



The best work *Out of the silent planet* by C.S. Lewis

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Abstract: *Out of the Silent Planet*, science-fiction novel by C.S. Lewis, published in 1938, that can be read as an independent work or as the first book in a trilogy that includes *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*. *Out of the Silent Planet* gives voice to Lewis's concerns about the secularization of society and affirms that a return to traditional religious belief is the only means of its salvation.

Key words: *science fiction, form, imaginative, purposes, work, culture, rock*

Out of the Silent Planet, [science-fiction novel](#) by [C.S. Lewis](#), published in 1938, that can be read as an independent work or as the first book in a trilogy that includes *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*. *Out of the Silent Planet* gives voice to Lewis's concerns about the secularization of society and affirms that a return to traditional religious belief is the only means of its salvation. Lewis, an early fan of [H.G. Wells](#), said in a letter that with *Out of the Silent Planet* he was “trying to redeem for genuinely imaginative purposes the form popularly known...as ‘science-fiction.’” The book was influenced particularly by Wells's *The First Men in the Moon*, which Lewis received as a Christmas present from his father in 1908 and “enjoyed...very much.” Lewis's story, like Wells's, starts with a scientist, an [entrepreneur](#), and a spherical vehicle for space travel. Lewis added a third traveler, Elwin Ransom, an academic who combines characteristics of Lewis and his friend [J.R.R. Tolkien](#), and changed the destination to a planet, Malacandra (Mars). Ransom is kidnapped by the scientist (Edward Rolles Weston, seeking to colonize Malacandra as a way to preserve the human species) and the entrepreneur (Dick Devine, interested only in the gold abundant on the planet), who believe they must take Ransom (as ransom) with them to Malacandra.



From his boyhood Lewis was attracted to the idea of other planets, and, like Wells, he delighted in describing the geographies and [cultures](#) of the worlds his travelers encounter. But Lewis's Malacandra is very different from Wells's Moon. After the travelers arrive on Malacandra, Ransom escapes and spends several months living with the *hrossa*—large animal-like creatures who are the planet's farmers, fishermen, and poets and are one of three [sentient](#) species on the planet: the others are the *séroni* (scientists and philosophers) and the *pfifltriggi*. In contrast to Wells's modern industrial subterranean lunar society, Malacandra is premodern, still in an “old stone age.” It is nonhierarchical, with no rulers or governmental structures, and it is cooperative rather than competitive, unafflicted by greed, war, or ambition. Ransom initially judges Malacandra by Earth's standards and expectations, but he eventually concludes that Earth's standards are deficient in comparison with Malacandra's and that there is much his world could learn from theirs. Such social [criticism](#) is an important theme in the book.

Ransom eventually learns that Malacandra is an unfallen world filled with spiritual vitality. The planet is cathedral-like, with elongated vegetation and rock formations (resulting from the planet's light gravitational pull) symbolically pointing heavenward. He learns that the God worshipped on the unfallen Malacandra is the same God he worships on Earth, and he also learns that each planet has a guardian angel (an Oyarsa) whose role is to protect and oversee it. Ransom meets the Oyarsa of Malacandra, from whom he learns about ancient interplanetary warfare similar to what the 17th-century English poet [John Milton](#) describes in his *Paradise Lost*: the Oyarsa of Thulcandra (Earth) rebelled against the “Old One” (God) and, after a fierce conflict, was conquered and thrown back to Thulcandra. It thereafter was isolated from the rest of the universe and referred to as the “silent planet.” The Malacandrians know nothing about it except that the Old One did not abandon it but sent Maleldil (Christ) to rescue it. Lewis thus slipped the central elements of [Christianity](#) into the book, doing it so subtly that few early reviewers noticed. (He concluded, in a letter,



that “any amount of [theology](#) can now be smuggled into people’s minds under cover of romance without their knowing it.”)

Weston and Devine are compelled to return to Earth, and Ransom chooses to accompany them. His journey in *Out of the Silent Planet*, though it can serve as a stand-alone story, also equips him for the adventures he will experience in the second and third volumes of the trilogy: he has learned “Old Solar,” the language used throughout the universe except on the silent planet; he has accepted “otherness” by meeting and living with beings very different from his own species; and he has overcome his fear of death and learned to obey and put his trust in Maleldil. Each of these lessons serves as preparation for what lies ahead.

Lewis wrote *Out of the Silent Planet* during 1937 after a conversation with [J. R. R. Tolkien](#) in which both men lamented the state of contemporary fiction. They agreed that Lewis would write a space travel story and Tolkien would write a time travel story. In fact, Tolkien never completed his story, while Lewis went on to compose two others over the [war years](#) in Britain.^[8] These three books are now referred to as the Cosmic or [Space Trilogy](#), or occasionally as The Ransom trilogy after the main character, [Elwin Ransom](#). Lewis was an early reader of [H.G. Wells](#) and had been given a copy of [The First Men in the Moon](#) as a Christmas present in 1908.^[10] Ransom makes dismissive references to Wells's conceptions in the course of the novel, but Lewis himself prefaced early editions of the novel with the disclaimer that "Certain slighting references to earlier stories of this type which will be found in the following pages have been put there for purely dramatic purposes. The author would be sorry if any reader supposed he was too stupid to have enjoyed Mr. H. G. Wells's fantasies or too ungrateful to acknowledge his debt to them." Another early work of space fiction which he later acknowledged was [David Lindsay's A Voyage to Arcturus](#).

But there were other speculative works in answer to which *Out of the Silent Planet* was written as a decided reaction. In both Olaf Stapledon's [Last and First Men](#)



and an essay in [J. B. S. Haldane](#)'s Possible Worlds, Lewis detected what he termed [Evolutionism](#), an amoral belief that humanity could perfect from itself a master race that would spread through the universe. Such was the ideology that Weston championed in his debate with Oyarsa, only to have it travestied by Ransom's translation of it into Malacandran. In the end, very few of the novel's original reviewers even realised that Lewis's intent was to substitute theological values through its means for those he deplored on the side of [Scientism](#). Noting this omission, he pointed out to one of his correspondents that "any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people's minds under cover of romance without their knowing it".^[10] In the novel itself, Ransom proposes a similar but subtler approach in his letter to Lewis quoted in the postscript: "What we need for the moment is not so much a body of belief as a body of people familiarized with certain ideas. If we could even effect in one per cent of our readers a change-over from the conception of Space to the conception of Heaven, we should have made a beginning." What Lewis actually offers as substitute views are a series of reversals. His Malacandra is in fact the planet [Mars](#) which, named after the [Roman god of war](#), was once viewed astrologically as the influencer of self-assertion and disruption.

However, in place of Wells's scenario in [The War of the Worlds](#), in which the inhabitants of Mars come to Earth as invaders, Lewis portrays a world of different species living in harmony from which members of his own corrupted species are expelled as bringers of violence and exploitation. Again, the clock is turned back from the world view of the post-mediaeval [Renaissance](#) to that of the [Renaissance of the 12th century](#) with the novel's vision of the universe as "the field of Heaven" peopled by [aetheric](#) angels. It had been the aim of Lewis's scholastic study [The Allegory of Love](#) to revalidate the standpoint of the mediaeval literature flowing from that time and a reference to one of its key authors is introduced as the reason for Lewis to contact Ransom in the first place. In Lewis's study, the authors of the Platonic School of Chartres are presented as "pioneers of medieval allegorical



poetry...For them, Nature was not opposed to Grace but, rather, an instrument of Grace in opposing the Unnatural", which is one of the transformative ideas with which the novel's readers are to be familiarized. [Bernardus Silvestris's study of the creation](#) underpins Oyarsa's discussion with Ransom in the novel.

“Out of the Silent Planet” is the first book in C. S. Lewis’s Space Trilogy, published in 1938. The novel is a thought-provoking and imaginative work that blends science fiction, fantasy, and philosophical themes. Set in a distant future, the story follows the protagonist, Dr. Elwin Ransom, on an interplanetary adventure to Mars (known as Malacandra by its inhabitants) and his encounters with alien beings. Through this journey, Lewis explores human nature, morality, and the complexities of cosmic existence. The novel opens with the introduction of Dr. Elwin Ransom, a philology professor, who is kidnapped by two men, Devine and Weston, and taken to a remote location. Ransom quickly realizes that he is on a spaceship headed to Mars. During the space voyage, Ransom learns that Devine and Weston plan to offer him as a sacrifice to the alien beings on Mars. He discovers that Weston’s motivation is driven by his desire for power and dominance over other planets.

Upon arriving on Mars, Ransom manages to escape from his captors and explores the alien landscape. He encounters strange creatures and flora, discovering a fascinating and harmonious world. Ransom meets the Hrossa, a peaceful and wise species of humanoid creatures who live near the water. The Hrossa embrace a simple and natural way of life and possess a deep appreciation for poetry and storytelling. Ransom embarks on a journey with one of the Hrossa, Hyoi, on a boat called the Oyarsa. During their voyage, Ransom learns more about Malacandra’s history and its unique social structure. Ransom’s journey continues as he encounters another intelligent species called the Seroni. The Seroni are highly intellectual beings who live in magnificent and mysterious caves. They possess advanced knowledge and are known for their pursuit of truth and wisdom. Ransom is summoned to meet Oyarsa, the ruler and guardian spirit of Malacandra. Oyarsa represents a higher order of being,



responsible for the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants. Ransom learns about the cosmology and cosmic harmony that govern Malacandra. Unbeknownst to Ransom, Weston is plotting a dangerous plan to exploit Malacandra's resources and colonize the planet. He seeks to gain power and control over this alien world, even if it means destroying its unique civilization. Ransom, Hroi, and another Hross named Whin are captured by Weston's followers, who believe that human sacrifice is necessary to appease the alien beings. Ransom stands trial before the Bent Oyarsa, the corrupted ruler of a distant region, who is under Weston's influence. The Hrossa, Seroni, and other creatures of Malacandra unite to rescue Ransom and his companions from Weston's followers. The alien beings demonstrate their unity and strength in the face of exploitation. Ransom, now safe and free, boards the spaceship and prepares to return to Earth. He is deeply moved by his experiences on Malacandra and contemplates the impact of human nature on different worlds. The novel concludes with Ransom's return to Earth. He reflects on the significance of his journey to Malacandra and the profound lessons he has learned. Ransom is forever changed by his encounter with the alien world and the wisdom of its inhabitants.

Exploration of Human Nature: "Out of the Silent Planet" delves into the nature of humanity, both its potential for good and its capacity for evil. The contrasting characters of Ransom and Weston serve as archetypes representing the battle between morality and self-serving ambition. Critique of Colonialism: Through Weston's colonization plans and exploitation of Malacandra, Lewis critiques the imperialistic tendencies of humans and their propensity to conquer and dominate others. Harmony and Cosmic Order: The novel explores the concept of cosmic order and harmony in the universe. Malacandra represents a world where creatures coexist in balance with nature, fostering a deeper connection to the cosmos.

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