Chapter Four

The Letters

A close reading of the numerous letters of Lewis reveals his early nature awareness as well as his enjoyment of all sorts of living creatures. The ecological relationship of all living things as presented in the work of Lewis stems from his deep-rooted nature-love. His consciousness of the beauty of the mountains, hills and all objects of nature that rose up in the boy Lewis as he gazed out through the windows on the Castlereagh Hills grew up within him and expressed itself in his works and his letters. The joy that filled the child as he looked upon the biscuit-tin decorated with twigs and flowers by his brother Warren bore fruit in his fiction. His attitude to man and beast alike rests on his claim to “the inherent worth of all living organisms” (Bouma-Prediger 122) and the study of his letters to his friends, father and children throws light on his humane treatment of animals and people alike.

In the following analysis of Letters of C.S. Lewis, Letters to an American Lady, Letters to Arthur Greeves, and Letters to Children can be seen the man who set out to create nature consciousness in his readers by his own example of rejoicing in the world of plants and animals. These letters of Lewis give significant glimpses of “Lewis the man, lover of cats and dogs, of the first cuckoo and the first crows of spring, of Lewis getting up to prepare his own breakfast and do his chores during the much loved ‘empty, silent,
dewy, cobwebby hours’ of the morning” (Kilby, Preface 8). These writings serve “the important function of consciousness-raising” (Glotfelty, Introduction xxiii). By his own keen observance of particular features and traits in plants and animals, Lewis pointed out the way to a more intimate and delightful knowledge of the environment.

In the preface to the *Letters to an American Lady*, Clyde S. Kilby describes Lewis and his brother Warren, both bachelors, living in a house called ‘The Kilns’, four miles from Oxford and “abutting a hillside of fine trees rising above tangled vines and blackberry bushes and, at its base, a small quarry lake where they could swim in water apparently once used by the poet Shelley to sail his little paper boats” (5). Though Lewis was often overworked by his University duties and religious duties and had his time occupied with writing books, he “meticulously endeavoured to answer, sometimes with an arm so rheumatic that he [could] hardly push the pen, the vast correspondence falling into his hands from around the world” (Kilby, Preface 7). These letters often gave encouragement or sympathy or hope to his readers, and reveal the man who was conscious of the needs of his fellow men.

Lewis’s letters are animated by his environmental consciousness. He takes Wordsworthian pleasure in the wholesome natural environment. He writes in a letter that he “had been in Ireland, Donegal, which is lovely. All the mountains look like mountains in a story, and there are wooded valleys, and golden sands, and the smell of peat from every cottage” (*Amer. Lady* 30-31). Whether he travelled, or walked or just looked out of his window, Lewis
appears keenly aware of the natural setting and the smaller animals that he has viewed, and he mentions the awe he feels in his letters. The animal creatures he observed around him made him ponder deeply on their suffering. He could easily relate to his friend because his sentiments are similar:

I am sorry to hear of the little dog’s death. The animal creation is a strange mystery. We can make some attempt to understand human suffering: but the suffering of animals from the beginning of the world till now (inflicted not only by us but one another) – what is one to think? And again, how strange that God brings us into such intimate relations with creatures of whose real purpose and destiny we remain forever ignorant. We know to some degree what angels and men are for. But what is a flea for, or a wild dog? (Amer. Lady 106)

This reveals Lewis’s sensitivity towards the animals suffering with pain which is caused by man or other animals. In fact, he rightly states that “animals react to pain much as we do, of course, no proof that they are conscious” (Pain 121). This brings awareness that man should develop a harmonious relationship with the animals without inflicting pain upon them.

As Lewis’s eco-awareness has sharpened his sense of humour he ascribes human features or characteristics to animals. His comic perceptions of the animal kingdom are often combined with a subtle humour and wit in presenting animals as ‘dressed’:
... what fun! The elephant looks as if he wore trousers already, but terribly baggy ones. What he needs is *braces*. The Rhino seems to wear a suit much too big for him: can it be “taken in”? What sort of collars will giraffes wear? Will seals and others have ordinary clothes or bathing suits? The hedgehog will wear his shirts out terribly quickly, I should think. (*Amer. Lady* 112)

Lewis’s keen observation of animal behaviour also shows remarkable insight, as when he writes:

> We kept one of the puppies, and call him Guppy (out of *Bleak House*) and he is a lively youngster. I notice, as I have done before in similar circumstances, the common *age* is a bond stronger than common species; i.e. Guppy is friends with the kitten and Guppy’s mother is friends with the old cat – a huge Tom called Ginger. (*Amer. Lady* 69)

Lewis’s reply to the American Lady reveals that he has her letter before him when he writes her the answer: “Is your pet a cat or dog? I’ve found that cats stand these changes and separations pretty well – one of mine, when I was ill, took possession of a new home and mistress and had them completely under his thumb in a week” (*Amer. Lady* 73). Lewis cared enough to understand the woman’s fears and joys and took pains to answer each letter carefully and sincerely. He was never at a loss for writing material and candidly expressed his boyish tendency to shake the animals by their tails:
We also have a Siamese cat. In my heart of hearts I really prefer the great, grey bullet-headed native cat, but the Siamese are delicate and fascinating creatures. Ours adores me because I lift her up by her tail – an operation which I can’t imagine I should like if I were a cat, but she comes back for more and more, purring all the time. (Amer. Lady 79)

Lewis’s patience and consideration for the cats in his house is seen in this jocular presentation of their activities: “We are also both ruled by cats. Joy’s Siamese – my ‘stepcat’ as I call her – is the most terribly conversational animal I ever knew. She talks all the time and wants doors and windows to be opened for her thousand times an hour” (Amer. Lady 102).

For Lewis, ordinary events in life seem to get associated with birds and animals, as seen in this example: “I get on fairly well. My chief trouble is a difficulty in sleeping at night and keeping awake by day. Perhaps I am turning into a nocturnal animal. Bat? Wolf? Owl? Let’s hope it will be owl, the bird of wisdom (And I always was attracted by mice!” (Amer. Lady 109).

Lewis loved to see the natural world with all his senses and his writing therefore succeeds in creating nature consciousness. He shares his love for beauty and nature with the American Lady and relates his delightful experiences in Greece in his letters to her. In fact, he gives vigorous and enthusiastic accounts of his visit to various places like Acropolis, Attica and Rhodes. He describes how along with his wife Joy, he observed the splendid
beauty of the orchards, wild flowers, mountains, vines and olives. Lewis writes:

We did get to Greece, and it was a wonderful success. Joy performed prodigies, climbing to the top of the Acropolis and getting as far as the Lion gate of Mycenae. . . . She was absolutely enraptured by what she saw. But pray for us: the sky grows very dark.

I can’t begin to describe Greece. Attica is hauntingly beautiful and Rhodes is an earthly paradise – all orange and lemon orchards and wild flowers and vines and olives, and the mountains of Asia on the horizon. And lovely, cheap wines.

I’ve eaten squid and octopus! (Amer. Lady 88)

Though Lewis himself had no great desire to visit other countries, he gladly took his wife Joy to the places she longed to visit and enjoyed in her company the majesty and glory of the mountains of Asia and the grandeur of Attica with their natural fruits and wild flowers. His experiences are expressed with excitement and joy to the American Lady. Lewis candidly demonstrates his intense feelings for the intricacies and mysteries he finds in his natural environment. Thus the study of the Letters to an American Lady reveals Lewis’s true love for the natural and for the animal kingdom.

Lewis also had a long and intimate correspondence with J. Arthur Greeves, a close friendship beginning in 1914 and ending with Lewis’s death. Lewis’s extensive correspondence with Greeves reveals his memorable
experience which is of an intellectual and emotional nature. His earliest commitment to an almost pagan love of sensuous beauty, the wild and eerie, rhapsodic and emotive “seen in his admiration for the sagas, the Ring cycle, Keats, MacDonald, the Brontës, and Dürer, which brought him to recognize spirit in beauty” (Glover 13) is closely associated with his impulse to create beauty. His sensuous experiences of his natural environment are revealed in his letter:

Have you ever lived among deer? The windows of my Northern room look into the grove. There is a flat stretch of grass receding into big forest trees (all day long at present the leaves are eddying up the sky from them and the wind among them at night is magnificent.) There is nothing in sight, not even a gable, to remind me that I am in a town: and over this grass the ‘little dappled fools’ come right up to my window. One morning there will be seven there chewing the cud in close squadron: next day not one in sight, till I go down to the bathroom. The window there is level with the ground and on these autumn mornings one gets a delicious earthy freshness and a horizontal view of dew and cobwebs along the turf: and perhaps one tiny solitary stag nibbling quite close to the sill as if he were the first animal in the world. (qtd. in Glover 13)

In the same letter Lewis explains his sensuous experiences of the peculiar animal sounds that he soon became familiar with at night:
But best of all is to hear them at night. They don’t moo and they don’t neigh, but they have two sounds. The one is a thin little hooting, rather like a faint cough, and most unearthly. The other . . . is absolutely indistinguishable from the grunting of old fat pigs. And this last being most unpoetical and an anticlimax in the eyes of the unwise, is really the best. If only to hear this you should come. (qtd. in Glover 13-14)

The description of the sights and sounds of the deer, in evocative detail, is an illustration of many such remembered experiences of nature and the environment. Lewis’s perception of nature is fresh and vivid, and he enjoyed endless walks and the life out of doors. He mentions these as glorious moments when he and Greeves “lay drenched with sunshine on the ‘moss’ and were for a short time perfectly happy – which is a rare enough condition, God knows” (Greeves 93). The description of the writer’s enjoyment triggers impulses in his readers and arouses longings for similar enjoyment.

The letters frequently mention the natural beauty of the countryside through which he passed. In the view of Lewis “the countryside where Nature reigns supreme is the one where soil, weather and vegetation” are “unimpeded by man” (Miracles 10). He often visits countryside “to get away from tilled lands and metalled roads and be alone with Nature” (Miracles 10). Lewis observes flowers, fields, villages and valleys:

The country round here is looking absolutely lovely: not with the stern beauty we like of course: but still, the sunny fields full
of buttercups and nice clean cows, the great century old shady
trees, and the quaint steeples and tiled roofs of the villages
peeping up in their little valleys – all these are nice too, in their
humble way. I imagine (am I right?) that ‘Our Village’ gives
one that kind of feeling. (Greeves 99)

As Lewis was an avid walker and he values the natural environment he
often incorporates in his correspondences his delight in walking. He frequently
took his own walking tours around England and Ireland, “a habit he formed long
before there were formal walking associations to encourage such tours”
(Dickerson, Narnia 55). Walking in woody places gave him great pleasure and
by recounting it to his friend he recollects the joyful memories:

. . . it was glorious when we got there. You are walking in the
middle of a wood when all of a sudden you go downwards and
come to a little open hollow just big enough for a little lake and
some old, old red-tiled houses: all round it the trees tower up
on rising ground and every road from it is at once swallowed
up in them. You might walk within a few feet of it and suspect
nothing unless you saw the smoke rising up from some cottage
chimney. Can you imagine what it was like? (Greeves 132)

Lewis’s obsession for walking unveils his healthy enjoyment of the natural
world. Thoreau writes on the values of walking: “When I would recreate
myself, I seek the darkest wood. . . .There is the strength, the marrow of
nature” (“Walking” 116). Likewise, Edward Abbey shows his anxiety over
the visitors to national parks who hardly walk: “I entreat you, get out of those motorized wheelchairs, get off your foam rubber backsides, stand up straight like men! like women! like human beings! and walk – walk – WALK upon our blessed land!” (233).

Humphrey Carpenter states that Lewis is an enthusiastic walker and he used to walk “twenty miles a day” (34). Lewis would never abandon a walking tour because of inclement weather and he was “particularly determined to carry on . . . maintain stoutly that every kind of weather has its attractions” and he was similarly “determined to enjoy every kind of landscape” (Carpenter 35) during the walking tour.

Several letters mention Lewis’s joy of walking in the snow. He writes about his “lovely walk this afternoon in the snow. As I walked up the village street, the ground and house tops were thick, and it was coming fluttering down. . . . But best of all, the blacksmith’s place was open, and you could see the red forge glowing inside. Can’t you imagine it?” (Greeves 161). Spending a whole day skating on a lake at a place called Wisley, he returns through the snow covered woods, enjoying a ‘topping walk’: “The winding road covered with snow, the bare trees with their snow covered branches and the sunlight falling thro’ them in bars on the ground also covered with snow. Absolutely lovely, especially as the air is very dry and the sky clear” (Greeves 164). The description which shows the loving attention given to remembered accumulated in his life never appears eccentric but appears fresh and vivid to the readers.
Another day he returns after skating, in the dark: “The moon was out, and starting under a clear starry sky we gradually walked into a cold white fog. The white of the ground and the white of the fog became indistinguishable and you seemed to be floating in a sort of silver cloud, broken by the red light of a railway signal at the station” (Greeves 164). Such nature description reveals the creative imagination of the writer who was later to write the science fiction trilogy.

Such keen enjoyment of frost, snow and moonlit nights reveals how Lewis responded with his naked nerves to each natural experience. Each encounter brought a fresh thrill, infused with meaning, elevating his senses. The spirit of Lewis received the beauty of nature with heightened response. He finds meaning in all that he delights in nature:

One of the vertues of snow is that it chiefly teacheth and instructeth us for to loven and cherish the greene grasse – certainly I never appreciated grass until about Teusday the snow began to melt and after so many days whiteness it was nice to see the old homely fields again, all pale and washed looking, with drifts still lying in the hollows. (Greeves 166)

Lewis’s perception of “the general beauty of the world” (Greeves 164) enabled him to respond with emotional thrill to beauty in nature. He feels an anticipation of renewed delight as he sets out one day for a bath in a river:

It was a perfectly lovely morning with a deep blue sky, all the towers and pinnacles gleaming in the sun and bells ringing
everywhere. We past down through quieter streets among
colleges and gardens to the river, and after about quarter of an
hour’s ride along the bank came to the bathing places. Here,
without the tiresome convention of bathing things we enjoyed a
swim. The bathing place is a lovely backwater surrounded by
those level (you know the sort) daisied and buttercuped fields
and overhung by those short fluffy trees – named – I don’t
know. (Greeves 183)

Lewis’s nature awareness motivated him to think deeply of the role of
nature in the universe. His “love and delight in nature and in descriptions of
nature in literature” (Glover 26) are mentioned in a letter to his friend Dom
Bede Griffith:

I think this is one of the causes of our love of inanimate nature,
that in it we see things which unswervingly carry out the will
of their creator, and are therefore wholly beautiful; and though
their kind of obedience is infinitely lower than ours, yet the
degree is so much more perfect that a Christian can see the
reason that the Romantics had in feeling a certain holiness in
the wood and water. (qtd. in Glover 26-27)

His trust in nature led him deeper and higher to more sublime experiences so
that he could visualize the enrichment he received from his association with
the birds and beasts in his works.
A reading of Lewis’s *Letters to Children* allows readers to take a peep into the child-heart of this creative artist. A textual analysis of these letters highlights the interesting details provided in the description or mention of animals like mice, rabbits, guinea pigs and other animals. His sincere affection for animals of all kinds forms the basis for the ecological concern that surfaces in his fiction. With children, he allows himself to be a child, enjoying pets and their enchanting behaviour, sharing with them his thoughts on writing and drawing. He writes in considerable detail, valuing every letter and replying in person to the questions often raised about himself on his pets:

We still have our old big dog, he is eight years old. I think this is as much for a dog as 56 is for a man – you find this out by finding what is seven times the dog’s age. So he is getting rather grey and very slow and stately. He is great friends with the two cats, but if he sees a strange cat in the garden he goes for it at once. He seems to know at once whether it is a stranger or one of our own cats even if it is a long way off and looks just like one of them. His name is Bruce. The two cats are called “Kitty-Koo” and “Pushkin”. Kitty-koo is old and black and very timid and gentle but Pushkin is gray and young and rather fierce. (*Children* 23)

Lewis’s affinity with all living creatures can be traced to his early life. In his college days, Lewis was friendly with the animals that lived nearby. He writes: “I am getting to be quite friends with an old Rabbit who
lives in the Wood at Magdalen [College]. I pick leaves off the trees for him because he can’t reach up to the branches and he eats them out of my hand. One day he stood up on his hind legs and put his front paws against me, he was so greedy” (Children 21). The writer’s basic impulse was to communicate his own joy to others. Sometimes his message has the power to move and excite his readers.

Lewis’s responses are often frank and humorous: “We’re bringing up a (ginger) kitten at present and it behaves very like your (baby sister) Deborah” (Children 60). His comic vein frequently surfaces in his letters: “There’s just no news at all about Cambridge cats. I never see one. No news and no mews” (Children 78). The child who received his letters, written with jocularity would have enjoyed it as much as Lewis enjoyed writing it, for there is a happy combination of truth and imagination in his reply:

But I must just tell you what I saw in a field – one young pig cross the field with a great big bundle of hay in its mouth and deliberately lay it down at the feet of an old pig. I could hardly believe my eyes. I’m sorry to say the old pig didn’t take the slightest notice. Perhaps it couldn’t believe its eyes either. (Children 28)

To the child who writes to Lewis about her own interest in horses and horse-riding, he responds frankly in his letter: “I can’t, but I love the sight and sound and smell and feel of a horse and v.[ery] much wish that I could. I’d sooner have a nice, thickset, steady-going cob that knew me and that I
knew how to ride than all the cars and private planes in the world” (*Children* 37).

Lewis never looked down upon children or despised them. Rather he gave sincere attention to the doubts and fears they expressed in their letters and he encouraged them by replying to them individually and by answering their questions. The conversational tone in these letters reveals feelings of intimacy and personal confession:

I never knew a guinea-pig that took any notice of humans (they take plenty of one another). Of those small animals I think Hamsters amusing –. And to tell you the truth, I’m still fond of mice. But the guinea-pigs go well with your learning German. If they talked, I’m sure that is the language they’d speak. (*Children* 57)

Though mice were a problem for the older people, Lewis himself never considered them as pests but endowed them with noble qualities. The following letter shows the writer’s observation of mice which is probably the source of Lewis’s creation of Reepicheep the soldier-mouse in the tales of Narnia:

When I last met your father and mother, *mice* were weighing rather heavily on their minds. I should think the population runs into millions by now.
Love to them (I mean your parents, tho’ of course I don’t
mind – at a distance – including the mice too) and yourself and
all good wishes for 1956. (*Children* 59)

To an enquiry about the weather he responds with truth as well as
humour: “It is a dreadfully cold, wet summer here. The cuckoo (do you have
cuckoos?) only speaks about once a day and even the squirrels are
depressed” (*Children* 46). His ecoconscious nature enables him to frequently
connect himself with the animals and birds around him.

Details that would seem irrelevant and are soon forgotten by other
men and women are remembered and recounted affectionately by Lewis:
“Last night a young thrush flew into my sitting room and spent the whole
night there. I didn’t know what to do, but in the morning one of the college
servants very cleverly caught it and put it out without hurting it. Its mother
was waiting for it outside and was very glad to meet it again” (*Children* 61-
62). Such nature-centred responses enabled his young readers to think deeply
about the feelings of birds and animals. Lewis not only replies each child’s
letter with faithfulness but seems to take delight in expressing his own
emotions and feelings in great detail:

In this country we hardly ever have any snow worth talking
about till January, or later. Once we had it at Easter after all the
trees had their spring leaves on. So the snow could lie on the
trees far heavier than if they had been bare, and there was great
destruction in the way of broken branches. We had our first
frost last night—this morning the lawns are all grey, with a pale, bright sunshine on them: wonderfully beautiful. And somehow exciting. The first beginning of the winter always excites me; it makes me want adventures. I expect our autumn has gentler colours than your fall and it goes far slower. The trees, especially beeches, keep their leaves for weeks and weeks after they have begun to change colour, turning from yellow to gold and from gold to flame-colour. (Children 56-57)

Such letters would certainly do much to create nature consciousness in his young readers and gradually lead them into an ecological relationship. In his letters Lewis often encouraged children who tried their hand at writing stories. For instance, he wrote to inspire a child named Joan in writing stories related to animals. In fact, Lewis points out various mistakes in her story and provides her valuable guidance through his letter in 1958:

I am sure you had fun writing the stories. The main fault of the animal one is that you don’t mix the reality and the fantasy quite in the right way. One way is Beatrix Potter’s or Brer Rabbit’s. By fantasy the animals are allowed to talk and behave in many ways like humans. But their relations to one another and to us remain the real ones. Rabbits are in danger from foxes and men. The other way is mine: you go right out of this world into a different creation, where there are a different sort of animals. (Children 80)
One of the child readers of Lewis’s stories responded by sending Lewis a picture she had drawn to illustrate his story. Lewis replies with candour and genuine admiration:

In Hugh’s picture of the Dufflepuds what I like best (though the D’s themselves are quite good) is the ship, just the right sort of ship, and the shadow of the ship, and the windiness of the sky. I mean, I like a picture of out-of-door things to look as if it was really out of doors – as this does. But you all seem able to do that. Nicky’s Reepicheep shows the sunlight splendidly by the shadows of the trees. But what I like best of all is the ‘spirit of a tree.’ It is so beautifully wavy and graceful and is moving so. Bravo! (Children 40)

He draws the letter-writer towards consideration of the life in all of creation and therefore to think of the life in every plant. Thus, Lewis’s Letters to Children manifests environmental awareness in the minds of children.

The Letters of C. S. Lewis collected and published by his brother Warren are filled with Lewis’s description of autumn smells and colours, hours of wandering over woods, fields and unspoilt hills and country lanes. It is the simplicity of country pleasures that he cherishes. Warren remembers how his brother Lewis “sighed for . . . the lost simplicity of country pleasures, the empty sky, the unspoilt hills, the white silent roads on which you could hear the rattle of a farm cart half a mile away. These pleasures – all but unattainable to the modern child – were ours, and more especially after our
move in 1905” (Letters 2). In 1905, Lewis’s family shifted to a new house named ‘Little Lea’ which was situated beside the “open hilly farmland . . . in these golden years before school, Jack developed a passionate and life-long devotion to County Down” (Letters 2-3).

Lewis’s habit of walking in all kinds of weather, alone or with friends along the countryside, served to deepen his eco-sensitiveness. Like Scott Hess, by walking, he “got to know the feeling of the vegetation and the topography” (87). Warren reflects that Lewis’s “annual walking tour was a regular fixture: on these long days, and during the pleasant evening hours . . . Jack was always at his most exuberant, his most whimsical, his most perceptive . . .” (Letters 16). As he walked around Somerset and Devon, he found the country “delightful, consisting of high moors with charming valleys full of orchards between them and everything is a mass of white blossom” (Letters 50). Lewis also writes to his brother regarding the “good walks” that he enjoyed at Standlake: “In the heat of the day it was an heroic undertaking. . . . We had to begin by climbing the ‘warm, green-muffled Cumnor hills’ a long, long pull, all on foot. . . . We really enjoyed nothing until beyond Cumnor we sunk into the long grass by the side of the road under one of the deplorably rare trees” (Letters 63). Lewis’s keen enjoyment of his natural environment of trees and grasses enabled him to impart his own joy in nature to his readers.

Lewis’s attachment with the natural world is revealed in his description of his tour to Wells, a country of hills. With great enthusiasm he
watches the winding valleys, rocks, hills, woods and water. From the sight of such landscape and the wilderness of Wells he derives inexplicable pleasure. Once, Lewis along with others “climbed up through the Quantocks; they are a tremendous barrier of moor, with the most wonderful valleys, called ‘combes’, running down them” (Letters 67). From this place, he “looked down into the last valley in Somerset – a little piece of ground that I love as well as any I have ever walked in” (Letters 67). Lewis’s description and details of the natural environment mingled with responsive feelings and thoughts serve “to give voice back to nature” and also result in “green consciousness raising” (Speek 171).

As an active observer of the nonhuman world, Lewis is not merely enthralled by colour but also by smells, sounds and tastes as well. His visit to Lynmouth made him feel extremely glad and he records this exceptional experience to his brother, Warren:

We were exceedingly glad to drop into Lynmouth . . . It was a fine evening, delightfully cool and dewy. The road was good . . . big gorges . . . mysterious and chaotic landscape – ‘forest on forest piled. . . . Whenever you were still, the sound of a stream many feet below and the ‘EEE-ee’ of bats worked a kind of counterpoint on the general theme of silence. We walked faster; we talked most entertainingly. Finally we reached the top where these valleys, getting shallower and shallower, at last come out on the surface of the moor. We sat under a haystack
enjoying the smell and the air of a good, starless, moonless
English Country night. . . . (Letters 68-69)

Thus, Lewis, in his letters frequently indulges in praising the scenery and the
pleasure of walking tours. The “evocation of scene, the descriptive detail, and
the loving attention to remembered experiences accumulated over a long
period, these all characterize even his informal writing” (Glover 14). Lewis’s
letters are embellished with the description of the natural beauty of his
environment. Moreover, his sensitive ears are always quick to sense the
sounds of animals. His letter to his father in 1925 regarding the natural
environment in the Bishop’s Palace at Wells reveals the roots of his
ecological relationship:

My external surroundings are beautiful beyond compare. . . .
My big sitting-room looks north and from it I see nothing, not
even a gable or a spire, to remind me that I am in a town. I look
down on a stretch of level grass which passes into a grove of
immemorial forest trees, at present coloured autumn red. Over
this stray the deer. They are erratic in their habits. Some
mornings when I look out there will be half a dozen chewing
the cud just underneath me, and on others there will be none in
sight – or one little stag (not much bigger than a calf and
looking too slender for the weight of his antlers) standing still
and sending through the fog that queer little bark which is these
beasts’ ‘moo’. It is a sound that will soon be as familiar to me
as the cough of the cows in the field at home, for I hear it day
and night. (Letters 104)

Lewis’s eco-sensitive nature is revealed in his journey to Icknield Way
where he relishes the green grasses, the lovely sunshine and the pleasant
breeze. He writes:

We spent nearly the whole of Wednesday following the
Icknield Way along the northern edge of the Downs,
overlooking the Wantage valley on our right. Around us and to
our left the country had all the same character; close, smooth
grass, deliciously springy to the foot; chalk showing through
here and there and making the few ploughed places almost
cream colour . . . (Letters 114-15)

Thus, Lewis’s correspondence to his friends, relatives and child
readers is packed with description, especially of seasons, birds, trees, hills,
valleys, mountains and wilderness. Moreover, his “perceptions and
descriptions are fresh and vivid and although personal, are never quaint”
(Glover 14). From his letters it is evident that Lewis has awareness of the
natural world of which he writes with enthusiasm.

Another significant work of Lewis which can be evaluated for his
nature awareness is The Great Divorce. Lewis is one of those best teachers in
whom “imagination and logical control combine, so that you receive wisdom
from their flights of fancy as well as a human heartbeat from their logical
analyses and arguments” (Packer 245). Biblical truth thus combines with imagination and logic in Lewis’s *The Great Divorce*.

The works of Lewis becomes a gospel of ecology where he “draws the reader in and forces him to accept the author’s position . . .” (Reedy 93). Glover states that “this book is the shortest and most clearly didactic of Lewis’s fiction” (129). It is depicted as a guided tour by George MacDonald, taking Lewis through the celestial regions and ending with the revelation that it has all been a dream. The work acknowledges the great separation between two spiritual realms.

Lewis is allowed to travel in a bus that takes the passengers to the gates of Heaven, where they may stay as long as they like. The natural setting in heaven proves to be hard and weighty to the Ghost visitors from hell:

> It was the light, the grass, the trees that were different; made of some different substance, so much solider than things in our county that men were ghosts by comparison. Moved by a sudden thought, I bent down and tried to pluck a daisy which was growing at my feet. The stalk wouldn’t break. I tried to twist it, but it wouldn’t twist. I tugged till the sweat stood out on my forehead and I had lost most of the skin off my hands. The little flower was hard, not like wood or even like iron, but like diamond. (*Divorce* 27)

However, when the souls from Paradise come to receive these visitors from hell, the ground yielded to their tread: “the earth shook under their tread as
their strong feet sank into the wet turf. A tiny haze and a sweet smell went up where they had crushed the grass and scattered the dew” (Divorce 29). This is not the case for the souls from hell. They find it almost impossible to walk on the hard, pointed grass. As these souls are hard-hearted and rebellious, the natural surroundings also become hard and unresponsive to them. The souls from Paradise appear as Solid people, in some ways more real than men and women who lived on earth and the grass is naturally soft and comfortable to the feet of the Solid people though it seems hard and stiff as rock to the feet of Lewis the ‘ghost’:

Walking proved difficult. The grass, hard as diamonds to my unsubstantial feet, made me feel as if I were walking on wrinkled rock, and I suffered pains like those of the mermaid in Hans Anderson. A bird ran across in front of me and I envied it. It belonged to that country and was as real as the grass. It could bend the stalks and spatter itself with dew. (Divorce 30)

The Solid person explains to the Big Ghost, that only those who stop thinking of themselves and agree to walk to the mountain with the help of the Solid Souls sent to help them will find that their feet grow hard enough to walk on the grass in paradise, because “reality is harsh to the feet of shadows” (Divorce 40). Lewis mentions in Mere Christianity that pride is not “something God forbids us of concern for his own dignity” (111) but God must “eliminate this barrier between Himself and His creation” (Lindskoog
Therefore these souls who enter eternity must learn to overcome their pride and ask help of others.

As Lewis continues wandering around, his eco-reflections give him further insights. From his experiences in the celestial regions he learns that the grasses are as hard as rock. Later when Lewis sees the water he expects the water to be hard enough to walk on: “I tried it with one foot, and my foot did not go in. Next moment I stepped boldly out on the surface. I fell on my face at once and got some nasty bruises. I had forgotten that though it was, to me, solid, it was not the less in rapid motion” (Divorce 43-44). Willing to involve himself in his natural surroundings Lewis has strange experiences in this ‘different’ environment which confronts him. Walking on ‘hard’ water is an entirely refreshing experience:

The cool smooth skin of the bright water was delicious to my feet and I walked on it for about an hour, making perhaps a couple of hundred yards. Then the going became difficult. The current grew swifter. Great flakes or islands of foam came swirling down towards me, bruising my shins like stones if I did not get out of their way. The surface became uneven, rounded itself into lovely hollows and elbows of water which distorted the appearance of the pebbles on the bottom and threw me off my balance, so that I had to scramble to shore. (Divorce 45)
The sounds that he hears here also have a difference. When he hears a lovely noise vibrating through the forest he does not at first recognize it as a waterfall. The huge waterfall falling over many-coloured rock in a wide amphitheatre enclosed by natural slope would have been terrifying and deafening on earth, but the present sensation is different:

On earth, such a waterfall could not have been perceived at all as a whole; it was too big. Its sound would have been a terror in the woods for twenty miles. Here, after the first shock, my sensibility ‘took’ both as a well-built ship takes a huge wave. I exulted. The noise, though gigantic, was like giants’ laughter: like the revelry of a whole college of giants together laughing, dancing, singing, roaring at their high works. (*Divorce* 45)

Thus, Lewis is able to respond with joy and exaltation at the sound of the waterfall.

When Lewis watches the Ghost in the Bowler attempting to take with it some of the beautiful golden apples that had fallen from the tree and sees it struggling with the weight of just one of these apples, he suddenly hears a great voice addressing the Ghost. The thunderous yet liquid voice came from the waterfall. A bright angel who stands like one crucified, “poured himself perpetually down towards the forest with loud joy” (*Divorce* 48). This voice addressed the Ghost: “‘Fool,’ he said, ‘put it down. You cannot take it back. There is not room for it in Hell. Stay here and learn to eat such apples. The very leaves and the blades of grass in the wood will delight to teach you’ ”
(Divorce 48). The Ghost however refuses to hear this message, being interested only in fulfilling its own desires, and continues with the agony of trying to shift the heavy apple to the bus. At that moment, Lewis himself feels self-conscious in the presence of the Water-Giant and begins to leave the place. As he watches the silver fish darting briskly over the riverbed so easily and naturally, he yearns to find the water permeable so that he too could enjoy a dip in it. When the reader identifies his own feelings with the writer’s feelings, certain nature awareness is created.

One of the visitors is a Ghost that appeared to be a well-dressed woman but who tried to hide herself behind the bushes because she felt insufficiently dressed and thought everyone would look through her. One of the Bright People tries to convince her that if only for a moment she would fix her mind on something not herself, and allowed herself to be helped to the mountain, all would be well. When the lady Ghost rejects all help, the Spirit makes a last attempt by blowing a horn to call the unicorns so that the woman could be frightened enough to seek help or run for the mountains:

A herd of unicorns came thundering through the glades: twenty-seven hands high the smallest of them and white as swans but for the red gleam in eyes and nostrils and the flashing indigo of their horns. I can still remember the squelching noise of the soft wet turf under their hoofs, the breaking of the undergrowth, the snorting and the whinneyings; how their hind legs went up and their horned heads down in
mimic battle. Even then I wondered for what real battle it might
be the rehearsal. I heard the Ghost scream, and I think it made a
bolt away from the bushes. (Divorce 58)

Thus, the beasts are called in to help humans to come to the realisation that
interdependence and co-existence is essential for peace and happiness, even
in paradise.

When Lewis leans on the arm offered by MacDonald to support him,
he finds it more tolerable to walk on the hard grounds. Thus by surrendering
his self-willed independence with humility and accepting help, Lewis finds a
great change taking place within him:

    . . . my other senses also appeared to be quickened. I noticed
    scents in the air which had hitherto escaped me, and the
country put on new beauties. There was water everywhere and
tiny flowers quivering in the early breeze. Far off in the woods
we saw the deer glancing past, and, once, a sleek panther came
purring to my companion’s side. (Divorce 69)

On the other hand, the Ghost visitors who refused to be helped, “repelled
every attempt to teach them, and when they found that nobody listened to
them they went back, one by one, to the bus” (Divorce 71). They could not
believe the Bright Spirits who attempted to encourage them to walk, with
their help, to the mountains and be transformed into Solid people.

The power of eco-relationship and its redeeming nature appears as
Lewis watches a Ghost submit to the killing of its lust which is in the form of
a lizard sitting on its shoulder. When the Ghost gives permission for the lust to be destroyed, the Angel grips it and kills it. From that moment, the Ghost becomes more and more solid and finally becomes a new-made strong man. The lizard that is killed increases in sizes and grows into a powerful Stallion:

What stood before me was the greatest stallion I have ever seen, silvery white but with mane and tail of gold. It was smooth and shining, rippled with swells of flesh and muscle, whinneying and stamping with its hoofs. At each stamp the land shook and the trees dindled. (Divorce 93)

MacDonald explains that “lust is a poor, weak, whimpering, whispering thing compared with that richness and energy of desire which will arise when lust has been killed” (Divorce 95) and once it has submitted to death, it can be raised a spiritual body. After the new man and the stallion had breathed into each other they embrace the feet of the Burning Angel, drawn towards it by the “liquid love and brightness which flowed from him” (Divorce 94). With a blissful heart the young man swiftly leaps upon the horse’s back. Then both horse and man ride away:

. . . already they were only like a shooting star far off on the green plain, and soon among the foothills of the mountains. Then, still like a star, I saw them winding up, scaling what seemed impossible steeps, and quicker every moment, till near the dim brow of the landscape, so high that I must strain my
neck to see them, they vanished, bright themselves, into the rose-brightness of that everlasting morning. (*Divorce* 94)

As horse and man ride away victoriously, the realm of nature begins its song of rejoicing: “It was the voice of that earth, those woods and those waters. A strange archaic, inorganic noise, that came from all directions at once. The Nature or Arch-nature of that land rejoiced to have been once more ridden, and therefore consummated, in the person of the horse” (*Divorce* 94).

When Sarah Smith’s soul enters heaven, she is heralded by the scattering of flowers and music whose notes if they could be written down “no man who read that score would ever grow sick or old” (*Divorce* 97). Angels and Bright Spirits dance before her and she is followed by many ‘sons and daughters.’ She had influenced all those who came into contact with her by her powerful divine nature. Even the animals developed a relationship to her: “Every beast and bird that came near her had its place in her love. In her they became themselves. And now the abundance of life she has in Christ from the Father flows over into them” (*Divorce* 99). In one of his essays Lewis states: “Those who want Heaven most have served Earth best” (*Concerns* 80). As Smith had harmonious relationship with human and the nonhuman world when she was in earth she is happily received in heaven. Now, when the Bright Spirit comes forward to receive her, they sing their song of welcome and they sing her praises:

*The Happy Trinity is her home: nothing can trouble her joy.*
She is the bird that evades every net: the wild deer that leaps every pitfall.

Like the mother bird to its chickens or a shield to the arm’d knight: so is the Lord to her mind, in His unchanging lucidity.

Bogies will not scare her in the dark: bullets will not frighten her in the day. (Divorce 109)

Thus, in *The Great Divorce* Lewis unveils the character of nature awareness against a divine setting. Those who are conscious of nature’s value and beauty find their way to Paradise.

In *The Screwtape Letters* Lewis suggests that every moment of life a person is either advancing towards heaven or towards hell, for “those high stakes are played out in the most mundane of decisions” (Meilaender 240). The letters that are exchanged between Screwtape and Wormwood reveal how much the ordinary and everyday count for in real spiritual life. Here, too, those who enjoy the simple pleasures of life such as reading and walking with wholehearted sincerity are distinguished from those who complicate their lives with all their scheming, cunning and evil designs. For instance, in *The Screwtape Letters*, the uncle devil Screwtape warns his nephew devil Wormwood of the danger of allowing the patient (person) to do something he really enjoys. In fact Wormwood had erred when he “. . . allowed the patient to read a book he really enjoyed, because he enjoyed it and not in order to make clever remarks about it to his new friends” (*Screwtape* 63-64). He also
adds: “In the second place, you allowed him to walk down to the old mill and have tea there – a walk through country he really likes, and taken alone. In other words you allowed him two real positive Pleasures” (Screwtape 64).

When a person indulges in cultivating his love for nature such as taking a walk in the country he is following his true “likings and impulses” (Screwtape 65) inbuilt in him by his Creator and thus increasing his nature-awareness. Screwtape advises Wormwood to point the man towards deviating from his own true nature, to follow conventions or fashions and so on. Thus those who are oriented towards nature such as taking a walk in the country purely for enjoyment are seen as taking the path towards God and the others as moving away from His presence.

Screwtape recognises that God has made change pleasurable to man and balanced it by a love of permanence:

He has contrived to gratify both tastes together in the vey world He has made, by that union of change and permanence which we call Rhythm. He gives them the seasons, each season different yet every year the same, so that spring is always felt as a novelty yet always as the recurrence of an immemorial theme. (Screwtape 136)

Thus, the love for the seasons and the enjoyment of each season appears as a godly virtue. In these letters, Lewis portrays the devil as being anti-nature as well as anti-human nature in its divine form. The writer thus shows by
contrast that a dislike for nature points to the devil and a love for it points to God.

Lewis’s novel *Till We Have Faces* is considered to be the best piece of fiction. Apparently, this work relates the myth of Psyche and Cupid. An examination of the book demonstrates the writer’s skill in raising nature-awareness. The power of nature has a vital role in the life of the characters in this work. The character Psyche is filled from lonely childhood with a longing for the Grey Mountain. Whenever it is possible to leave the palace, the guide and tutor called the Fox leads Psyche and her sister Orual into the woods and other natural surroundings so that they can go up into the hill-tops in summer and gaze upon the mountains. The Grey Mountain, a powerful eco-symbol for all that is majestic, powerful and glorious in nature symbolises the epitome of happiness for Psyche. By telling herself stories about it, she develops a relationship with the Grey Mountain, and longs for the time when she will be able to journey towards it. Psyche’s deep longing for the Grey Mountain depicts her yearning for self-transcendence and godliness: “‘When I’m big,’ she said, ‘I will be a great, great queen, married to the greatest king of all, and he will build me a castle of gold and amber up there on the very top’” (*Faces* 31).

This search for meaning or joy, represented in the longing of Psyche for the Grey Mountain is the theme of nearly all the fiction by Lewis. In this work, the writer has placed the quest and journey in a traditional myth. In his reinterpretation of this myth, he has used his skills as a writer to “add
significance to the action, to give it historical perspective and allusiveness, to place it in a remote and mysterious antiquity” (Glover 192). The novel explores the divine nature in Psyche and her involvement in her natural environment. As Psyche has the divine within her, her beauty adds meaning and glory to anything around her: “She made beauty all round her. When she trod on mud, the mud was beautiful; when she ran in the rain, the rain was silver. When she picked up a toad – she had the strangest and, I thought, unchanciest love for all manner of brutes – the toad became beautiful” (Faces 30-31). Even as Psyche grows up, it appears that “the almonds and the cherries blossomed earlier in those years and the blossoms lasted longer” (Faces 31). Thus her divine native is reflected by comparisons to nature and the seasons.

The works of Lewis always represent natural objects as having human and divine attributes. Psyche’s desire for the unknown or unseen Presence is hidden in her longing for the Grey Mountain. When she is denied attainment of her desire, she “felt like a bird in a cage when the other birds of its kind are flying home” (Faces 82). She recollects that the longing itself was a great source of joy:

“It was when I was happiest that I longed most. It was on happy days when we were up there on the hills, the three of us, with the wind and the sunshine . . . where you couldn’t see Glome or the palace. Do you remember? The colour and the smell, and looking across at the Grey Mountain in the distance?
And because it was so beautiful, it set me longing, always longing. Somewhere else there must be more of it. Everything seemed to be saying, Psyche come! But I couldn’t (not yet) come and I didn’t know where I was to come to. It almost hurt me”. (*Faces* 82)

In reaching the Mountain she hopes to reach the source of all joy and hence when she is chosen as the sacrifice for the Shadowbrute, to be made on the mountain, she feels that her heart’s desire will be attained: “‘All my life the god of the Mountain has been wooing me. Oh, look up once at least before the end and wish me joy. I am going to my lover’” (*Faces* 84).

Psyche has her heart’s desire fulfilled when the God of the Westwind comes to the place where she has been bound to the tree with iron fetters as a sacrifice, pulls her out of the iron girdle without hurting her, carries her above the ground and whirls her away. She claims:

At first I was all out of breath and too bewildered to see where I was; for Westwind is a merry, rough god. (Sister, do you think young gods have to be taught how to handle us? A hasty touch from hands like theirs and we’d fall to pieces.) But when I came to myself – ah, can you think what a moment that was! – and saw the House before me; I lying at the threshold. And it wasn’t, you see, just the gold and amber House I used to imagine. (*Faces* 121-22)
Unfortunately the beautiful palace in which Psyche lives and spends her days joyfully are not visible to Orual’s eyes for her own ego and self-love have blinded her. Later, when she is granted a vision of it, it makes her grip in wonder:

I saw that which brought my heart into my throat. There stood the palace; grey, as all things were grey in that hour and place, but solid and motionless, wall within wall, pillar and arch and architrave, acres of it, a labyrinthine beauty. As she had said, it was like no house ever seen in our land or age. Pinnacles and buttresses leaped up – no memories of mine, you would think, could help me to imagine them – unbelievably tall and slender, pointed and prickly as if stone were shooting out into branch and flower. (Faces 141)

This is one of the “most arresting descriptions and one of the most effective that Lewis ever drew verbally is the vision which Oural has of Psyche’s palace” (Glover 196). The vision of the cold, windy reality of the mountains seems to point to the reality that certain visions of nature and nature awareness are possible only to those who surrender their greed and self-centredness.

The letters of Lewis and works such as The Great Divorce and Till We Have Faces thus contribute to creating nature awareness. His letters, as well his other works are all equally interwoven with his nature-sensitiveness. They urge a perfect ecology where flora, fauna and human beings live in
wholesome ecological relationship without dominating or destroying the other. The writer’s skills of raising nature awareness in his readers results in persuading individuals to become aware of the sustaining power of the natural environment.