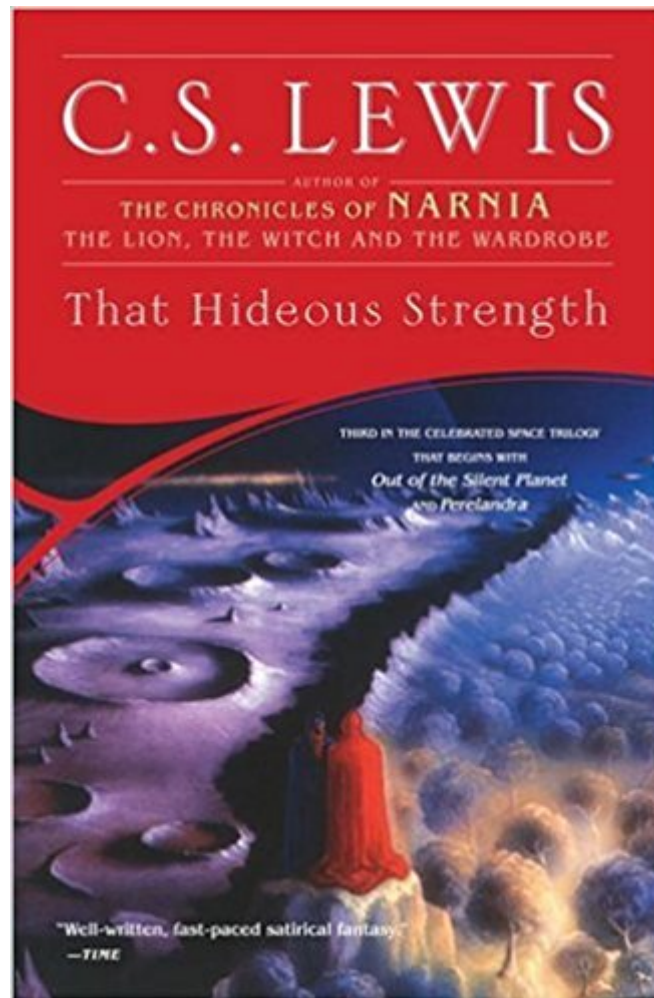




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That Hideous Strength (Space Trilogy, Book 3)



Synopsis

Written during the dark hours immediately before and during World War II, C. S. Lewis's Space Trilogy, of which *That Hideous Strength* is the third and final volume, stands alongside such works as Albert Camus's *The Plague* and George Orwell's *1984* as a timely parable that has become timeless, beloved by succeeding generations as much for the sheer wonder of its storytelling as for the significance of its moral concerns. The final book in C. S. Lewis's acclaimed Space Trilogy, which includes *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*, *That Hideous Strength* concludes the adventures of the matchless Dr. Ransom. The dark forces that were repulsed in *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra* are massed for an assault on the planet Earth itself. Word is on the wind that the mighty wizard Merlin has come back to the land of the living after many centuries, holding the key to ultimate power for that force which can find him and bend him to its will. A sinister technocratic organization is gaining power throughout Europe with a plan to "recondition" society, and it is up to Ransom and his friends to squelch this threat by applying age-old wisdom to a new universe dominated by science. The two groups struggle to a climactic resolution that brings the Space Trilogy to a magnificent, crashing close.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The New Yorker In his usual polished prose, the author creates an elaborate satiric picture of a war between morality and devilry. The New Yorker If wit and wisdom, style and scholarship are requisites to passage through the pearly gates, Mr. Lewis will be among the angels. Los Angeles Times Lewis,

perhaps more than any other twentieth-century writer, forced those who listened to him and read his works to come to terms with their own philosophical presuppositions.

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A lot of people give the Scifi series of Lewis flak for being a little out there, but it really is a great story that comes together beautifully at the end. The first bit of this book is a little slow, but as it gets to the conflict it picks up pace and is hard to put down. Also, is very inspiring for someone interested in writing fiction.

This serves as the conclusion to C.S. Lewis' "Space Trilogy," and it does its job best in that area, as themes from the previous books are wrapped up here. However, the best description in this scenario would be to compare this trilogy to the Original Star Wars trilogy. For that series, "Empire Strikes Back," is arguably the best, and as a result, "Return of the Jedi," has the insane task of following up that monument. Needless to say, it didn't. That is not to say, "Return of the Jedi," is a bad movie, it's actually quite good, on its own, but to go from the emotional heights "Empire," gave us, to Ewoks is quite jarring. The same goes for "A Hideous Strength," as it has the tremendous task of following "Perelandra." While the third book by itself is a quality read, it is just not as engaging as what came before.

After enjoying the first two books in C. S. Lewis' space trilogy I was excited to start reading the third book titled "That Hideous Strength." It is the conclusion of the first two books "Out of the Silent Planet" and "Perelandra." Unfortunately "That Hideous Strength" is much different than the first two books in the series. It is a "modern" fairytale tied to the legends of Merlin the wizard. The first two books were very original works, so it felt weird to have the possibility of Merlin suddenly joining the story (you will have to read the book to find out if he actually does). One of the strengths of the story, in terms of science fiction, was the part about the amoral use of science to create a hideous leader. There is also a reference to the moon, but it is very brief. The main theme of the story is about the spiritual corruption on planet Earth. Evil is often cloaked with the appearance of good. People often think themselves the opposite of what they really are. The author did a good job addressing these important issues, but I found the story itself gloomy and tiring to read. Much like "Screwtape Letters" this story makes good points but is not for someone looking for a cheerful read. There are a few cheerful moments in this book, but they are lacking. C. S. Lewis is a great author,

but this story is not what I hoped for. The author describes this book as a fairytale for adults. It is more harsh and gloomy than the first two books in the trilogy. It does tie together with the first two books, but I had to do much reading before I saw the connection.

I had a harder time getting into this one than *Out of the Silent Planet*, however, I thought it was a decent ending to the trilogy. Perhaps I will think better of it my 2nd time through...

I enjoyed this book. As the third part of the Space Trilogy, it is VERY different in style. Whereas the first two basically follow the adventures of the main character Ransom on other planets, this one is set on earth, and follows a much larger set of characters with a more complex plot. It reads much more like a contemporary novel, switching between multiple threads of the plot, from several different character's points of view. Relative to the other two novels, this plot is downright labyrinthine, with a grand conspiracy to take over Britain and ultimately the world. On the surface this is a secular progressive movement, but below the surface are demonic elements (the dark eldila that we learn about in the previous books). Supernatural elements aside, the crazy plot with conspiracies within conspiracies reminds me of a Robert Ludlum novel (of course predating Ludlum by a few decades), and also (like classic Ludlum) the body count gets pretty high. Some of the occult elements of the conspiracy, and some of the serious-silliness also reminded me a bit of "Foucault's Pendulum", although from a very different point of view from that novel. The whole plot is rather melodramatic, almost campy, and in parts Lewis's writing is rather cheeky, but this is also interspersed with more straightforward CS Lewis insights and thoughts into this, that, or the other thing (he's surprisingly insightful on marriage and relationships for a man who was a bachelor for most of his life). At times the plot suffers a bit under its own weight - there are some little strands that don't really go anywhere, and some characters that don't really matter, and some loose ends that don't quite get tied up. Lewis clearly likes his animal characters, but I found all the stuff with the bear and the other critters a bit silly and overdone. I also think the story could have been tighter as a standalone novel, without it being part of the "Space Trilogy" mythos, with the eldila and Oyeresu and Ransom and what not. As with the first two parts of the trilogy, a central theme is the dangers of "Modernism" or "Progressivism". With the larger cast of characters (vs just Weston as the main antagonist in the first two), Lewis gets to skewer many more caricatures of Modern thought. His main target remains scientific Materialism, but the bad guys include all manner of "Progressive" sociological thought (circa 1940s). It is striking how much of it rings true today, like we're still having the same debates, and the materialists and progressives of today are not that far removed from

those of Lewis's day. I also thought Mark Studdock was an interesting character; I think he symbolizes all of Lewis's fears and suspicions of young academics (Lewis was a fairly senior professor by the time he published this). Studdock is thoroughly Modern in every respect, and as a result is continuously buffeted and blown about, going one direction and then another, always on the outside trying to be on the inside of something, anything. There's a quote, I'm not sure about the real attribution, about not being so open-minded that your brain falls out, and I think this is what Lewis has in mind with his portrait of Studdock. As I've read through the Space Trilogy, I really get the feeling that a lot of the characters and philosophies that Lewis disdains are drawn directly from Lewis's experiences with his fellow academics. It really comes through in this book - you get the feeling that Lewis wrote large parts of this book while sitting through interminable faculty meetings at Oxford. An interesting little tidbit is that Lewis borrows (or perhaps appropriates?) his friend Tolkien's concept of Numinor (Lewis's acknowledgment at the start of the book is amusing!) Now Lewis's book was published probably 6 or 8 years before *The Lord of the Rings*, and I suspect that the way Lewis ties in Numinor fairly literally with both our contemporary history as well as (for the purposes of this novel) a "historical" Arthurian Britain is probably not what Tolkien envisioned. It's a very minor part of the book (Numinor is mentioned by name only a couple of times) but I do wish Lewis would have skipped that, or just made up a different name for a mythical prehistorical age that fit the conception in this story.

C.S. Lewis's project sits uneasily with many modern readers, who are uncomfortable with Christian proselytizing precisely because Christianity is so close. But it is admirably and entertainingly pursued as Lewis combines elements of the Arthurian tradition with his enormous knowledge of medieval and Renaissance mythography and his particular understanding of Milton's theological stance. Out of this heterogeneous material he creates a fascinating fantasy of Merlin's return to the world to insure the survival of a saving remnant of the Round Table and the latest of a continuous line of successive Pendragons. The survivors keep alive a Logres that is nearly extinct in modern Britain. The story fascinates those who know about the traditions; but it also simply makes a good read, not least in a satire upon the means by which academic and executive powers build hegemonic dominance; here, Lewis might be placed in the company of Dickens and later dystopian critics of circumlocution and Newspeak.

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