War. Barfield was not at first a Christian. “I was brought up as an agnostic; but, partly perhaps through my father, who was a convinced admirer of Tolstoy, that did not prevent me from wishing the Gospels were true,” he later said. (Schenkel 26) But this remained no more than a wish for some time, for in the intellectual climate of the early twentieth century religion was thought to be mere superstition. In 1922, however, Barfield’s research into the changing meanings of the word “ruin” brought him a first, break-through intimation that the Gospels might be true after all:

Always the individual spirit increases, according to its knowledge, its dreadful consciousness of solitude. Language has done this; but language, which was born in order to permit social relationships between men, is striving still towards that end and consolation. As it grows subtler and subtler, burying in its vaults more and more associations, more and more mind, it becomes to those same

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<sup>1</sup> *Spirits in Bondage* is the title of Lewis’s first book, published in 1919.

<sup>2</sup> This is the title of a book by A. C. Harwood, *The Recovery of Man in Childhood: A Study in the Educational Work of Rudolf Steiner*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1959.

spirits a more and more perfect medium of companionship. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." ("Ruin" 170)

Pursuing his study of language, Barfield came to understand how "Great poetry is the progressive incarnation of life in consciousness." (*Poetic Diction* 203) His philological research also made him certain "that the incarnation, and life and death of Christ was at the center of the whole evolutionary process of life itself." (Mead 120) And so, as he told Elmar Schenkel, when he read Steiner's book *Christianity as Mystical Fact* and realized that the Incarnation "was central to his whole vision of the evolution of consciousness (...) I immediately became an avowed anthroposophist. Mere honesty demanded as much." (Schenkel 26)

At this time in his life Lewis was resolutely atheist. Always an exemplary practitioner of rigorously logical reasoning, he held steadfastly to philosophical realism during the first years of his friendship with Barfield, Harwood, and Field. However, as their friendship deepened through their spirited debates concerning literature and ideas, their conversations became more and more powerfully helpful for the personal development of each of the friends. This was particularly true for Lewis and Barfield. Lewis's criticisms had a lifelong positive effect on Barfield's thinking; his writings from the mid-1920s on are impressive evidence that, as he told Astrid Diener seven decades later, he had lastingly learned "to think out my positions responsibly and fully" and to appreciate the value of strict logic; "I owe a tremendous lot to him." (Diener 17) And as Lewis explains in *Surprised by Joy*, in challenging Barfield to think clearly and coherently about language and the imagination, he himself came to recognize and shed his "'chronological snobbery', the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited." (200) Moreover, after several months of their "Great War" dialogue Lewis became convinced by Barfield's counter-arguments that his own "realistic" outlook could not be related conceptually with his actual experience: "Unless I were to accept an unbelievable alternative, I must admit that mind was no late-come epiphenomenon; that the whole universe was, in the last resort, mental; that our logic was participation in a cosmic *Logos*." (209) In 1926 Lewis abandoned philosophical realism and became an absolute idealist; and in 1929 he exchanged idealism for theism: "I gave in and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed, perhaps the most dejected and reluctant convert in all of England." (228-29)

Also in 1929, Barfield completed his second novel, *English People*. It provides an interesting perspective on the "walking together" of Lewis, Field, Barfield, and Harwood, for, like the four real-life friends, each of the four central characters has a distinctly different outlook from the others, and much of the

novel consists of conversations in which they examine their shared ideas and ideals from the multiple points of view represented in their circle. In these consistently lively, earnest, thoughtful interchanges, each participant strives, as Lewis and his walking companions consistently did, to discover truth rather than to score points. *English People* gives particularly clear and substantial insight into Field, on whom Barfield modelled Humphrey Trinder, one of the novel's four protagonists.<sup>1</sup> Trinder, like Field, is notable for his probing intelligence, utter integrity, generous concern for others, and outstanding moral and physical courage. Also like Field, he has what he perceives to be clairvoyant experience and takes it very seriously; a genuine seeker of the spirit, he puts all that he discovers – both clairvoyantly and in ordinary consciousness – in active service of his fellow human beings.<sup>2</sup>

*English People* concludes with “The Rose on the Ash-Heap,” a *märchen*, or fairy-tale for grown-ups, which imaginatively epitomizes the novel's core themes: love, imagination, and the evolution of consciousness. “The Rose on the Ash-Heap” is a quest story. Sultan, the central character, travels from East to West, seeking the Lady, a beautiful dancer who has vanished from the temple where he met and fell in love with her. In his journey Sultan experiences how the ancient, graceful wisdom of the temple, palace, and old Romances has gradually been supplanted by modern consciousness. Along the way, he becomes friends with a Poet and a Philosopher; both are gently satiric representations, the Poet of modern-day aestheticism and the Philosopher of Lewis. The Philosopher is a warmly hospitable and decidedly unglamorous person. “His clothes—a shabby old coat and a pair of sagging cylindrical trousers—hung loosely from his rounded shoulders; his voice was loud and startling; all his movements were boyish and awkward and (...) he must needs pour a perpetual column of [soot] into the air from a tobacco-pipe which was itself no less than a small chimney.” (*Rose* 33) He volubly and enthusiastically expounds his philosophy, abstract idealism, and endeavours to practice it in all aspects of his life. At the end of the *märchen* the Philosopher and Sultan meet again, this time as fellow students of the deep-rooted wisdom of the Rose.

A few years later Lewis too wrote a quest story. In 1931 he had become a Christian; in *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933) he describes his conversion to Christianity. The path that Lewis's pilgrim traverses includes several areas that Lewis, Barfield, Harwood and Field had jointly explored, such as the House of Wisdom where Lewis's fictional “Rudolf Steiner” resides. Diana Pavlac Glyer has pointed out that “Owen Barfield shows up in this book too, as the figure of History,” (168) a profoundly wise hermit who lives in “a little chapel in a cave

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Barfield told the author this in a personal conversation.

<sup>2</sup> *English People* has not yet been published. The author has a copy of Mr. Barfield's typescript of the novel.

of the cliff.” In his portrayal of Father History, Lewis pays appreciative tribute to the friend he regarded as “the wisest and best of my unofficial teachers.”<sup>1</sup>

Barfield’s 1930 essay “Death” may also have contributed to Lewis’s becoming a Christian. In that same year, Lewis drafted an autobiographical manuscript, “Early Prose Joy.” This unfinished reminiscence includes his description of a near-death experience that he had when he was a soldier in the Great War:

From the time which I spent in the army one experience stands out. (...) I have to record it, for its influence on me was profound. I had just been hit by some pieces of a shell. I was lying on my face, with no pain, when I found (or thought I found) that I was no longer breathing. I was not choking or struggling to breathe; the function had simply ceased. At that moment, something which I can speak of only as “I” observed mentally, without the slightest emotion, “This man must be dying”. There was no question of my “soul” concluding that my “body” was about to die. I am confident that “this man” meant the whole man, body and soul. The individual, everything that could be called “me” was coming to an end, and I (whoever that might be) cared not two farthings. (23-24)

Reading Barfield’s essay seems to have given Lewis a helpful new perspective on this event. In *C. S. Lewis: A Biography*, Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper point out that “it is not until the summer of 1930 that his letters show that he had given any thought to the possibility of there being an afterlife. What may have set him thinking was an article on ‘Death’ written by Barfield, which Lewis particularly admired.” (108) Death, Barfield writes, must be understood as a spiritual phenomenon, and coming to terms with it requires active moral will. In this process one “puts on immortality”; and in so doing, one discovers “what you have been seeking all your life. For all your life long you have been seeking Another.” (“Death” 55)

By the time *The Pilgrim’s Regress* was published, Barfield’s life had undergone a drastic change. Toward the end of 1930, his strong sense of responsibility caused him to move to London and join the family law firm, Barfield and Barfield. Beginning in January 1931 he worked there, initially as a clerk, and then, when he had earned the B.C.L. degree, as a solicitor. The timing was quite fortuitous for the Lewis household, which turned to him promptly in 1931 for help in working out the details of the complicated mortgage for the Kilns. Years later, Barfield’s legal expertise enabled him to devise and administer the “Agape Fund” by which Lewis could practice the thorough-going Christian charity as he vitally needed to do, without being bankrupted by tax penalties. In “The Things That Are Caesar’s!” chapter six of *This Ever Diverse*

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<sup>1</sup> This is the wording Lewis used when dedicating his 1936 book *Allegory of Love* to Barfield.

*Pair* (1950), Barfield gives a humorous account of how the Agape Fund came to be.

Lewis, Harwood, Field, and Barfield each had a lively sense of humor, and one of the most striking characteristics of their friendship was the joy and wit of their interchanges. These qualities are wonderfully present in their letters to each other, as well in the three works that Lewis and Barfield composed collaboratively. In “Abecedarium Philosophicum” (1933), an ingenious sequence of rhymed couplets, Lewis’s and Barfield’s collaboration is so close that it is impossible to tell for sure which author contributed which portions. The poem may have originated as one of the works that the four friends spontaneously composed in their annual Eastertide walking tours.<sup>1</sup> *A Cretaceous Perambulator (The Re-examination of)* was written in 1936, after Lewis had stayed home to grade school examination papers instead of walking with his friends. As a penalty for his absence, Barfield and Harwood composed a parody of school examination questions for Lewis to answer. *A Cretaceous Perambulator* consists of the questions and Lewis’s equally comedic responses to them.<sup>2</sup> *Mark vs. Tristram* (1947) is an imaginary legal correspondence, inspired by Lewis’s observation that it would be interesting to “imagine the life of Sir Tristram as it would be presented by King Mark’s solicitors.”<sup>3</sup>

One of the subjects which enduringly interested all four of the “cretaceous perambulators” was mythology. Barfield wrote several substantial works that were inspired by myths. One of them is *Orpheus: A Poetic Drama*, which he wrote in the 1930s following a suggestion made to him by Lewis.<sup>4</sup> Another is *Riders on Pegasus*. In this narrative poem, Barfield tells the story of King Perseus, Andromeda his queen, and Bellerophon, who becomes their travelling companion. Barfield modelled both Perseus and Bellerophon after Lewis, as he explains in his Introduction to *Light on C. S. Lewis*:

From about 1935 onwards (...) I had the impression of living with not one, but two Lewises. (...) [In *Riders on Pegasus*] two of the characters loosely and archetypally represented for me “my” two Lewises. They suffered very different fates. The one (Perseus), after going through a great many difficulties arising

<sup>1</sup> “Abecedarium Philosophicum” was first published in *Oxford Magazine* 52 (30 Nov. 1933): 298.

<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis and Owen Barfield, *A Cretaceous Perambulator (The Re-examination of)*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Oxford: Oxford University C. S. Lewis Society, 1983.

<sup>3</sup> *Mark vs. Tristram* was first published as *Mark vs. Tristram: Correspondence between C. S. Lewis and Owen Barfield*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Cambridge, MA: Lowell House Printers, 1967. William Griffin quotes Lewis’s comment in his book *Clive Staples Lewis: A Dramatic Life*. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986, 271.

<sup>4</sup> Owen Barfield, *Orpheus: A Poetic Drama*. Ed. John C. Ulreich, Jr. West Stockbridge, MA: The Lindisfarne Press, 1983.

out of a preference he had developed for dealing with the reflections of things rather than with the things themselves (...), made peace with what Professor Wilson Knight or Sir Herbert Read would probably call his “creative eros” (Andromeda) and was ultimately constellated, along with Andromeda and Pegasus, in the heavens. The other (Bellerophon), after slaying the monster Chimera, declined an invitation to ascend to heaven on the back of Pegasus, who had been his mount in the fateful contest, on the ground of impiety. He was thrown by Pegasus and ended his days in increasing obscurity as a kind of aging, grumbling, earth-bound, guilt-oppressed *laudator temporis acti*. (xv)

Barfield’s description of Bellerophon’s last days is somewhat misleading. In fact, he is a tragic, thoroughly noble figure; and he has a fittingly noble end:

the Blest  
Received him when he died – no fiery stars  
Whirling, but steeped Elysium dowered his ghost with rest.<sup>1</sup>

Field died in the summer of 1957. When Lewis learned of his death, he wrote to Harwood, “Wof was the most completely lovable man, I admit, I ever knew. I am so glad to have known him, that it almost obliterates the loss.” (*Collected Letters* 3 884) Lewis, Harwood, and Barfield continued to exchange cordial letters and got together whenever they could. The “golden” atmosphere of their friendship is deftly depicted in Barfield’s *Worlds Apart* (1963), which is a kind of walking tour of the contemporary intellectual landscape. The characters in this brilliant work of creative nonfiction include Professor Hunter, Barfield’s affectionate version of Lewis; the “retired schoolmaster” Sanderson, who has Harwood’s presence of mind, tactfulness, and comprehensive understanding of anthroposophy; and Burgeon, who is, like Barfield, “a lawyer with an interest in philology.” Lewis thoroughly enjoyed *Worlds Apart*, which he read both in manuscript and again when it was published. In October 1963 he wrote to Barfield, “I think I can say that in sheer pleasure content *Worlds Apart* and the *Iliad* have been the high lights of this summer. As before, the difficulty in digesting *W. A.* comes from this irresistible tendency to wolf it down too quickly.”<sup>2</sup>

A little more than a month after his note to Barfield, Lewis quietly died at the Kilns, his home. Among the small group of family and friends who attended his funeral were Barfield and Harwood. Lewis had named these two the executors of his will and trustees of his estate, and they immediately took up

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<sup>1</sup> These are the concluding lines of Part VI of Owen Barfield’s poem *Riders on Pegasus*. *Riders on Pegasus* has not yet been published. A copy of Mr. Barfield’s typescript of the poem is in the author’s possession.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished letter. A photocopy is in the author’s possession.

these duties. During the years that followed Lewis's death, Harwood and Barfield also spoke to many audiences about their "absolutely unforgettable" friend Lewis.<sup>1</sup>

The two works of fiction that Barfield wrote after Lewis's death provide in-depth insight into the personalities of the four "perambulators" and the ideals that motivated their friendship. *Night Operation* is a science fiction story of three young men who together make their way out of the dystopian underground realm in which they were born and grew up. Each of the three friends represents a particular aspect of human selfhood. Jon is a thinker; his study of the changing meanings of words gradually discloses the meaning in life to him, as was the case for Barfield. Jak, whose heart guides him to reject the biological image of man and awaken to the experience of true love, is Barfield's salute to the inexhaustibly generous "Jack" Lewis, endower of the Agape Fund and author of *The Four Loves* and *Till We Have Faces*. Peet has the practical idealism and active moral will that Field and Harwood exemplified. The friends balance and strengthen each other:

Immediately the three friends found themselves together above ground, and by common unspoken consent they linked arms. It was a good thing to do. Jon felt stronger and braver, Pete felt steadier, and Jak felt supported on either side. Indeed (...) it was as if a two-way current flowed through and beyond them: courage from one direction and wisdom from the other. (46-47)

Barfield gradually reveals that the journey the friends are on together is a Grail quest. The "little Calyx of joy" that discloses itself to Jon, Jak, and Peet while they gaze up at the star-filled sky is "a vessel that could only be brimmed with no other substance than its own magic. Provenance awfully beheld." (64) In the legend, the Grail not only nourishes those who partake of it; it also heals the wounded king and restores the Wasteland to fruitfulness. *Night Operation* encourages the hope that by our "walking together," the legend can become true story of our time.

The last book Barfield wrote is *Eager Spring*, an ecological novel. Its central character is Virginia (Vi) Brook, a young scholar of the humanities who becomes an active participant in the environmental movement. On her walks through the English countryside, Vi comes to recognize that the whole ecosystem is being poisoned by biocides and yearns to take a constructive role in this new Great War. She receives crucial advice from John Herapath, a member of her university's faculty who teaches art history. As his name indicates, Herapath is somewhat like Harwood, whom Lewis dubbed "Lord of the Walks"

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase is one that Barfield used in an address he gave at Wheaton College, Illinois, in 1964. It has been published as "C. S. Lewis" in *Owen Barfield on C. S. Lewis*. Ed. G. B. Tennyson. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989. 3-16.

because of his ability to chart good routes for their walking tours. An outstandingly lucid thinker and graceful writer, Harwood also was a masterly teacher, lecturer, and administrator. He had two qualities which Barfield, who was close friends with him from childhood, thought were his signature strengths: a “deep-rooted serenity of spirit” (Barfield, “Youth” 2) and a remarkable “faculty, when under heavy pressure, to keep the mind calmly and steadily fixed on a comparatively distant future.” (Barfield, Address 9) Herapath has most of these traits, but he is unlike Harwood in two significant respects: he is not a member, let alone a leader, of any action organization, and indeed has no impulse to translate ideas into actions. He does, however, have a clear and very comprehensive understanding of the situation and thus is able to give Vi what is, as it were, a map of the terrain and to point her toward a promising route forward.

Throughout Vi’s journey there are reminders of Field, Lewis, and Barfield. Vi has Field’s “needle-like or greyhound-like keenness,” and one of the dreams that help transform her from thinker to doer is of “a strong straight metal rod,” (59) rather like the walking stick that figured in Field’s most famous act of heroism as a soldier. She also has several transformative encounters with “the lion,” who is for her, as for Lewis, a tremendously significant being. These encounters culminate in an inspiring dream-vision: “She had a strong feeling that there was something behind her. Turning, she saw another lion who was both old and young, he was white like stone but at the same time slightly luminous like alabaster, and she knew that he was the guardian of Eager Spring, and was glad that he was behind her.” (78) Like Barfield, Vi thinks deeply and imaginatively; but when she attempts to discuss her discoveries with her geologist husband Leo, he can respond only with the “bow-wow dogmatism” of the conventional scientist for some time.

What eventually frees Leo to begin “for the first time to think” (143) is reading “Virginia’s Conte.” As John D. Rateliff explains in his Introduction to *Eager Spring*,

Throughout the story Vi is thinking of writing a book about her research, a sort of *Allegory of Love*, but when we and her husband finally come to read it as she lies poised between life and death, we find instead of a learned tome, ‘Virginia’s Conte’, a *märchen* or myth-allegory (in Barfield’s view it is a false dichotomy to divide the two) which comprises the final third of this book.” (xii)

Like “The Rose on the Ash-Heap,” “Virginia’s Conte” “is a kind of epitome in fantasy of the basic issues of the novel” (Kranidas 94) which it concludes. Leo, and perhaps other readers, will find themselves “embarked on a journey that [will] take [them] a very long way.” (*Eager Spring* 143)

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