

ABSTRACT

GRAHAM, ELIZABETH. Greece to Glome: The Christianization of a Pagan Myth.
(Under the direction of Dr. Christopher Cobb.)

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the differences between the Cupid and Psyche tale found in Lucius Apuleius's The Golden Ass and C.S. Lewis's Till We Have Faces, with particular attention to how Lewis created a didactic non-allegorical mythopoeic Christian fantasy work from the original possibly allegorical pagan myth. The thesis focuses on the development of the Cupid and Psyche myth in Apuleius's work, then draws comparisons to the significant differences Lewis makes in his own novel. Lewis's basic Christian beliefs, specifically in relation to mythology, are discussed. This thesis was conceived as there is very little critical work that focuses on Till We Have Faces and no in-depth research done comparing it to the second century story upon which it is based.

GREECE TO GLOME: THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF A PAGAN MYTH

by
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DEDICATION

Patri.

To my family, especially my parents, who helped me to create my own Narnia,
and to my brother and grandmothers, who are already in theirs.

BIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth Graham was born in a small town in North Carolina and was raised in an even smaller town just a little further east. By the time she was in sixth grade, she knew that she was going to work with English literature and writing, and by the time she was in eighth grade she knew she wanted to be a teacher. Elizabeth always knew that she wanted to attend North Carolina State University, so it was inevitable that after high school she went to NCSU for her degree in English education. Her father was never more proud of her than when she turned down the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Elizabeth decided to stick with what she knew and attended NCSU for her graduate work as well. After graduation, Elizabeth plans to teach in the mountains of North Carolina, write her own fantasy literature, and travel around the world, not necessarily in that order.

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INTRODUCTION

*“Till We Have Faces is my biggest ‘flop’ for years,
and so of course I think it is my best book.” --C.S. Lewis¹*

The most common question I have been asked when telling people about the topic of this thesis has been: why not write about Shakespeare? I suppose this is a valid question; Shakespearean literature is undoubtedly worthy of scholarly attention and is respected while fantasy literature tends not to be. Till We Have Faces is not only one of C.S. Lewis’s least known works, but also one of his least understood works. Even when it was first published, Lewis was disappointed in how unsuccessful the novel turned out to be, both popularly and critically. Till We Have Faces never achieved the success of his earlier works, such as the Chronicles of Narnia and his nonfiction apologetics.

One major source of scholarly misunderstanding of Till We Have Faces is its genre. Till We Have Faces is commonly described as an adult fantasy. However, critics tend to casually slip in misnomers such as myth or allegory in association with the novel, which causes its true meaning to be often misconstrued. Furthermore, the mere appellation of “fantasy” makes critics who feel that fantasy is not a valid genre for scholarly work dismissive of Till We Have Faces. As a result, Till We Have Faces is generally at best forgotten and at worst purposefully ignored as an important work in Lewis’s Christian fiction.

¹ From Letters to Children, page 88.

A proper description of the genre of Till We Have Faces is needed. As Lewis himself said in Preface to Paradise Lost, “The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know *what* it is—what it was intended to do and how it was meant to be used...the first thing is to understand the object before you” (1). What, then, is Till We Have Faces? Lewis called it a “myth retold.” Till We Have Faces tells the story of Cupid and Psyche from one of Psyche’s elder sister’s point of view. The earliest extant version of the myth appears as a story within the story of The Golden Ass, written in the second century A.D. by Lucius Apuleius (ca. 125 to ca. 175). This was also the version Lewis used as a source for his own work, as he records in the note at the end of Till We Have Faces. The novel, however, becomes more than a simple retelling of the myth. Lewis essentially took a pagan myth, altered its structure, form, and purpose, and created an entirely new work.

Till We Have Faces has been described as a fantasy novel, an allegory, and a myth. Lewis described Till We Have Faces as an adult fantasy novel, and it is generally listed as such. At the same time, however, many critics and contemporaries of Lewis claim it is allegory. Ben Ray Redman, for example, wrote that “the religious allegory is plain to read” in his review of the novel (qtd. in Hooper 263). On the other hand, the extended title of the book, Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold implies that the novel is myth; furthermore, many critics blur the lines between myth and fantasy.² I posit that Till We Have Faces is a specific type of fantasy novel and neither an allegory nor a myth, and that through its structure and characters, Till We Have Faces creates a Christian story that could be told in almost no other way.

²See, for example, Timmerman.

How Till We Have Faces functions as a fantasy novel is best understood first by examining what it does not do. A mythological interpretation does not accurately describe the intention of Till We Have Faces. While Till We Have Faces is a “myth retold,” it lies more in the fantasy realm than in the mythological. Although both myth and fantasy ostensibly serve the same purpose, to affirm “a meaning which is the ground of reality for humankind” (Timmerman 28), there is a difference between the two. Some critics blur the lines of myth and fantasy. Even John Timmerman, author of Other Worlds: The Fantasy Genre, which attempts to define the fantasy genre, says that “most properly, fantasy is a kind of myth” (28) because they both work to explain the supernatural, show the sacred in life, inspire greatness, and teach fundamental values, morals, and beliefs. Although certainly both fantasy and myth have these traits, I contest Timmerman’s definition of fantasy *as* myth on the grounds that their structures have differing purposes. Myth at its most basic origins strives to elicit belief; the gods in myth are also gods outside the myth. Myth intends to teach through the mouth of the divine. Fantasy, on the other hand, willingly admits it is make-believe. The characters in fantasy literature are fictional characters and do not purport to be anything else, but the characters in mythology wear the robes of gods.

Till We Have Faces lies more in the mythopoeic realm than the mythological. Mythopoesis is literally the creation of myth. In Till We Have Faces, Lewis creates both a new world and a new mythology for that world. Lewis intended the mythology of Glome to be for Glome only; Ungit is as fictional as Orual, and Lewis expects no one to believe in her other than the characters in the novel. On the other hand, Venus and Cupid were believed in not only by the characters in Apuleius’s tale but also by some of his readers.

The distinction between mythology and mythopoesis is important when considering the meaning of the gods in the novel. Lewis's gods in Till We Have Faces are *not* the Christian God. Instead of Till We Have Faces being a manifestation of the divine in human life, it is a manifestation of the figuratively divine in the fictional characters' lives. The significance of this is best described in Lewis's own words. While he never addressed the question of what the gods represent in Till We Have Faces, he did answer it for Aslan in the Chronicles of Narnia in a way that is applicable to Till We Have Faces as well:

I did not say to myself "Let us represent Jesus as He really is in our world by a Lion in Narnia": I said "Let us *suppose* that there were a land like Narnia and that the Son of God, as he became a Man in our world, became a Lion there, and then imagine what would happen." If you think about it, you will see that it is quite a different thing. (Letters to Children 44-5)

While Lewis was answering a question about the god of Narnia, the principle of representation still applies to Till We Have Faces: the gods of Till We Have Faces do not represent real gods in any way but are, quite literally, fantasy. Because Lewis created the gods for his world and did not intend them to be real, Till We Have Faces is more mythopoeic than mythological.

Mythology's intention is different from fantasy's; so too is allegory's. An allegorical interpretation of Till We Have Faces may be convenient, but such an interpretation would detract from the complexity and beauty of the story itself. Lewis was questioned directly about the possibility of allegory in Till We Have Faces by Professor Clyde S. Kilby in 1957. Lewis denied the presence of allegory in Till We Have Faces, saying "much that you take as allegory was intended solely as realistic detail" (Letters of C.S. Lewis 273-4).³

³ Hereafter referred to as Letters.

Some critics describe Christian fantasy literature as a genre that is almost inevitably allegorical, claiming that the Christian didacticism can only be presented through allegory. However, while fantasy literature may be didactic, it is neither necessarily nor commonly allegorical. An allegory gives the reader precise directions on how to get from one point to another. Fantasy literature, on the other hand, throws the whole map at the reader and lets him figure out for himself where he is now and where he can go. As Timmerman put it, “in fantasy, meaning is *appropriated* by the reader rather than *given* by the author” (8).⁴ This is a very important distinction to make when considering Till We Have Faces. While it is certainly possible for a fantasy novelist to teach through allegory and for a fantasy novel to be both allegorical and didactic, that is not the case with Till We Have Faces.

Till We Have Faces is not an allegory of Christian ideals so much as a story that is probably—although not unquestionably—about a journey into the Christian faith. The novel stands alone as a complete and engrossing story whether or not the reader takes into consideration its Christian themes. The Christianity in Till We Have Faces does create a didactic level that may enhance a reading of the story rather than a necessary allegorical interpretation that is the only mode through which value or understanding can be found. Lewis once wrote in a letter “I think that *looking* for a ‘point’ ... may prevent one sometimes from getting the real effect of the story in itself” (Letters to Children 35-6). In the same way, one does not need to look for the single “point” of Till We Have Faces. There is more than one possible interpretation in Till We Have Faces, but the same cannot be said of allegory.

⁴ What is appropriated, Timmerman continues, is anagogic insight, “an immediate apprehension of spiritual patterns which has been stimulated by certain literary figures, symbols, or devices” (10). Lewis agreed with the connection between fantasy literature and anagogic insight.

Lewis described a strict allegory “like a puzzle with a solution” that tended to lack “the whole *quality* of life as we actually experience it” (Letters to Children 81). If Till We Have Faces is a puzzle, there are several possible solutions, and the quality of life that is missing in most allegory is found in the wide variety of characters in the novel. It is the characters who create the division between didactic fantasy and strict allegory. The characters are too complex to symbolize any one thing, and none of them are entirely right nor entirely wrong. Till We Have Faces is not only about a quest to find faith in that which cannot be comprehended until faith is already acquired, but is also a story about Psyche, Orual, the Fox, Bardia, and Glome itself. Lewis did not write Till We Have Faces to tell only a moral but also to simply tell a story.

While Till We Have Faces is not allegory, it is didactic, although Lewis “heartily disliked the label ‘didactic.’ ‘I’ve never started from a message or a moral, have you?’ says C.S. Lewis to Kingsley Amis in a discussion on fantasy” (Uruang 134).⁵ While Lewis may never have started a story with an intention to impart a certain message, at the same time he himself admitted that “it wouldn’t have been that particular story if I wasn’t interested in those particular ideas on other grounds” (Lewis “Unreal Estates” 62). Lewis therefore may not have started with a lesson in mind, but he infused a lesson into the story because the subject of the lesson—Christ—held him in such constant awe.

A didactic reading of Till We Have Faces makes the reader an active participant in the novel. The reader reads not only to find out what will happen to Orual, but also to find the importance of the story to himself. While the novel can be enjoyed simply for the story of Orual’s dogged hatred of the gods, especially in light of her blindness to her own failures,

⁵ Uruang is quoting from “Unreal Estates,” found in Of Other Worlds. The interview primarily focused on science fiction, but because of Till We Have Faces’s notably didactic nature and Lewis’s own accounts of the novel in his letters, the statement is applicable to Till We Have Faces.

the didactic side of the novel is just as gripping and perhaps more important. A reading of the novel that ignores the didacticism and focuses merely on the plot will tell the reader a complete and satisfying tale, but a reader who contemplates the didactic nature of the novel will find that the text's meaning becomes more significant because it applies directly to him. As the reader contemplates what will happen to Orual, he realizes that the question points also to himself and what, if he followed a similar path, would happen to him.

It is the didacticism in Till We Have Faces that creates a Christian moral in a formerly pagan myth. Till We Have Faces shows many different types of people—the natural Christian Psyche, the doubting believer Orual, the scientific Fox, the superstitious Priest—in order to show how religion influences and affects people. The diversity of characters within the novel shows also diversity in faith. Orual may not be Everyman, but she is presented as a normal, everyday type of person with the typical doubts and beliefs that generally accompany a person who was raised in a certain faith, and it is she who carries most of the weight of the didacticism in the novel. Because Orual must become a completely new person in order to face the gods, the reader learns that he must do so also. After all, “how can they meet us face to face till we have faces?” (Till We Have Faces 294).

Although Lewis could have made Till We Have Faces both allegorical and didactic, he did not. Instead, Lewis created a fantasy novel with subtle Christian didacticism that uses complex characters to teach instead of allegory. The story is Christian despite its pagan mythological origins. Till We Have Faces attempts, however, not to be myth but mythopoeic, another way in which Lewis prevents the Christian didacticism from becoming allegorical.

By examining the original myth and comparing it to Till We Have Faces, this thesis will attempt to show how Lewis transforms the ancient pagan myth into a didactic non-allegorical Christian mythopoeic fantasy. Through an analysis of the similarities and differences between Apuleius's tale and Lewis's novel as well as an examination of Lewis's own beliefs, I hope to show how Lewis was able to Christianize a Greek myth and show how Lewis's Christian beliefs were especially suited to being shown through fantasy literature.

The first section of the thesis will look at the origins of the Cupid and Psyche tale and then at the Cupid and Psyche tale in Apuleius's work. From there, a comparison between the traditional tale and Lewis's version will be made. While there are some thematic similarities between the two tales, such as the spiritual journey to enlightenment or the nature of love in one's soul, the narrative Lewis creates has many distinguishing characteristics that set it apart from the traditional tale. By changing the perspective and narrative voice of the novel, Lewis creates an entirely new angle to the old story. Several of his unique ideas, such as the nature of sight, the differing types of love, and the role of jealousy within love, make Till We Have Faces a much more complex and psychologically intriguing tale than Apuleius's version.

The second section of the thesis strives to understand why Lewis chose a pagan myth to create a Christian work and why he chose to present his Christian ideas through a fantasy novel. A definition of what Lewis believed myth to be is established first. "[M]yth, for Lewis, of course, meant not 'a fictitious story or unscientific account,' but a use of narrative structure and archetypal elements to convey through the imagination universal or divine truths not accessible to the intellect alone" (Schakel 5). Lewis believed that myth played an

important role in faith; the Bible itself is a myth come true. Likewise, imagination is an essential element of faith. One cannot have faith based on reason alone.

Because of the importance of myth in religion, Lewis's choice to portray a pagan myth in a Christian light does not seem unreasonable. Furthermore, the role of imagination in understanding the supernatural aspects of faith makes the fantasy genre as an ideal choice for his novel. The human mind is weak and cannot comprehend the true nature of God; it can only attempt to see the reality of Him through myth and imagination.

A NOTE ABOUT THE TEXTS USED

There are many different translations of Apuleius's The Golden Ass available. Lewis himself mentioned at least two different versions in his works. In Sixteenth Century Literature he cites W. Adlington's 1566 version, specifically the edition of C. Whibley in 1893. Since then, several newer editions have been released. I have chosen, however, to use the edition translated by Robert Graves. Not only was this edition mentioned in the endnote of Till We Have Faces, it also is more accurate than Adlington's. Graves notes that "Adlington was a pretty good scholar, but the text he used had not yet been critically examined and amended, and he had no reliable Latin dictionary" (xi). Grave's edition was first published in 1950; Till We Have Faces was published in 1956.

The text is also known by several different titles, the most common modern three are The Metamorphosis (which Adlington used), The Transformations of Lucius, and The Golden Ass. I have chosen to refer to the text as The Golden Ass as Graves preferred this title.

I: GREECE AND GLOME

“...Apuleius got it all wrong.” --C.S. Lewis⁶

It took C.S. Lewis over thirty-five years to write Till We Have Faces. In a journal entry dated 9 September 1923, Lewis already felt his intention to write the story “old”: “My head was very full of my old idea of a poem on my own version of the Cupid and Psyche story” (All My Road Before Me 266). Lewis also apparently had a good idea of some of the most important changes he wanted to make to the story from very early on. As he wrote in a letter to Christian Hardie in 1955, Lewis said “the idea of re-writing the old myth, with the palace invisible, has been in my mind ever since I was an undergraduate and it always involved writing through the mouth of the elder sister” (qtd. in Hooper 251). In the past, he had tried to write the story out in verse, as couplets and as a ballad; Lewis once toyed with the idea of a story between Psyche and Caspian.⁷ Eventually he put the idea of a retelling of Apuleius’s myth on the shelf until 1955 when the idea seized him once again and this time refused to let go. As he wrote to Katherine Farrer, “in a word, I’m much with book” (qtd. in Hooper 249).

Lewis turned to a tale found in the Latin novel The Golden Ass by Apuleius as his source, but he made many changes to the original tale in his retelling. Essentially, although both Lewis and Apuleius focused on two key issues in their stories—questing and love—Lewis altered his version to such a point that “Till We Have Faces is more *unlike* Apuleius’s

⁶ Letter to Katharine Farrer dated 2 April 1955. Quoted in Hooper, page 249.

⁷ Caspian was a character from Lewis’s Chronicles of Narnia, introduced in the book Prince Caspian, but with major roles in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader and The Silver Chair. Of course, it cannot be known whether Lewis intended this Caspian or another.

myth of Cupid and Psyche than it is *like* it” (Donaldson 22). Lewis did not completely reinvent Apuleius’s myth; he took the elements that were already there and changed them to fit his purpose. As he put it, “Apuleius was of course a man of genius: but in relation to my work, he is a ‘source,’ not an ‘influence’ nor a ‘model’” (Lewis “Endnote” 313). Apuleius’s tale was considered an allegory because its characters slide easily into simple, one-dimensional symbols. Lewis ensures through his vastly more complex characters that this does not happen. Lewis did not invent Psyche, but he changed her into a natural Christian. He didn’t invent the gods, but he Christianized them. Lewis’s retelling of the tale of Cupid and Psyche is unique not for its new creations but for its reinvention of old ones.

Before examining the aspects of Apuleius’s tale that are relevant to a comparison with Till We Have Faces, it is important to look at the origins of the myth. Robert Graves, a translator of Apuleius, believed that “[Apuleius] probably invented none of his stories” (Graves xix), and research on ancient Greek and Roman art confirms this. “There are no traces of evidence of a version of the story earlier than the one we know,” art historian Sonia Cavicchioli states in her very recent work The Tale of Cupid and Psyche: An Illustrated History, “But there are many visual representations of Cupid and Psyche. At least as early as the fifth century B.C.,⁸ images appear in the Greek world of the soul represented either as a young girl with butterfly wings or simply as a butterfly” (46). While no written record of the tale exists before Apuleius, artifacts of ancient Greek and Roman archeological sites have produced countless representations of Psyche, often in the arms of Cupid.

Cavicchioli does not neglect the fact that the Greek word $\Psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ means both “soul” and “butterfly.” It is unknown whether the early images of Psyche were created as a clever

⁸ Apuleius was writing in the second century A.D.

play on the word or as a representation of a goddess. However, Cavicchioli cites Plato's creation of the myth of the winged soul in Phaedrus as proof of a sound association of Psyche as a mythological character. No one can be sure whether Psyche started out as an image of the personified soul or as a character that later on took that image. Regardless, Psyche was clearly present in early Greek and Roman culture.

Psyche existed in mythology before Apuleius. However, the story behind her is much less clear. Apuleius did not create Psyche, but it is possible—though unlikely—that he created her story. From the remaining sculptures and paintings that survive, it is evident that the Greeks and Romans saw Cupid and Psyche as the embodiment of Love and Soul; what is less evident is how detailed a background Psyche had. Quite early on, Psyche did have an association with death. There is not only the myth that a person's soul takes the form of a butterfly and flies away at death, but there are also many remaining images of Psyche embracing Cupid on the lids of sarcophagi in both late pagan Greco-Roman and early Christian sarcophagi. That Cupid and Psyche embrace on sarcophagi hint at an allegorical image “to indicate the soul's destiny after death” (Cavicchioli 47). Cavicchioli confirms through her research that Cupid and Psyche existed at least in image form for both pagans and Christians because of what they represented:

...Psyche foreshadows the soul's destiny in the afterlife. On the sarcophagi, however, the promise of beatitude is made more explicit, where the union with the deity is represented by the embrace and kiss of Love. For this reason, the image appealed to Christians as well; in the period when this new religion was engaged in creating its own iconography... [early Christians] recognized in the image a persuasive symbol of the salvation and immortality promised by Christ. (50-52)

The symbolism behind Psyche and Cupid seems to have varied very little throughout the ages. Apuleius certainly knew what Psyche represented and with what gods she was associated with most often, Cupid and Venus. Whether or not the fully formulated story he presents in The Golden Ass was as well known is impossible to discover. What is known is that in the fourteenth century A.D. Giovanni Boccaccio discovered an ancient manuscript of The Golden Ass, copied it, and presented his own allegorical reading of the story. Since then, the story as Apuleius wrote it has become the accepted tale of Cupid and Psyche, and because of the medieval interpretations of that tale, it has often been associated with allegory (Cavicchioli 59-60).

Structurally there are several significant differences between Apuleius's version and Lewis's. The Golden Ass is not merely the tale of Cupid and Psyche; the main plot of The Golden Ass is a humorous tale about how the narrator (presumably Apuleius himself) is transformed into a donkey and his adventures in trying to undo the transformation. The tale of Cupid and Psyche is told in the middle of the book; it is a story told by an old woman, who lives with bandits, in an effort to amuse a young girl, Charitē, who the bandits had kidnapped. The tale itself lacks the humorous tone of the rest of the novel, and while it is long, its length is less than a third of the rest of the novel. The Golden Ass is in many ways a story about stories. In nearly every adventure of the donkey, someone is telling a new tale. The Cupid and Psyche story stands out from the tales in the rest of the novel as a sober, moralistic, and perhaps allegorical tale in the context of a slap-stick comedy about the adventures of a man turned into a donkey who most often hears bawdy or humorous tales. It is the only story of the many that involves true love instead of lustful sex, and it is the only story with a truly happy ending in which good triumphs. The tone of the tale is different

from the rest of the novel; the tale is much more serious and the comedy is much more subtle, if there is any comedy at all. The tale of Cupid and Psyche seems so dislocated, in fact, that the question arises as to why Apuleius chose to include the somber story in his work at all.

The most obvious reason is the frame of the story within the larger structure of The Golden Ass as a whole. The story is told to Charitë, who has been kidnapped by the bandits just before her wedding to a handsome noble who was so loved and admired that “everyone in the town wants to see him promoted to the highest offices.” (Apuleius 94) Furthermore, the woman is beautiful, free-born, and rich. As the narrator himself says, she “was so beautiful that though I was an ass, I swear that I fell deeply in love with her” (92). The girl is beside herself with grief at being kidnapped by nefarious outlaws just before her wedding and is further perturbed by a disturbing dream in which her fiancé was murdered by the bandits. She weeps inconsolably and contemplates suicide when the bandit’s old hag intervenes.

Considering the young girl’s background, it is little wonder that the bandit’s woman chose to tell her the story of Cupid and Psyche. The parallels between the young girl and Psyche are obvious: both are rich and beautiful and lose the men they love through the evil deeds of others. The hag’s story implies that the young girl should be strong like Psyche; she should not cry or attempt suicide but instead rise above the situation. In this context, the mythological takes precedence over the allegorical, despite the obvious allegorical parallels that can be drawn from the tale. Because the hag tells the story in order to comfort and inspire the girl about her own situation and show her a glimpse of the divine at work in mortal lives, the hag’s story takes a higher road. Although Apuleius may show contempt for

these Olympian gods, he shows through Charitë's reaction to the story the power they hold to inspire.

Psyche's story of struggle and eventual success over insurmountable odds fits in with the young girl's own plight and is a logical story for the hag to choose to tell the young girl. In addition, it fits within the construct of the novel as a whole as well. "Apuleius's tale [of Cupid and Psyche] is significant for being a myth of heroic questing and internal growth that concentrates on the possibilities of *human* development and change" (Edwards 11) just as Lucius the narrator must quest and develop. At the beginning of the novel, Lucius is self-centered and consumed by lust. It was his own greed for power that transformed him into a donkey. His trials and tribulations eventually lead him to enlightenment. Just as Psyche learns to have faith in the gods and their commandments, no matter how odd, so does Lucius. His newfound faith in the goddess Isis causes him to follow her strange orders, and those orders release Lucius from the spell and change him back into a man. As Lewis scholar Mara Donaldson suggests, The Golden Ass is as much a "spiritual autobiography" of Lucius the character (10) as the tale is for Psyche or Till We Have Faces is for Orual.

Lucius's spiritual journey indicates another reason Apuleius chose the Psyche and Cupid tale. With this tale as the center of the novel, the purpose of the frame around it becomes much more clear. It is apparent by the end of the novel that all of Lucius's trials and tribulations as an ass were in order to prepare him for a holy life in service of the gods. "Both [Psyche and Lucius] undergo a metamorphosis, Lucius in the literal sense, as he is turned into an ass...and Psyche in a figurative sense, as she loses her privileged state... For both, the experience of the fall is fundamental: the trials they overcome will bring them to an even better state..." (Cavicchioli 43) and closer to the gods. Apuleius chose the Cupid

and Psyche tale not only as a mythological tale to inspire his character Charitē, but also as an allegorical tale to instruct his character Lucius.

On the surface, Lewis's work follows closely the same sort of "spiritual autobiography" that is found in Apuleius's tale. However, the changes in the narrative create the significant differences between the two stories. The key changes—some slight, some major—set Till We Have Faces apart from Apuleius's tale in a very significant and drastic way. Thematically, the two biggest differences involve the nature of sight and of love, but there are very obvious structural differences that necessarily bring about important distinctions between the works.

The most obvious structural difference between the two stories is the perspective and narrative voice. Apuleius's tale is a story within a story, narrated in the third person by an old hag of the bandits' and told entirely from Psyche's point of view. Lewis changes this, as he always intended to from the first moment he conceived of a retelling of the myth, to write in a first person limited point of view in the voice of Psyche's older sister Orual. This change leads to many other significant departures in Lewis's retelling. Notably Orual's motivations⁹ and internal thoughts become clear in Till We Have Faces, whereas Apuleius relied upon simple envy as the sole motivation for the two elder sisters. Obviously Orual also becomes a much more complex character than her nameless counterpart.

The first person limited voice also makes the reader more sympathetic to Orual, even if the reader can see through her flimsy excuses to herself. "[Lewis's] use of relatively sympathetic first person narration, furthermore, brings us close to experiencing the

⁹ And, furthermore, Redival's motivations through Orual's narrative become clear. Lewis does not spend much time on Redival and had intended in some early stages of production to leave out the third sister altogether. Nevertheless, Redival's character remained in Till We Have Faces and was given her own motivation for her wickedness, told via Tarin. "First of all Orual loved me much; then the Fox came and she loved me little; then the baby came and she loved me not at all" (255).

movement from unbelief to belief, rather than merely contemplating the pattern of the process” (Uruang 42). The reader almost literally enters the story through Orual. The use of first person narrative voice creates for the reader a deeper participation in the novel. When the novel starts “I am old now...” (3), the reader reads the personal pronoun “I,” not the distant proper noun “Orual.”

The use of first person narration gives rise to the more significant changes Lewis made to the myth in his retelling. “The central alteration in my own version,” he says, “consists in making Psyche’s palace invisible to normal, mortal eyes” (Till We Have Faces 313). It is this question of whether or not Psyche lives in a real palace that raises the first thematic difference between Till We Have Faces and The Golden Ass: the nature of sight in context to the gods. “Hence [Orual’s] dreadful problem: ‘is P[syche] mad or am I blind?’” (Lewis qtd. in Hooper 249). Orual’s inability to see the palace at first brings forth the question “of faith and sight, of belief and disbelief in the unseen but real supernatural” (Uruang 43). Later, when Orual does in fact see the palace, she must struggle with herself and her inability to believe in that which she has seen for one indelible moment.

This question of sight is interesting in comparison with The Golden Ass for several reasons, not the least of which is that it makes yet another distinction between the allegory of The Golden Ass and the contrasting didacticism of Till We Have Faces. In The Golden Ass, the gods are unquestionably real and never invisible.¹⁰ Till We Have Faces brings in a certain level of doubt at the beginning of the novel. Because we see Glome through Orual’s eyes, we know that she truly does not see Psyche’s palace at first. There is no undeniable right or wrong belief that can be proven without a blind faith in Psyche and the gods. It is

¹⁰ An exception to this is Zephyr, who, because he is wind, is always invisible. However, his existence isn’t questioned because of that invisibility.

not logical for either the reader or Orual to accept the palace at first; the only reason one would believe it was there is Psyche's questionable testimony. The path for Orual is not clear either for her or the reader.

Even when Orual sees the palace for a brief moment, there is reasonable doubt about its existence. Orual's fluctuation between being capable of seeing the palace and not may also stem from Lewis's idea on the feeling of God's presence within our everyday lives. This was certainly a question he pondered. He wrote in 1953 in response to the question "Does God seem real to you?" that "It varies; just as lots of other things I firmly believe in (my own death, the solar system) *feel* more or less real at different times" (Letters 251). When you wake up on a sunny morning without a care in the world, death does not seem as close as when you lie in bed, terribly ill. In the same way, Lewis says, you feel closer or further away from God at different times.

For Orual, the fluctuations between the reality and unreality of the gods become literal, not figurative, although Orual feels that sometimes sight (nearness to God) is still ambiguous. When Orual first sees the palace, in one paragraph she goes from complete belief in Psyche's story to complete disbelief. In one sentence alone, Orual's belief fades like the fog surrounding the towers: "I had dared to scold her (dared, what was worse, to try to comfort her as a child) but all the time she was far above me; herself now hardly mortal...[sic] if what I saw was real" (133). Orual's feelings of belief and disbelief are similar to the feelings Lewis described in his letter, but for Orual the feelings are represented as true vision. Orual must make the choice between whether she will believe in what she has seen or not.

On the one hand, to believe in the gods Orual needs more than blind faith: she needs to actually see the gods before she can believe in them. On the other hand, Orual's doubt in the gods, a doubt she begins to feel even before the castle fades into the fog, proves that it is not the presence of the gods she needs for belief but a change within her own self.¹¹ There is a dual nature in Orual's faith that she struggles with—and nearly fails—to be resolved. To have true faith in the gods, Orual must be granted knowledge of the gods' existence by them and accept the gods as unfathomable with her own leap of faith. Orual's faith must be both divine and mortal, beyond her control and in her control. Her struggle to accept the gods stems from doubt in the divine and unwillingness to bend.

The question of seeing the supernatural is one that Lewis raises for a purpose. Two years before he wrote Till We Have Faces, Lewis wrote a letter in which he posed a hypothetical question that echoes Orual's own problems. "If Our Lord *did* seem to appear to you at your prayers (bodily) what after all could you do but go on with your prayers?" he asked, "How cd. you know that it was not an hallucination?" (Letters 251). The problem with a vision of the supernatural, as Lewis suggests in his letter and implies through Orual, is that on the one hand it goes against our capacity of human understanding to comprehend the god before us and at the same time it would be sinful to reject that which we have been given the gift to see. It does not become a question of "seeing is believing" or even "believing is seeing" but rather that sight itself must be accepted with blind faith. "The general answers Lewis offers affirm both grace and free will: to see is both something [Orual] must learn and something given her by the gods" (Holyer 72). Orual rejects the gift

¹¹ It is interesting to compare Orual in this instance to Psyche, who saw the West-wind for only a moment and then saw nothing. Psyche did not lose her faith when she could no longer see; Orual did (Schakel 48). This concurs with Lewis's intention to portray Psyche as one who is born with faith and Orual as one who must struggle to attain it (see page 37).

the presence of the god has given her—truth of the god’s existence—and therefore rejects the possibility of their benevolence. It becomes clear later on that while Orual receives the grace of the gods (their vision), she uses her free will not to learn and accept but to deny and reject.

There is a further play on vision found in both tales, though Apuleius did not emphasize it as Lewis did. In both tales, Psyche uses an oil lamp to see her unknown lover, and it is this lamp that wakes Cupid and leads to Psyche’s quest for redemption. The lamp is an image from the tale that Lewis did not want to change; as Orual says “the picture—Psyche, a bed, and a lamp—is everlasting” (*Till We Have Faces* 67). For Apuleius, Psyche’s sin with the lamp was in breaking her word to her husband and disobeying the patriarchal superiority of the god and lover. In *Till We Have Faces*, the sin was more personal. Psyche tries to see with her lamp that which she has been told she must see with faith. She has broken her word with the God of the Mountain, but more, she has allowed herself to be ruled by mortal fears (albeit those of her sister) to see only through mortal ways.

Uruang suggests that there is another play on the idea of vision in the novel, although he does not associate it with the conflicting motifs of sight. He states that Psyche herself is “vision;” her life, as a natural Christian, makes her able to “love the Truth which others oversimplify into clear and distinct ideas” (43). Psyche is the vision by which Orual comes to see her own life. Because Psyche lived with the gods, Orual is able to see the gods; because Psyche labored for the gods, Orual is able to redeem herself by laboring for Psyche. Psyche literally becomes the eyes through which Orual can see—and believe in—the gods.

While sight creates important conflicts in Till We Have Faces, just as important in its thematic structure is the concept of love. Lewis and Apuleius see this concept in vastly different terms. For Apuleius, love is simple. There are three types of love: familial, sexual, and love of self. Psyche has unreturned familial love for her sisters and sexual love for Cupid. Cupid has familial (and possibly some sexual) love for Venus and sexual love for Psyche. Psyche's sisters love themselves. Love in Apuleius's tale is a key motivation for most of the characters, but the love is simple and clear. Love is even given an origin: it is merely the result of Cupid's arrows, or, in the case of self-love, the result of one's own evil egotism.

Lewis purposefully deviated from this idea. There are many different kinds of love within his work, and they are all intentionally complex. There is not simply familial love in Till We Have Faces; there is the obsessive familial love of Orual for Psyche, the short lived familial love of Redival for Orual, the self-deceptive love of King Trom for Psyche, the adoptive love of the Fox for Orual and Psyche. There is not simply sexual love; there is the unrequited and one-sided love of Orual for Bardia, there is the frustrated love of Ansit for Bardia, there is the careless infatuation of men for the veiled Orual, there is the pure love of Psyche and Cupid. Even love of one's self is made more complex by Lewis; Orual both loves and hates herself, and her love for herself is consuming and damaging.

The love that Lewis most emphasized, however, was divine love. Lewis wrote to Father Peter Milward about Till We Have Faces concerning this issue. "The main themes are," he wrote, "(1) Natural affection, if left to mere nature, easily becomes a special kind of hatred, (2) God is, to our natural affections, the ultimate object of jealousy" (qtd. in Hooper

250). Whereas Apuleius's Psyche loves Cupid because she is pricked by his arrow,¹² Lewis's Psyche has a natural inborn affection for the divine. Psyche's love for the divine clashes with Orual's affection for humanity, namely Psyche herself. Psyche loves the gods most, but Orual loves Psyche most, and each love is natural to each. Orual describes seeing Psyche for the first time as "the beginning of all my joys" (20), but Psyche's greatest joys before her sacrifice were when she longed to be closer to the gods, even through death, and she says, "It was when I was happiest that I longed most" (74).

Orual's natural affection, her love for Psyche from the moment she saw her, becomes a special kind of hatred that starts the night before Psyche is to be taken as a sacrifice. Orual confesses that Psyche "made me, in a way, angry" (71), and Orual dreams the next day that "Psyche was my greatest enemy" (81). Orual slips in and out of hatred for Psyche throughout the remaining first part of the novel. Psyche herself recognizes how twisted Orual's love has become when Orual forces Psyche to swear to break her promise with the god. "I am not sure whether I like your kind [of love] better than hatred," she says (165). Orual's greatest mistake in Till We Have Faces is twofold: she lets her love of Psyche slip into hatred, and she forces that hatred to spill out onto the gods.

Orual's love-hate for Psyche stems from a jealousy of the gods. In her complaint, she is angrier that the gods stole Psyche's love for her than she would have been if they had killed Psyche outright. "We'd rather they were ours and dead than yours and made immortal," she accuses (291). She feels that the gods have stolen from her: "Psyche was mine and no one else had any right to her" (291-2). Lewis intended to make a parallel of

¹² Apuleius says, after Psyche sees Cupid, she inspects his weapons out of curiosity. "She pulled an arrow out of the quiver and touched the point with the tip of her thumb to try its sharpness; but her hand was trembling and she pressed too hard. The skin was pierced and out came a drop or two of blood. So Psyche accidentally fell in love with Love" (118).

Orual's jealousy with the reaction some families have when "someone becomes a Christian, or in a family nominally Christian already, does something like become a missionary or enter a religious order. The others suffer a sense of outrage. What they love is being taken away from them" (Letters 273-4).¹³ Orual's reaction to Psyche's love of the God of the Mountain and her insistence to stay in the palace only she could see echoes the reactions of the families of people who "get religion." There is the same type of jealousy that Orual exhibits; "why should he have this religious experience I cannot be a part of?" There is the same fear for the loved one; "what if all this is foolishness?" There is pain; "my loved one loves this 'God' more than she loves me." The end result of all this, Lewis feared, was that out of their suffering, "much of the bitterness against religion arises" (274). Orual's complaint against the gods is the result of her bitterness against them; her anger stems from a reflection of the jealousy people feel when their priority in a loved one's life is displaced by God. Orual's anger is rooted in jealousy and her jealousy is rooted in love.

Till We Have Faces is a story about the progression of love. It is easy for the reader to see how twisted Orual's love for Psyche becomes through Orual's own words, although she herself cannot see it. As the story progresses, it becomes more and more clear how corrupt Orual's love for Psyche has become. Orual decides with little contemplation that her course to "save" Psyche must be to use any means necessary. She chooses to persuade Psyche to see the "truth" of her lover by threatening Psyche with both their lives. To prove her resolve in the matter, she stabs herself through the arm with a knife. It is this self-destructive threat that forces Psyche to break her word to her lover and see his face at night. In this instance, as Psyche herself notes, Orual's love is more like hate. Her actions are

¹³ See also Lewis's letter to Katherine Farrer, reprinted in Hooper 249.

based on jealousy. Although Orual never discusses her action specifically in the novel again, her attitude is one of determined selfishness. If Orual cannot have Psyche, she will ensure that no one else can have her either.

Despite Orual's constant attestation that her method was sound, the reader is more apt to listen to the Fox. Like Orual with Psyche, the Fox uses his love against Orual in order to convince her not to fight Argan. However, the Fox apologizes soon afterwards, saying "Daughter, I did badly last night....I was wrong to weep and beg and try to force you by your love. Love is not a thing to be so used" (204). While the discerning reader may note how Orual had done exactly the same thing to Psyche, Orual herself does not see the resemblance. Perhaps it is important to note that Orual acted out of jealousy, but the Fox acted out of fear. It is ironic that of the two, the Fox has the lesser reason to apologize but does, and Orual has the greater reason to apologize but does not. Jealousy becomes both her reason for action and the mask she hides behind to excuse her action, if only to herself.

Orual's idea of love is all consuming and devouring, very much like her perception of the gods' love. She does not see nor understand until the end of the novel how greedy her love was, that it was wrong of her to try to keep Psyche, the Fox, and Bardia entirely to herself. Orual does not understand what real love is even when Ansit defines it for her, saying that she would never "Make [Bardia] so mine that he was no longer his" and that she would acquiesce to the proper way in which "He was to live the life he thought best and fittest for a great man—not that which would most pleasure me" (264). Ansit tells Orual and the reader what true love is through her angry outburst to the Queen, but Orual cannot reconcile herself to that understanding. "She dares do all things save expose herself and let those she loves lead their own lives" (Adey 154). By this point in the novel, Orual's veil of

jealousy also hides the fear that is mounting within her, the fear that she has lived her life in self-deception.

The necessity of Orual's exposure of herself leads to the next major difference between Apuleius's tale and Lewis's. For Apuleius and nearly every other version of the tale,¹⁴ Psyche's sisters are beautiful, though of a normal, mortal beauty that cannot compare to Psyche's. By making Orual ugly, Lewis makes Orual's envy of Psyche more bitter and Orual's redemption and transformation into Psyche more sweet. Orual acts out of love, however self-deluded that love may be, not out of envy. Nevertheless, Orual is envious of Psyche. As she comes more and more to understand how ugly she herself is, she comes more and more to wish it were not so. If Orual had Psyche's beauty, she believes that she could have the love of a man (preferably Bardia) and a stronger love from the Fox. Love is what Orual craves above all else, and subconsciously Orual believes that beauty is the key to love. Perhaps the reason Lewis made Orual ugly was to show again the way God is the ultimate object of jealousy. Orual's envy of beauty rises with her hatred of the gods who are the most beautiful of all beings. It is no accident that once Orual gets beauty from Psyche, it becomes clear to her that she no longer needs it to have the love that she desires most, that of the gods.

There is one more disparity between the works of Apuleius and Lewis that should be considered. In Apuleius's tale, Psyche gives birth to a daughter, Pleasure, with whom she has been pregnant throughout her trials with Venus. Lewis's Psyche is never pregnant. On the one hand, it seems reasonable for Lewis to have left out this detail. "His is not a story of the frivolous relationships between the gods and their human consorts, or of the jealous

¹⁴ For an extensive collection of variants of the Cupid and Psyche tale, see *Beauties & Beasts* by Betsy Hearne, Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1993.

mother-in-law. As a way of making this point clear, Lewis also omits the pregnancy motif and the birth of the child at the end” (Donaldson 10). While there is no birth of a child at the end of the novel, I disagree with Donaldson’s assertion that Lewis left the pregnancy motif completely out of Till We Have Faces. Adey more accurately points out that Orual herself presents an image of pregnancy. “I locked Orual up or laid her asleep as best I could somewhere deep down inside me; she lay curled there. It was like being with child, but reversed; the thing I carried in me grew slowly smaller and less alive” (Till We Have Faces 226). Adey points out that not only does Orual create within herself a “pregnancy in reverse,” (Adey 161) there is also the celebration of New Year in which Ungit’s temple becomes womb-like, and Orual describes her desire to write as “with book, as a woman is with child” (Till We Have Faces 247). Just as Orual absorbs the role of story-teller, she also takes on the responsibility of the regenerative motif in Apuleius’s tale.

Furthermore, the pregnancy images associated with Orual, especially the often repeated image of a smaller Orual hidden within the Queen, adds to Lewis’s idea at the conclusion of Till We Have Faces that Orual must die and be born again in order to meet with the gods. In Apuleius’s tale, the pregnancy and regenerative motifs work to show how the female soul’s greatest pleasure is birth, and that the union of the soul with divine love creates the epitome of pleasure. Lewis does not need these images. Instead, he uses Orual’s reverse pregnancy throughout the book to show through his “case” of the human condition how one can hide one’s true self behind a created image. Just as Orual hides her ugliness behind a veil, she also hides her soul behind the persona of the Queen that she creates. Orual must shed the image she has forced herself into in order to be reborn in beauty.

Apuleius deals with pregnancy as a means of regeneration, but Lewis uses it to show the birth of one's true self.

Although both Lewis and Apuleius tell the story of a girl's quest for spiritual love, they do so in vastly different ways. Lewis's first person voice allows the reader to have a more sympathetic and active view of Orual and a deeper understanding of her motivations. Apuleius's story is literally the story of a girl's quest to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds to find love. Symbolically, it becomes an allegory to show the outward journey of the soul upon death to discover safety in heaven through and with Love. Lewis turned the quest inward to show the journey to God before death through the self. Orual discovers the gods through herself and she discovers herself through the gods. By including questions on the nature of sight and love, Lewis creates a new meaning in the tale. "The various epistemological issues raised by the story center on these two basic questions: how do we know the existence and nature of God?" (Holyer 58). Lewis has effectively used a pagan story to answer questions about the Christian God.

II: THE BAPTISM OF PSYCHE

“The idea was that a human being must become real before it can expect to receive any message from the superhuman...” --C.S. Lewis¹⁵

The question remains, however, why Lewis chose an already well-known pagan myth to portray his very Christian story. Through his Cosmic Trilogy and the Chronicles of Narnia, Lewis had already proved that he was capable and indeed very adept at creating his own literary worlds without relying on stories that had already been created. If “to a large extent, Lewis succeeds in grafting Christian upon pagan mythology” (Adey 159), why graft new ideas on an old story when it would have been just as simple to create an entirely new story? What is the significance of keeping the whispers of Greece in Glome?

The world of Till We Have Faces is in many ways not a very drastic change to the world that Cupid and Psyche inhabit in Apuleius’s tale. Glome could easily be a fledgling Greece; the Greek ideas that Apuleius must have been aware of are spouted throughout the novel through the Fox’s mouth. Lewis could have told a similar story set in a world he created without these Greek¹⁶ influences.

If Glome is so like Greece, is it possible for it to maintain what Timmerman calls the “chief distinguishing trait of the [fantasy] genre” (49), the alternate world? Unquestionably, yes. While Glome may have the physical appearance of ancient Greece, the key thing to

¹⁵ From a letter Lewis wrote to Dorothea Conybeare. Printed in Hooper, page 252.

¹⁶ Ungit is most like Venus in the outward practices: a temple, temple maidens, priests. There is also the emphasis on beauty and her connection between the God of the Mountain (Cupid). Ungit also has a close relationship with Ceres, the earth goddess, and the cycle of regeneration that she symbolizes. It is possible that the reason Ungit is associated with earth is a play on Apuleius’s description of the origins of Psyche: people began to believe that “...the earth, not the seas has been impregnated by a heavenly emanation, and has born a new Goddess of Love...” (96-7)

remember is that it *is* ancient Greece, a world quite alien from our own, and which, like the fantasy alternate world, “a mental leap *apart* from [our world]” (Timmerman 50). The ancient Greece in Glome becomes the fantasy world in Till We Have Faces, and nothing is so fantastic as Glome’s mythology come to life.

The word “myth” brings to mind two connotations: either a falsehood or a pagan belief. “Lewis, along with most other literary scholars, objects to thinking of myth in this way. For him the great myths of the Bible as well as of pagan literature refer not to the nonhistorical but rather to the nondescribable” (Carnell 106). Lewis did not consider myth to be entirely false simply because it was not historical. “Myth is a story of what *happens* as distinguished from, but not contradictory to, the history of what *has happened*” (Hart 13). In other words, a myth could be historically wrong (Cupid and Psyche may never have lived the story Apuleius wrote) but the essence of the story (Love and Soul must be joined for the ascension into heaven) could still be true.

In this way, Lewis viewed the Bible as a myth. As he said when he was first becoming a Christian, “Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as others, but with this tremendous difference that *it really happened*: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering that it is God’s myth where the others are men’s myths...” (They Stand Together 427). God’s myth is necessarily true because it comes from the one perfect God. Men’s myths, on the other hand, are at best mere extrapolations of the truth, dilutions of the purity of God’s myth. They may hold certain elements of truth because the Truth was their source, but men’s myth are ultimately much weaker and duller in comparison to God’s.

To adequately define the word myth in Lewis's terms is difficult. Mythology originally came from men who created stories in an attempt to define the undefinable. Myth was man's first effort to know God, but it was clouded by an unavoidable lack of knowledge. Pagan myth was the closest the pagans, who did not have the enlightenment of Christ, could come to God, and they should not be wholly condemned for not realizing a God they could not reach at that time. The coming of Christ marked an age in which mythology became fact. The Bible and Christ are true myth. "...Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as he finds there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call 'real things'" (Lewis They Stand Together 427). The truth in pagan myths is the shadow of truth found fully realized in the Bible. "Lewis maintains that the *mythos* of the New Testament transposes all the best visions of Paganism into another key of richer harmony—whether they be transcendent monotheism of Akhenaten, the theistic leap of Plato, or such Pagan Christs as Adonis, Balder, and Osiris" (Carnell 135). Pagan myths were not entirely untrue; they rang with a truth that was not fully realized until Christianity.

The question of truth in all these myths is as complex as Lewis's definition of myth. "[Lewis] affirmed, in all his writing in all genres, that myth is an expression of universal truth in terms that the human imagination can apprehend" (Hart 13), and pagan myths could hold the universal truth without fully reaching the absolute truth. The Bible, for Lewis, is a myth that is at the height of truth; if a pagan myth holds elements of the universal truth, the Bible is the truest final evolution of the universal truth. While the Bible is true, Lewis emphasized that even its truth has been altered in order to ensure comprehension. Lewis described the Bible as "*true*, not in the sense of being a 'description of God (that no finite

mind could take in) but in the sense of being the way in which God chooses to (or can) appear to our faculties” (Lewis They Stand Together 427). It should be noted that Lewis emphasizes here the belief that the Bible is true but also limited because we, as humans, are limited.

Just as our faculties prevent us from seeing the absolute form of God, so too were pagans even more limited in their mythology because they did not even have the experience of Christianity or the Bible to instruct and inspire them. This is not to say that Lewis felt there was no value in pagan mythology. “He felt that being a Christian does not require a denial of beauty in those myths... Those who have no other revelation of God than that afforded by nature and human magnanimity will, in Lewis’ opinion, be judged only in terms of what they have been given” (Carnell 134). A pagan who has not had an experience of Christ may still follow the Christian ways, and his judgment will be based on how closely he followed those ways with the knowledge he had. “A myth points...to the realm he lives in most,” Lewis said, “It is a master key; use it on what door you like” (qtd. in Hart 17). This concept becomes clear in the last section of Till We Have Faces. Orual is from a pre-Christian world and the only religion she knows is that of the gods. Nevertheless when she faces the gods, Lewis has made it possible that a didactic reading of the novel reveals that the god Orual talks to and the one who answers her is the Christian God. Lewis retells a myth in part to make the true myth of Christianity more accessible in other myths.

The image of Christianity in pagan works is evident even in Apuleius. Consider, for example, the ideas on religion raised in The Golden Ass. Apuleius was not a Christian; in fact he uses the baker’s wife, one of the most abominable characters in The Golden Ass, to mock Christianity when she is noted to have “professed perfect scorn for the Immortals and

rejected all true religion in favor of a fantastic and blasphemous cult of an ‘Only God’.” (204). At the same time, the goddess Isis whom Lucius first comes to serve has echoes of the Christian God: “her service is perfect freedom” (273), “by her grace [initiates] are, in a sense, born again” (277), and Lucius describes her as “you whose bountiful grace nourishes the whole world; you whose heart turns towards all those in sorrow and tribulation as a mother’s to her children; you who take no rest by night, no rest by day, but are always at hand to succor the distressed by land and sea” (282). Apuleius’s story is false because it does not have the truth of God behind it, but it is true in that it values qualities that *are* of the true God. Apuleius’s story is a myth that has traces of truth; the Bible is a myth that *is* truth.

Again, myth is a misleading term. When Lewis claims that the Bible is myth, he does *not* mean that it is false nor that myth is a derogatory term for Christianity or the Bible. “Even the gospel [according to Lewis] is myth, but it is ‘myth become fact’. In Jesus Christ ‘the essential meaning of all things [comes] down from the “heaven” of myth to the “earth” of history’—but, Lewis insists, ‘without ceasing to be myth’.” (Uruang 36). The conflict between myth and truth in the Bible creates a paradox in which the stories written are both mythology and literal truth. The Bible cannot cease to be a myth any more than it can cease to be true. “There is to be no demythologizing. ‘To be truly Christian we must both assent to the historical fact and also receive the myth (fact though it has become) with the same imaginative embrace which we accord to all myths’” (ibid). Lewis then sees the Bible as a mode for imagination to lead to faith and belief.

His own journey to Christianity started with his imagination; reading Phantastes by Scottish theologian George MacDonald when he was sixteen years old brought Lewis to an imaginative contemplation that eventually made him receptive to Christianity. Christianity

and imagination go hand in hand for Lewis, and it is here that the Bible's mythology plays an important role. For Lewis, the awakening of his imagination through Phantastes led him to eventually accept, through his imagination, the miracles of the Bible. It is little wonder, then, why Lewis often chose fantasy literature as the genre in which to embody his Christian apologetics. Opening one's imagination to the fictional gods in Till We Have Faces, for example, may help open one's imagination to the real God.

Lewis's beliefs in reason and imagination played an important role in his life. As Peter J. Schakel writes in his book Reason and Imagination in C.S. Lewis, Lewis struggled nearly all his life to find a balance between reason and imagination. "Early in his life Lewis was pulled one way by rationalist tendencies, the other by romantic and imaginative ones" (Schakel 90). On the one hand, Lewis learned about reason from his tutor W.T. Kirkpatrick, a strict teacher who had to see to believe and taught young Lewis the same. On the other hand, Lewis had a fascination for mythology, particularly Norse, and a great imaginative mind. Schakel believes that Lewis never truly achieved the balance between reason and imagination that he sought until late in his life, and that balance is shown ideally in Till We Have Faces. Lewis's imagination may have been baptized by the works of George MacDonald, who created fantasy works with deeper meaning, but it took a combination of that imagination and reason for Lewis to finally convert to Christianity. After all, "Christianity embodies the meaningful in the knowable. Reason and imagination are separate avenues to, on the one hand, knowledge of and, on the other hand, the meaning of 'the actual incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection'¹⁷...the imagination provides a 'picture' which enables the reason to grasp more firmly what the objective is" (Schakel 110-11). This

¹⁷ Schakel is referring to an account of Lewis's first steps towards accepting Christianity of which he wrote his friend Arthur Greeves. The letter is reprinted in They Stand Together page 428.

is what Psyche means when she says “I have come to feel more and more that the Fox hasn’t the whole truth” (Till We Have Faces 70). The Fox has the reason side of faith, but lacks the imagination.

Lewis himself tended to be like the Fox. He was at his core a man who questioned and sought truth through logic. At the same time, however, he came to realize the importance of imagination. “I am a rationalist. For me, reason is the natural organ of truth,” he wrote, “but imagination is the organ of meaning” (qtd. in Schakel 197n26). Just as pagan myth could hold traces of the true Christian myth, his works of imagination, his fantasy novels, could show the meaning behind the truth of reason. Truth and fantasy, reason and imagination, worked together.

In the same way Lewis felt that although the Bible was and is true, it is still myth. “Just as God is none the less God by being Man, so the Myth remains Myth even when it becomes Fact. The story of Christ demands from us, and repays, not only a religious and historical but also an imaginative response. It is directed to the child, the poet, and the savage in us as well as to the conscience and the intellect” (qtd. in Knickerbocker 110). The Bible is both Myth and Truth, and it is important that it is myth because myth inspires the imagination necessary for one to even begin to comprehend that which is beyond comprehension. It is within myth that man can put “what he does not yet know and cd. not come by in any other way” (Letters 271). It is here, in mythology, that the imagination must fill in the gaps that mankind’s limited faculties create when reading or contemplating the true myths of the Bible and Christianity. Without the imagination, one could not accept myth; without myth one could not even come close to accepting Christianity.

Because Lewis saw truth in mythology, it is not surprising that he was at least a little sympathetic towards how Apuleius and his contemporaries were labeled. In his English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Lewis includes a brief history of what he called “Platonic theology.” He believed that “if Plato alone had been in question the Florentines would in fact have been attempting to ‘baptise’ him as Aquinas had ‘baptised’ Aristotle” (10-11). However, since Platonic theology applied to many early Romans, including Apuleius, they were not given as high regard even though Platonic theology “is a deliberate syncretism based on the conviction that all the sages of antiquity shared a common wisdom and that wisdom can be reconciled with Christianity” (11). Lewis’s own thoughts leaned towards a Platonist Christianity; many Platonic ideas are found in his work,¹⁸ and his theories on inspiration and creativity were distinctly not mimetic Aristotelian but much more Platonist: art isn’t simple imitation but can represent the principles of nature, and the knowledge of these principles of nature comes only with the aid of divine intervention (Uruang 144). Orual’s problems with belief echo this. She cannot believe in the gods until they step in and make their presence physically known. Once she has this divine intervention, she believes unquestionably in their reality, if not their love, but she did not have the imagination necessary to believe in the gods before she saw them. Imagination’s power in Till We Have Faces is subtle. The only character who has a strong imagination is Psyche, and she is the only character who has pure and true faith in the gods.

If Lewis saw traces of Christianity within the works of the Platonic theologians, then it must be remembered that early Christians saw traces of their beliefs in the Cupid and Psyche myth. Lewis was certainly not the first person to tell the pagan myth with a

¹⁸ See particularly The Last Battle in which the stable at the end of the novel has an inside that is much larger than the outside and echoes Plato’s story of the cave.

Christian context, although he is the first to tell it without allegory. As has been discussed earlier, early Christians took the symbolism of Cupid and Psyche to parallel the union of God and the soul at death. Boccaccio's allegorical reading lent the story even more Christian tones, and this version was continued. "The possibility of a Christian rereading of the pagan tale favored its dissemination enormously, first in the Middle Ages and then in later centuries, when humanism, despite its idolatry of antiquity, searched for continuity between classical and modern thought within a Christian context" (Cavicchioli 60). However, despite the many Christian subtexts that were applied to the story of Cupid and Psyche after Boccaccio, the stories relied more on Christian symbolism and less on a complete revamping of the story as Lewis did.

While the Cupid and Psyche myth had been Christianized before, Lewis was the first person to create a distinctly non-allegorical mythopoeic fantasy based on Apuleius's work. Ultimately, it is the characters Lewis created in Till We Have Faces that define his work as a Christian mythopoeic fantasy. Orual is not Everyman, and the work itself is complex enough to produce a variety of meanings for its readers. Therefore, Till We Have Faces is not an allegory in the same way that the medieval retellings were. Furthermore, Till We Have Faces becomes less myth and more fantasy because of the roles of the gods. Apuleius's gods were gods with real human believers; Lewis's gods lived only within Till We Have Faces. Consider Timmerman's definition of fantasy literature: "it provides new ways of seeing a thing, and new answers to what is seen; but it deals with enduring matters" (2). Till We Have Faces is a new way of seeing an old myth, through the eyes of a character that had previously only been a two-dimensional tool for advancing the plot and

emphasizing the goodness of Psyche. In redefining the characters and their motives, Lewis creates a story that turns to the “enduring matters” of love, doubt, faith and forgiveness.

Ultimately, Lewis’s innovativeness in Till We Have Faces lies in his characters, especially in Psyche and Orual. Lewis described “Psyche as an instance of *anima naturaliter Christiana* making the best of the Pagan religion she is brought up in and thus being guided...towards the true God” and said that “Orual is...an instance, a ‘case’ of human affection in its natural condition” (Letters 273-4). Psyche, then, is the embodiment of a soul that is in its nature Christian as opposed to the *anima pagana*, a pagan soul.

What makes Lewis’s Psyche significant and different from all past versions of Psyche is not that she becomes divine,¹⁹ but that she is naturally a Christian. She does not question the gods as Orual does because it is not in her nature to do so. Psyche was essentially born with the faith and acceptance of the gods that Orual must quest inwardly and outwardly to find.

While Christian meaning can only be found in Apuleius through allegory, Lewis creates meaning in Till We Have Faces through his characters. There are four types of characters in Till We Have Faces: the true believers of the gods, those who doubt or hate the gods, those whose belief is more superstitious than true, and those who rely on logic or reason to a point that excludes religious belief. Table 1 illustrates the four different types of characters in Till We Have Faces and which character corresponds to each type.

¹⁹ Lewis wrote in a letter to two little girls that “Psyche has a vocation and becomes a saint” (Letters to Children 74). He did not intend, as Apuleius did in his version of the myth, for Psyche (or Orual) to be or become a goddess. He described them instead as “just human souls” (ibid).

Table 1. Characters and their method of belief

	Primary	Secondary
Believer	Psyche	Bardia
Doubter	Orual	Trom
Superstitious believer	The First Priest	Common people
Logic/reason unbeliever	The Fox	Arnom

The four types of characters often butt heads against one another. Psyche and Orual fight about the reality and benevolency of the gods. Bardia refuses to go against Ungit for King Trom. The Fox looks down on the Priest's superstitions and the Priest looks down of the Fox's servitude to Trom. Lewis uses these differences between characters to allow his readers to decide for themselves which way is best. Very rarely does Orual, the voice of the novel, pass judgment on any of the character's beliefs. She sees truth in both the Priest who makes the Pillar Room "very holy" just by entering it (43) and the Fox whose rational mind she admires and never fully gives up. The contrast between the believer Psyche and the doubter Orual makes up the meat of the novel and is how Lewis explores "the problems and significance of religious experience" (Holyer 70-1). Lewis Christianized Apuleius's myth by creating contrasting characters in his novel that proved, through their very contrariness, the strongest and truest belief.

Furthermore, Lewis Christianizes his characters without the use of allegory. The two characters who could most easily slip into allegory in Till We Have Faces are Psyche as a Christ figure and Orual as an Everyman. While Lewis said that Psyche was simply an *anima naturaliter Christiana* and not a Christ figure, there are many images in the novel that *could* point to Psyche as a Christ figure. She is a sacrifice to save all her people, tied to a

tree to die, Orual must go through water to reach her, and Psyche offers her sister wine from her hands to drink. Despite these images, Lewis did not intend Psyche to represent Christ in either an allegorical or mythological way. Instead, Psyche is a Christian who, like all good Christians, reflects Christ in her actions. Lewis staunchly believed that to be a Christian was to be Christ-like; Psyche as a natural Christian is also naturally Christ-like.

At its most basic narrative level, Till We Have Faces is not so much about Psyche as it is about Orual and her journey through life and spirit. It is Orual whose story holds Lewis's attention; he wrote to Kilby "but of course, my interest is primarily in Orual" (Letters 274). He intended her not as a symbol of anything but more as an average human. When he calls Orual a "'case' of human affection in its natural condition," he implies that Psyche's natural Christianity is *not* actually natural and is in fact extremely rare. What is natural is Orual's questioning and doubt. Because Lewis creates Orual to be a "case" and not a representative, Orual does not slip behind the Everyman mask. She is an average human being by birth, not innately born with an affinity for Christ. She had no beliefs she was born with; she is cursed and blessed with a free will to choose to believe in the gods she does not see, and when she does see them and believe in their existence, she must then choose what she believes of them. In the story, Orual must learn to live her life based on her own heart and mind. Lewis makes certain, however, that Orual remains a "case," a unique character who, because of her complexity, does not become an Everyman.

Till We Have Faces analyzes Christianity through its diversity of characters, all the characters. A reader could conceivably be any of the characters in the novel, from the logical and reasoning Fox to Psyche's natural Christianity to Orual's doubtful skepticism. "The goal of fantasy...is to lead the reader to a keener understanding of himself and his

world” (Timmerman 91) and Lewis does this by providing a variety of characters in which to mirror his readers. Readers find meaning not in Orual, but in comparing Orual to the other characters in the novel.

If Orual is a doubter in the middle ground of religion, on one side she has the influence of true believers and on the other side she has superstition and logic vying for her. Orual is caught “oscillating between impure superstition (Ungit) and unchastened enlightenment (the Fox)” (Uruang 47). Whereas Orual is trapped between deciding whether the Fox or the Priests are correct in their beliefs, Psyche’s true belief represents a balance between the overly zealous Priest and the overly logical Fox. Psyche found comfort on the Mountain not from the Fox or from the Priest of Ungit but a combination of the two: “It was hardly a thought, and very hard to put into words,” she tells Orual, “There was a lot of the Fox’s philosophy in it—this he says about gods or ‘the divine nature’—but mixed up with things the Priest said, too, about the blood and the earth and how sacrifice makes the crops grow. ...It seemed to come from somewhere deep inside me” (109-10). It is not so much that Orual needs to choose to either be pure superstition or pure reason; she needs to find the middle ground between the two, the middle ground that Psyche innately already has.

There is certainly a place in religion for reason, and Lewis, as a rational professor and excellent rhetorician, was sympathetic to logic. “For Lewis also, reason is the organ of truth. But for him imagination is the organ of *meaning*, which is the antecedent condition of both truth and falsehood” (Uruang 36). In the same way that myth can hold truth, the imagination is the mode by which we can interpret the truth. Too much logic kills the imagination and blocks the only way we can understand the supernatural aspects of religion.

“We can be assured—since there is ‘a kind of truth or rightness in the imagination itself’—that whatever the imagination grasps as meaning will have some relevance to truth” (ibid).

The imagination is the key to the discovery of true belief. For Lewis, the imagination works in the same way as myth. If myth is able to embody as closely as humanly possible the story of Christ that can be told in no other way, so too does the imagination provide the only means a human mind is capable to understanding anything about God. Reason cannot hold the entire Christian story; imagination fills in the gaps and opens one up to the supernatural.

As mentioned above, it is no coincidence that the only character in the novel who has a positive active imagination is Psyche with her gold and amber palace in the mountains which eventually become more real than she could ever have imagined. Of course, Psyche’s imagination does not paint her an exact picture of her amber castle; it is more beautiful than she ever imagined. However, because Psyche had the capacity to imagine it in the first place, she is more apt to believe in it when she is before it. Imagination, as said before, must work hand in hand with reason. Psyche is the balance between the Fox’s logic and the Priest’s superstitious belief, but she is also a balance between reason and imagination. Orual, unfortunately, is also left unbalanced in the first part of the novel; she can no sooner understand Psyche’s resourceful imagination than she can believe in something she cannot see.

Although Lewis strives to paint a picture of many different characters at different stages of their beliefs, the real focus is on Orual’s personal journey to God. Through Till We Have Faces, Lewis implies that the true discovery of the self necessarily leads to a discovery of God. Orual’s covering of her face symbolically shows how she hides her true self as well (emphasized by the repeated images of the Queen trying to destroy Orual). Not

until she takes away the veil and becomes bareface²⁰ before the gods does Orual find her true self again and becomes Psyche, a true believer of that which truly is. Lewis explains this concept more in a letter he wrote to Dorothea Conybeare.

The idea was that a human being must become real before it can expect to receive any message from the superhuman; that is, it must be speaking with its own voice (not one of its borrowed voices), expressing its actual desires (not what it imagines that it desires), being for good or ill itself, not any mask, veil, or *persona*. (qtd. in Hooper 252)

As Uruang succinctly put it, “the will is truly free when it wills a thing truly known by intelligence” (148). Once Orual gains true understanding of herself, she is capable of understanding the gods.

In this instance, Lewis uses Orual to express a very Christian idea. For Lewis it is necessary to give up the self in order to become Christian. Once one gives up his or herself, one can regain a truer self through Christ. “Never his own until he makes it Christ’s; up till then, merely a result of heredity, environment, and the state of his digestion. I became my own only when I gave myself to Another” (Letters 251). Orual, then, does not see or understand her true self at the beginning of the novel because she has not given herself to the gods. She cannot see her selfishness or twisted love because she clings to herself as her own. She does not allow the gods to enter into her life in part because it is the gods who can expose her sins to herself and Orual, who has believed herself infallible, will not risk revelation that she is not. Lewis describes the paradox of losing and finding oneself best in Mere Christianity:

²⁰ Lewis originally intended the title of Till We Have Faces to be Bareface. He was forced to change the title after bitter arguments with his publishers who thought that “bareface” implied a Western novel. Orual refers to herself without the veil in more than one instance as “barefaced.”

The principle runs through all life from top to bottom. Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will ever be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in. (190)

Orual finally comes to terms with this when she reads her complaint against the gods. The complaint becomes its own answer (294) because it opens the door of confession to and acceptance of the gods. Lewis felt that there was power in confession (although not necessarily in Catholic confession to a priest but instead personal confession in prayer): “there is the gain in self-knowledge; most of us have never really faced the facts about ourselves until we uttered them aloud in plain word, calling a spade and spade” (Letters 250). Because Orual for the first time speaks with her “real voice” (292), she realizes that she has finally been able to say what she meant all along and confess the words “which [have] lain at the center of [her] soul for years” (294). Through this confession she realizes the truth of both herself and the gods. Her complaint becomes a confession; her confession becomes the means through which the gods can enter her heart; the gods in her heart becomes her salvation.

Herein lies another reason for Lewis to choose a mythopoeic fantasy as the mode of telling his story about the quest to find god. Till We Have Faces is the story of one girl’s journey to find and confront the gods. The inclusion of the gods as real, active characters within the story makes mythopoeic fantasy—in which the gods are always active and real—the perfect vehicle to tell the story. By retelling a story in which the supernatural (gods’

physical participation in mortals' lives) is *expected*, the reader is capable of suspending his or her belief (or disbelief) in the gods and can then focus on what is truly important with the story. As Lewis himself explained "it is only while receiving the myth as a story that you experience the principle concretely...What flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always *about* something, but reality is that *about which* truth is)" (qtd. in Uruang 42). Knowing that Till We Have Faces is a retelling of a myth, the readers can stop trying to discern the truth of the gods in the novel's existence and instead try to discern their reality.

Christian religion is, necessarily, supernatural. Miracles are not natural: Lazarus, by the laws of nature, should have remained dead; the blind should have naturally remained blind; five thousand men should not naturally have been able to eat off of five loaves of bread and two fish. The most fundamental beliefs in Christianity, such as a God who is both three and one, are supernatural. Lewis knew this, and he knew that a true belief and faith in Christianity must include belief in that which cannot be comprehended. Belief in the supernatural is a part of the belief in Christianity. "C.S. Lewis's literary apologetic is calculated to rehabilitate belief in supernaturalistic Christianity as a possibility for the modern sensibility; not to 'confirm' the understanding—that can come later—but to 'baptize' the imagination" (Uruang 38). In this way, Lewis attempts to use fantasy literature to help others in the same way the George MacDonald's fantasy literature helped him. Lewis creates a story in which the Christian supernatural aspects are emphasized in order to help invoke the imagination of his readers that can eventually lead to a faith in that which cannot be proven. After all, what better way to invoke the imagination than to write a fantasy novel? Lewis knew from experience that religion required imagination in

conjunction with logic. Orual may be a character who, for the most part, relies on logic, but she is wrapped inside a fantasy novel that requires its readers to, from the very first page, enter imagination.

It is interesting to note that just as Christianity must be believed in spite of—or perhaps because of—its supernatural and incomprehensible aspects, so too does myth. Myth is an expression of truth, albeit at times imperfect (such as pagan myth), and the truth is bound up with the supernatural aspects of the myth. For this reason, Lewis shaped Till We Have Faces into a mythopoeic fantasy. Just as pagan mythology is the diluted version of Christian mythology, Till We Have Faces becomes another dilution, although this time purposefully so. Mythology and mythopoeics were the first steps to Lewis's own Christianity. He was certainly sympathetic to the genre and aware of the possibly powerful impact it could have on a reader. Opening the imagination opens the door to Christianity.

It is the imaginative fantastical aspects of literature that baptize the imagination. Furthermore, it is within these aspects that the real meaning of both mythology in general and Lewis's own retelling of that mythology can be found. It must be remembered that Lewis believed that pagan mythology should not be entirely dismissed. The meaning and intent behind the mythology was not necessarily un-Christian. "There is a case to be made for the 'immediately sub-Christian virtues' (Lewis's term in Rehabilitations) of fortitude, integrity, courage, etc., and while the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity are higher virtues in that they proceed from a response to God's initiatives in Christ, the Pagan virtues are not to be despised except when they lead to self-congratulation" (Carnell 135). Mythology, when appealed to for the imaginative and often exaggerated emphasis on "immediately sub-Christian virtues," works to strengthen and inspire a belief in those virtues

and lead a reader to the grander beliefs in Christianity as a religion. Another reason Lewis created his own mythology in a fantasy world was to show through Orual the role of sub-Christian mythology in leading to a faith in the true mythology of Christianity.

The difference between the mythological tale and Till We Have Faces in considering the role of divine inspiration lies in the intention of each work. Myth “may be considered the mode of revealing a spiritual insight through words, but seeks an immediate apprehension of spiritual truths which lie beyond words” (Timmerman 118n36). Myth attempts to directly create a parallel between the story and the spiritual truth and aspires to have the audience of the tale understand the divine behind the story. Till We Have Faces, on the other hand, becomes a story that shows its characters seeking to understand the divine. With myth, the audience plays an active part in discovering spiritual truth; in Till We Have Faces, it is the characters who are active and the reader who passively watches their action. While it may be argued that the reader must, at the conclusion of the novel, compare Orual’s god to the Christian God and thus become an active seeker of the divine truth hidden within the tale, it should be remembered that this is not an “immediate apprehension of spiritual truth” but an introspective comparison of the reader’s own spiritual journey. Lewis makes his readers active not by attempting to create divine inspiration but by prodding them to self-contemplation.

When Lewis says that “In the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction” (qtd. in Uruang 36), he is acknowledging both the limited capabilities of the human mind and the importance of imagination in the development of true Christian faith. One may approach religion logically, but it is “the imagination [that] provides a ‘picture’ which enables the

reason to grasp more firmly what the objective is” (Schakel 111). Lewis provides in Till We Have Faces the “picture” from his imagination that will help his reader to grasp his Christian objective. Giving the gods an aspect and voice in Till We Have Faces makes concrete for Lewis’s readers an idea of God that had heretofore only been an abstraction. The only genre that could believably encompass this lofty goal is mythopoeic fantasy.

Not only does this genre allow Lewis to give a physical form to abstraction, it also allows him to play with the reader’s sense of familiarity. “According to Lewis, ‘the value of myth is that it takes all the things we know and restores to them the rich significance which has been hidden by ‘the veil of familiarity’” (Hart 13). For a Christian who knows that one must become a bride of Christ,²¹ the familiar phrase can be given a much richer significance when it is literally personified by Lewis’s marriage between Psyche and the God of the Mountain (and, likewise, the Christian interpretation of the union of Psyche and Cupid symbolizing the union of the Soul and Love at death).

Defamiliarization was also important to Lewis in order to reach readers who were not already Christian. When Lewis first started to become a true Christian, he discovered the importance of defamiliarization in his talks with his Christian friends, Henry Victor Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien.

Now what Dyson and Tolkien showed me was this: that if I met the idea of sacrifice in a Pagan story I didn’t mind it at all: again, that if I met the idea of a god sacrificing himself to himself...I liked it very much and was mysteriously moved by it: again, the idea of the dying and reviving god...similarly moved me provided I met in anywhere *except* in the Gospels. The reason was that in Pagan stories I was prepared to feel the myth as

²¹ The reference stems from two different verses in the Bible. John the Baptist calls Christ the bride (John 3:29). In Revelations, “The Spirit and the bride say ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’... (Rev. 22:17). Believers (the bride) are given second life once they join with Christ, the bridegroom.

profound and suggestive of meanings beyond my grasp even tho' I could not say in prose "what it meant." (They Stand Together 427)

There are elements of Christianity that cannot survive the "pale enlightenment" of those like the Fox who live their lives based on science alone. When Lewis heard a pagan myth, he was able to set aside rationalization and scientific explanations and enjoy the story for what it was. And he did certainly enjoy the stories in myth. Furthermore, he saw elements of truth in myth. Beowulf and Grendel may not be real, but heroism and bravery were. From very early on in his life, Lewis enjoyed the heroics and magic found in mythology. He accepted the story for what it was, a mixture of reality and unreality, in part because "of course readers can and should, as Lewis says, lay aside their own set of beliefs while reading and 'enter into other men's beliefs...even though we think them untrue'" (Schakel 165). Lewis knew from experience that a reader enters a sort of stasis of belief when reading; he accepts more and questions less. Furthermore, as Lewis became more famous as an apologist, he came "to ask himself if perhaps he should move on to another mode of writing about Christianity. His turning to myth is not a rejection of his earlier mode, but an effort to go beyond it and offer a reader not 'knowledge' of God but a 'taste' of Divine Reality" (Schakel 150).

Of course, Lewis soon discovered his belief in Christianity as a true myth, fantastic yet real. In order to recapture that belief in myth as myth, however, Lewis turned back to the pagan myths. Here was a story that people as he had been then could enjoy: it was a myth with all the elements of mythology that he loved. Adding Christian elements without taking away the quality of the myth helped Lewis to create a Christianized story that was still myth enough to attract those who had been able to value any myth except the true one.

Although Lewis's name and reputation attracts a strong Christian reading, the novel does not exclude non-Christian readers.

Defamiliarization also emphasized the points that were familiar within the text. "For [Lewis] we can be *like* Christ; we cannot participate in Him. So he puts God in another world, myth divided by fact, and surprises us with Him there. He has us leave Earth or our own dimension for another, and tells us that reality on other planets or in fairy land, far from being as different as we expect, repeats the spiritual patterns of our own" (Manlove 257). Glome, its inhabitants, and its gods are as alien to the modern reader as Narnia or Perelandra, separated by time if not by space. The similarities found in Glome and the modern world therefore become much more significant.

For example, while Orual is not an Everyman character, she is the character that most readers can identify with; she encompasses the middle road between the natural Christian Psyche and the strong (though contrary) beliefs of the Fox or the Priest. Orual may have had experiences that the reader will never know—coming face to face with a god, being Queen, addressing her complaint directly to the gods—but because there are many aspects of Orual that *are* similar to the average readers, they can sympathize with her character. Most people, for example, have had at one time or another a complaint against God. Following Orual's complaint enables the reader to gain insight on his own complaint. Because Orual accused the gods of vindictiveness for allowing things that were beyond her comprehension, readers can then draw parallels to their own situations in which they have experienced something they do not understand and choose, based on Orual's results, whether to accuse God or not. "With Lewis we have a double vision: one of a fantastic world quite alien to our own, and another of that world reflecting and re-enacting some of

the deepest truths of our spiritual history” (Manlove 258). Therefore, seeing these similarities in an alien world makes the readers pay more attention to how the characters and their situations end up. We empathize with Orual, so we pay attention to her and what happens to her more than if we did not.

Not only does Orual’s character take the middle road that most readers know, readers empathize with her as the main character in the story. Each person is the center of his own life’s story; each person hears his life through his own voice, just as Orual does. Lewis attempts to put the natural self-centeredness of life in perspective through Orual. “Only a Christian standpoint enables an understanding of the paradox...that any created thing, however large or small, is at once at the centre and the absolute periphery of importance in the universe, and both essential and absolutely superfluous to the divine purpose” (Manlove 107). Throughout the novel, Orual is the center of attention. However, when she faces the gods, she realizes how small and unimportant she is in the grand scheme of life. Orual understands and accepts how her life blanches when compared to Psyche’s and how even Psyche’s life blanches when compared to the gods. Even as she realizes her own insignificance, she begins to understand her true significance, and worth as a creature loved by the gods, despite her flaws. The Bible says that not even a sparrow “will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father” (Matt. 10:29), and Orual has discovered how very sparrow-like she is, small but infinitely loved. She can comprehend finally that while she may be an insignificant being worthy of the disregard she blamed the gods of, she is in fact loved. She fulfills the paradox of being at once the center and periphery of existence.

It is Orual’s discovery of this true center that Christianizes the mythopoeia. As Lewis himself said, had he written the story before he’d become Christian, the gods would

have not had a voice and Orual and her complaint would have been correct by default. By continuing the story, Orual discovers her true self and her true belief. However, Till We Have Faces becomes both Orual's defeat and triumph at the hands of the gods. In discovering the gods and herself, Orual must also lose herself. Lewis wrote that "it is, paradoxically, dangerous to draw nearer to God" (Letters 301). He meant in this case the sense that if Christianity "does not make a man v[ery] much better, it makes him v[ery] much worse" (ibid). Indeed, Orual clearly shows that in her own relationships with the gods before her final journey into their court. However, even if one draws nearer to God and becomes better, there is still very real danger. The danger at the end of the novel, however, is of a different sort.

Drawing nearer to God means giving up one self. "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:39). For Orual, the question of self is a difficult thing. As a child, she defined herself as a mother, although she was not and never would be one. She tried to kill her Orual-self in order to be Queen. She lived her life with the knowledge that she will be Psyche but believed she had become Ungit. Orual was never simply Orual until she met the gods. Her self, like her face, was hidden even from her.

When she sees Psyche in the god's domain, Orual realizes two key things. First, she realizes what she is: "I never wished you well, never had one selfless thought of you. I was a craver" (305). Then she realizes what Psyche has become: "Goddess? I had never seen a real woman before" (306). This was the difference between the two of them; one sister was a shell, the other was a woman. Orual has drawn nearer to the gods and has seen that she was nothing. One could hardly face greater danger.

However, once Orual realizes she is empty, the gods do not leave her so. “Each breath I drew let into me a new terror, joy, overpowering sweetness. I was pierced through and through with the arrows of it. I was being unmade” (307). When the god comes to her, Orual is remade into something entirely and wholly different from what she had been. Orual becomes Psyche; the god’s prophecy is fulfilled in “You also are Psyche” (308). She is not Psyche in the sense that she is beautiful; she is Psyche in the sense that she is real.

This transformation is a dangerous and at times painful transformation that Lewis saw in each Christian’s journey. Being unmade and remade was a part of being Christian. Christ kills “the old natural self in you and [replaces] it with the kind of self he has...turning you permanently into a different sort of thing; into a new little Christ, a being which, in its own small way, has the same kind of life as God; which shares his power, joy, knowledge, and eternity” (Lewis Mere Christianity 164). Orual’s old self is destroyed; in the god’s court she no longer even retains her own body. She is replaced with Psyche, the natural Christian who, like a good Christian, was always Christ-like in her actions. Orual, then, fulfills the image of “a new little Christ” and finally realizes the promise of the gods. She has become not only Psyche, but a version of Christ as well.

While at the outset it seems impossible to find Christianity in Apuleius’s version of the Cupid and Psyche tale without allegory, Lewis did just that in Till We Have Faces. He created a new story by shifting the perspective of the novel. Instead of relying on simple envy to motivate Orual, he created within her a dynamic character filled with psychological complexity that would lead her away from the allegorical mold. He expanded the novel to make it at once both relevant to Christians in understanding the nature of their love for God and still intriguing as an isolated story without the didacticism.

Knowing the importance of myth and imagination in faith, Lewis then changed the original tale from mythology to fantasy through mythopoeics. Myth and fantasy opened Lewis's imagination to Christianity; he saw myth as a true way of relating that which cannot be known in any other way. Christianity, as the true myth, was capable of maintaining both reason and imagination. Lewis Christianized Till We Have Faces through both the genre and the character of Orual. He used fantasy to Christianize the mythopoeics, relying on the willing suspension of disbelief and the active use of the reader's imagination to allow for the existence of gods. Orual's life and journey allows her to lead the reader to those gods. By the end of the story, it becomes clear that the point of the novel is not Psyche, nor Orual, nor even the gods, but the one God.

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