

THE
SPACE
TRILOGY

C. S. LEWIS

Out of the Silent Planet

Perelandra

That Hideous Strength

C. S. Lewis

THE SPACE TRILOGY, OMNIBUS EDITION

**Out of the Silent Planet
Perelandra
That Hideous Strength**

 HarperCollins e-books

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Excerpted from letters to Stanley Unwin

18 FEBRUARY & 4 MARCH 1938

Mr. C. S. Lewis tells me that you have allowed him to submit to you “Out of the Silent Planet.” I read it, of course; and I have since heard it pass a rather different test: that of being read aloud to our local club (which goes in for reading things short and long aloud). It proved an exciting serial, and was highly approved. But of course we are all rather like-minded.

It is only by an odd accident that the hero is a philologist (one point in which he resembles me). . . . We originally meant each to write an excursionary “thriller:” a space-journey [his] and a timejourney (mine) each discovering Myth. But the space-journey has been finished and owing to my slowness and uncertainty the timejourney remains only a fragment, as you know.^a

I read this story in the original manuscript and was so enthralled that I could do nothing until I had finished it. My first criticism was simply that it was too short. I still think that criticism holds. . . . But the linguistic inventions and the philology on the whole are more than good enough. All the part about language and poetry—the glimpses of its Malacandrian nature and form—is very well done, and extremely interesting, far superior to what one usually gets from travellers in untravelled regions. The language difficulty is usually slid over or fudged: here it not only has verisimilitude but also underlying thought.

I realize of course that to be even moderately marketable such a story must pass muster on its surface value, as a *vera historia* of a journey to a strange land. I am extremely fond of the genre. . . . I thought *Out of the Silent Planet* did pass this test very successfully. The openings and the actual mode of transportation in time or space are always the weakest points of such tales. They are well enough worked here. . . . But I should have said that the story had for the more intelligent reader a great number of philosophical and mythical implications that enormously enhanced without detracting from the “surface adventure.” I found the blend of *vera historia* with *mythos* irresistible. There are of course certain satirical elements, inevitable in any such traveller’s tale, and also a spice of satire on other superficially similar works of “scientific” fiction—such as the reference to the notion that higher intelligence will inevitably be combined with ruthlessness. The underlying myth is of course that of the Fall of Angels (and the fall of man on this our silent planet). . . .

I at any rate should have bought this story at almost any price if I had found it in print, and loudly recommended it as a “thriller” by an intelligent man. But I know only too sadly from my efforts to find anything to read, even with an ‘on demand’ subscription at a library, that my taste is not normal.

*Excerpted from letters to the Tolkien Society of
America and the Daily Telegraph Magazine
12 SEPTEMBER 1965 & 8 FEBRUARY 1967*

Lewis was a very impressionable man, and this was abetted by his great generosity and capacity for friendship. The unpayable debt that I owe to him was not “influence” as it is ordinarily understood, but sheer encouragement. He was for long my only audience. Only from him did I ever get the idea that my “stuff” could be more than a private hobby. But for his interest and unceasing eagerness for more I should never have brought *The Lord of the Rings* to a conclusion.

We neither of us expected much success as amateurs, and actually Lewis had some difficulty in getting *Out of the Silent Planet* published. And after all that has happened since, the most lasting pleasure and reward for

both of us has been that we provided one another with stories to hear or read that we really liked—in *large* parts.

a. The completed fragment of Tolkien's contribution to this collaborative venture was finally published in 1987 in *The Lost Road and Other Writings* by Christopher Tolkien.

SPACE TRILOGY • BOOK ONE

OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET



C. S. LEWIS

C. S. Lewis

OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET

(Space Trilogy, Book One)



HarperCollins*Publishers*

Dedication

TO MY BROTHER
W.H.L.

A lifelong critic of the
space-and-time story

Note

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.

C.S.L.