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**Peter Miller, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Extraordinary Perspective in C. S. Lewis.*  
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Peter Miller. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Extraordinary Perspective in C. S. Lewis* (CreateSpace, 2011). 298 pp. ISBN 978-1463584849.

Advisory letters on the art of temptation from one devil to another. Planets where the Fall is averted and Paradise persists. Lands in which trees dance, fauns frolic, and horses talk. All these and many more are the fruits of C. S. Lewis' imagination, an imagination, according to Dr. Peter Miller, with a proclivity for 'wider perspectives' and different points of view. It is this proclivity, both its formation and its fruit, which Miller makes the subject of his expansive investigation *The Lion, The Witch, and the Extraordinary Perspective in C. S. Lewis*.<sup>1</sup>

Miller presents 'perspective' as the ability to consider ideas or events from another's point of view, and thus gain a deeper and broader understanding of the subject in question: 'The Lewisian position, which I want to consider, is the idea of stepping outside ourselves to see through another's eyes, which sometimes means immersing ourselves in another world to see through its eyes.'<sup>2</sup> According to Lewis, we need various perspectives to rescue us from our personal limitations and the blindness of our own age. Miller claims that this use of perspectives is characteristic not only of Lewis' famous fictional works, such as *The Chronicles of Narnia* or *The Space Trilogy*, but also his literary scholarship and Christian apologetics. According to Miller, Lewis' interest in different points of view, as well as his ability to appreciate those view points and use them to expose essential truths, is one of the British scholar's greatest gifts to his readership:

I have said that I think this recurring element might actually be the perspectives that he brought to his life and work. Therefore the subject of this book is to be those opening horizons found in his work and the *idea* of 'perspective' *itself* as a key to his thought, with its fruitful sub-themes, such as the gaining of width, depth, and height, as well as the expansion of spiritual and temporal vistas. I want to argue that this principle could even be a kind of golden motif uniting his work, which provides a kind of 'undeception', and that finding this may be a good reason to study his work.<sup>3</sup>

Mirroring Lewis' own concern on the subject, Miller argues that this 'undeception' is as needed in our age as it was in Lewis' mid-twentieth century. Both periods were blinded by a rejection of the past, a false assurance in progress, and a snobbish insistence on the wisdom of their own era. Against these, Lewis' use of perspectives offers a valuable corrective – a 'disillusioning' as Lewis himself liked to call it.

Convinced of the need for this corrective and appreciating Lewis' masterful use of perspective, Miller embarks on his own journey through Lewis' life and works, endeavoring to understand both how this concept of 'perspective' grew in Lewis' own thoughts and how it may be found in his works. After laying a groundwork of the history of 'perspective' as a philosophic concept, Miller tours Lewis' biography, highlighting the moments and personalities that encouraged his appreciation of various perspectives. For an entire chapter, Miller lingers on the intellectual habits and theological principles of Lewis' favorite theologian, Richard Hooker, emphasizing the similarities between the Reformation era priest and twentieth century Oxford don in their view of Scripture and the Christian life. Miller finds many echoes of Hooker in Lewis' concept of 'mere Christianity,' the conciliatory search for the essential truths to which all believers, regardless of denomination, adhere. Miller then proceeds to the 'three Lewis', a concept he borrows from Owen Barfield: Lewis the Medieval and Renaissance scholar, Lewis the Crafter of Fiction, and Lewis the Apologist.<sup>4</sup> In each of these sections, he continues to follow the thread of 'perspective'. Finding it first in Lewis' own scholastic habits, Miller focuses primarily on Lewis' earnest pursuit to truly 'see' as those he studied saw and his appreciation of the past for its mistake-earned wisdom. Then investigating Lewis as author and apologist, Miller continues to illustrate this principle of perspective in Lewis' understanding of fiction and his own craftsmanship of imaginative works, as well as his defense of Christianity. In conclusion Miller first carefully looks at each of ten books Lewis listed as most influential to him, finding in them this same nurturing of perspective, and then turns to hopeful speculation on how Lewis' approach to life through various view points might aid our world today.

Miller's work is both thoroughly researched and judiciously presented.

Understanding the complexity of investigating how another person thinks, he is careful to note the difference between claims which can be substantiated and those which remain speculations. His comprehensive research and scholarly integrity grant his theories credibility. The book, however, does demand a great deal of work from its audience. Focused on his chosen theme of perspectives, Miller rarely pauses to aid his readers' comprehension. He expects his reader to be well versed not only in Lewis' life and works, but also various periods of history, philosophy, and literature. While the work is extensively footnoted, these most often serve as

asides to the main thought, quotes and opinions that lead the argument in another direction, rather than elucidating the issue at hand. Even those experienced in Lewisian studies might find Miller's work a demanding read, considering the numerous subjects with which he expects a familiarity. A reader willing to work slowly through the volume, however, will find the perspectives Miller opens worth the effort.

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## Notes

[1] Miller, Peter C. *The Lion, The Witch, and the Extraordinary Perspective in C. S. Lewis: Thinking Outside the Wardrobe. . . Horizons beyond Narnia; Lewis's own Dawn Treader Voyages*. Charleston, 2011..

[1] Miller 18.

[1] Miller 19.

[1] Miller 100.